Russian Church Says Patriarch's Christmas Message Stopped at Ukraine Border

January 04, 2019

Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS

Ukrainian border officials have reportedly detained a shipment of a Christmas message from the head of the Russian Orthodox Church following the creation of a new Ukrainian Orthodox church independent of Moscow.

Ukraine marked a historic split from Russia in December when it chose the head of a new national Orthodox church. Russia bitterly opposes the split, comparing it to the 1054 Great Schism that divided western and eastern Christianity.

Vladimir Legoida, a Russian Orthodox Church spokesman, said Thursday that Ukrainian border officials had seized a shipment of Patriarch Kirill's Christmas message over alleged violations with "customs formalities."

Related article: [Russian Orthodox Leader Writes to Pope, Complains of Persecution in Ukraine](#)

"But times are no longer the same: you can still read it on your smartphone," he [wrote](#) on his Telegram messaging app channel.

Orthodox Christians, including in Russia and Ukraine, celebrate Christmas in accordance with the older Julian calendar on Jan. 7.

Religious divisions deepened in Ukraine after 2014 and two Orthodox factions — the Kremlin-backed Moscow Patriarchate and the rival Kiev Patriarchate which formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 — vie for dominance.

Ukraine won approval for the new church in October from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, the seat of the global spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/04/russian-church-says-patriarchs-christmas-message-stopped-at-ukraine-border-a64039