

Department for External Church Relations  
of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church  
15 Lavrska str., build. 70a, Kyiv-01015, Ukraine

Відділ зовнішніх церковних зв'язків  
Української Православної Церкви  
вул. Лаврська 15, корп. 70а, 01015-Київ, Україна



## **On Easter, millions of believers in Ukraine may be deprived of their church**

*Kyiv, 18.04. 2019*

***On April 26, two days before Easter, the biggest denomination of the country can be liquidated in Ukraine. It is significant that this will happen on Good Friday - the day when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.***

On April 26, according to the interpretation of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, the deadline set by Law No. 2662-VIII for the voluntary refusal of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of its official name expires.

According to Viktor Yelensky, chairman of the subcommittee on freedom of conscience and religious organizations of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Culture and Spirituality, if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church refuses to rename, its name in the official registry will be changed by the sole decision of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, and the charters are deprived of state registration.

Thus, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church can cease to exist in the legal field of Ukraine and lose the right to use their churches for worship. As a result, on April 28, on the day of Easter of Christ, millions of Ukrainian Orthodox believers in 12,092 church parishes will be denied the right to pray in their Church.

The implementation of Law No. 2626-VIII creates, according to the Administrator of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan of Borispol and Brovary Anthony, opportunities and conditions for carrying out a one-step and large-scale raider attack on churches and other church property of the UOC in favor of the newly formed church organization registered as «the Kiev Metropolis Ukrainian Orthodox Church OCU».

It should be noted that the very fact of the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of Law No. 2662-VIII caused great concern in the Ukrainian religious community. In particular, in January 2019, the chief rabbi of Kiev and Ukraine, Yaakov Dov Bleich, who was at that time the chairman of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), publicly expressed his position. In his opinion, Law No. 2662-VIII, which introduces changes to the Ukrainian Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”, does not comply with the Constitution of Ukraine and grossly violates the principle of separation of church and state. After the adoption of this law by the Verkhovna Rada, stressed Yaakov Dov Bleich, not a single confession in Ukraine can feel protected from government interference.

In addition, the chairman of the AUCCRO paid special attention to the fact that the adoption of Law No. 2662-VIII caused a negative reaction in the international community. According to him, even international organizations supporting official Kiev made public statements about the incompetence and provocative nature of such actions.

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## **Information sheet:**

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the Local Orthodox Church of the people of Ukraine, which is officially recognized by all the Orthodox Churches of the world and is in spiritual unity with them.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a completely self-governing and independent Orthodox Church in its administration and structure. The control center of the UOC is located in Kiev. According to the UOC Charter, registered in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church independently elects the Primate and Bishops, ordains priests, conducts administrative and economic activities.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the largest Church in Ukraine. The UOC unites millions of believers in 12,092 territorial church communities (parishes) throughout Ukraine. 12 409 priests are serving in them. On the territory of Ukraine, there are 258 monasteries of the UOC, in which 4,500 monks carry obedience. In 17 religious educational institutions of the UOC, 1,415 students study.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has consistently advocated the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The UOC unites Orthodox citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their nationality, political convictions, and place of residence, thereby contributing to the unity of Ukrainians. In all its sermons, the UOC blesses Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian land and the Ukrainian state.

Law No. 2662-VIII «On Amendments to the Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations» was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on December 20, 2018 and entered into force on December 27, 2018. According to this law, a religious organization whose headquarters is located in a country recognized by the Verkhovna Rada as an aggressor is obliged to indicate in its official name the name of the religious organization of which it is a part. In case of refusal of a religious organization subject to Law No. 2662-VIII, change the name and re-register within 4 months, its statutory documents lose their state registration and lose legal force.

Law No. 2662-VIII itself does not include a list of religious organizations subject to renaming and re-registration. This list was compiled by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and contained 5 religious organizations, including the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. When the UOC was included in this list, officials of the Ministry of Culture resorted to outright manipulations and refused to take into account the UOC Charter registered in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, according to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is an self-governing and independent religious organization with a control center in Kiev.

The content of Law No. 2626-VIII, according to the expert opinion of the Main Scientific and Expert Administration of the Verkhovna Rada itself, violates the basic provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations", decisions of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, as well as a number of international covenants and agreements, signed by Ukraine. And the adoption of this law by the Verkhovna Rada took place, according to the decision of the Kiev District Administrative Court, with a large number of violations and unlawful actions by the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada.

After the adoption of Law No. 2626-VIII, many dozens of facts of forceful seizures of churches, beatings and insults of parishioners and clergymen of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and other cases of gross violation of the rights of Orthodox believers were recorded in Ukraine.