The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Russian Orthodox Leader Says Kyiv Eviction 'Monstrous'

By AFP

March 16, 2023



Russia's Patriarch Kirill **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Orthodox leader and staunch Kremlin ally Patriarch Kirill denounced Thursday the looming eviction of monks from a monastery in Kyiv over its links to Russia.

Ukraine last week announced the termination of the lease that allowed the church to occupy part of the 11th-century Pechersk monastery free of charge, but the monks said they would not move.

"The state's ultimatum over the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra represents a monstrous act," Kirill said in a video statement.

Ukrainian media has reported that the monks were given an eviction deadline of March 29.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova denounced "absolutely unacceptable" silence from the UN on the issue.

"I think there's no internet signal at the UN Secretariat in New York, no phone signal, computers don't work, phones and TV are switched off," Zakharova said, tongue-in-cheek during a press briefing.

The ancient golden-domed religious complex overlooking the Dnipro River is the country's most significant Orthodox monastery, with a population of monks who were until recently under Moscow's jurisdiction.

The branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church announced a rupture of ties with the Russian Orthodox Church after Patriarch Kirill backed Moscow's offensive last year.

The Kyiv government does not believe that the Church has fully cut relations with the Moscow Patriarchate and raided the buildings last year.

Kirill called on people to "make every effort to prevent the forced closure of the monastery."

He said the move would "lead to the violation of the rights of millions of Ukrainian believers in freedom of religion, guaranteed by the constitution of Ukraine."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/03/16/russian-orthodox-leader-says-kyiv-eviction-monstrous-a80514