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Amsterdam's Orthodox Clergy Split From Moscow Patriarch

By AFP

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The Amsterdam clergy said they felt that they were being pressured by both the archbishop and the Russian state to go back on their stance. **EPA/KOEN VAN WEEL/TASS**

The clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Dutch city of Amsterdam, announced Saturday it was splitting from the Moscow church because of threats to them over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In a statement posted to its website it said that after a meeting, "the clergy unanimously announced that it is no longer possible for them to function within the Moscow Patriarchate and provide a spiritually safe environment for our faithful."

It was "with a heavy heart" that the four priests of Saint Nicholas of Myra in Amsterdam had reached their decision, they said.

They had asked Archbishop Elisey, of the Russian Orthodox Church in The Hague, to grant

them canonical dismissal and had applied to join the Constantinople Orthodox Church, the statement added.

In an early statement, the church clergy said that they would no longer mention the name of the Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, in their liturgy because of his backing for the invasion of Ukraine.

In a Feb. 27 sermon, the Patriarch described Moscow's opponents in Ukraine as "evil forces" fighting against the "unity of Russia."

That early Amsterdam church decision led to an unscheduled visit from Archbishop Elisey during mass, who told them that Moscow was watching their actions closely, they said.

The Amsterdam clergy said they felt that they were being pressured by both the archbishop and the Russian state to go back on their stance.

The Amsterdam branch of the Russian Orthodox Church is not the only one to object to the position taken by the church's leader.

In Ukraine, some Russian Orthodox priests have denounced the Moscow church since the start of the invasion.

And the Paris-based Metropolitan Jean de Doubna, who heads up some 60 parishes following the Russian tradition across western Europe, expressed his support for Ukraine in an open letter published on Wednesday.

He also appealed to the Patriarch Kirill to intervene to stop the "bloodbath."

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