

# Russian Orthodox Church Threatens Tough Response Over Istanbul Backing of Ukraine Split

By [Reuters](#)

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**Mikhail Markiv / TASS**

The Russian Orthodox Church said on Saturday it would respond "in kind and toughly" to the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarchate over Moscow's row with Ukraine's Orthodox Church.

On Thursday a Synod meeting in Istanbul backed Ukraine's request for "autocephalous" — or self-governing — status and reversed the excommunication of Patriarch Filaret, who hopes to lead the newly independent church based in Kiev.

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Alexander Volkov, a spokesman for Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, said the Holy Synod of the Church would "express its position" on Sunday during a meeting in Minsk, without

elaborating on what measures it might take.

Arriving in Minsk, Kirill told reporters: "I hope the Orthodox Church will find the strength to overcome hardships... to stay united."

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