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Ukrainian Orthodox Church Seeks to Cut Ties With Russia

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The Ukrainian parliament has requested that Constantinople recognize the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's independence from Russia, the parliament website reported Thursday.

The appeal to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople — the head of the Orthodox Church— was supported by 245 deputies, with 20 deputies voting against. The move is hoped to speed up "changes that will grant the Ukrainian church independence from an aggressor state," the Kommersant newspaper reported.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is a self-governing part of the Russian Orthodox Church based in Kiev, and is the only formally recognized Orthodox church in the country.

The group has claimed to have be under increasing fire from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, one of the several unrecognized churches in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko urged the creation of a single, officially recognized Orthodox church in April, saying that any such group should be "independent from other

states.” He said that recent polls showed growing support for the move within Ukraine, the RBC news website reported.

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