

Head of Kyiv Monastery Says Monks to Defy Eviction Order

By [AFP](#)

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An Orthodox priest walks in the grounds of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. **Sergei Supinsky / AFP**

The head of the 11th-century Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, Ukraine's most significant Orthodox monastery, has said that the monks facing eviction because of their church's links to Russia will not leave.

The golden-domed religious complex overlooking the Dnipro River has a population of monks that were until recently under Moscow's jurisdiction.

The branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church announced it had broken with the Russian Orthodox Church after its leader Patriarch Kirill backed Moscow's invasion last year. But the Kyiv government does not believe the church has fully cut ties with Moscow and raided its buildings last year.

Ukraine subsequently announced it was terminating the lease that allowed the monks to

occupy part of the monastery for free, giving them until March 29 to leave.

"They gave us two weeks, until March 29, to move out of the monastery...", the head of the monastery, Pavlo Lebid, said in a YouTube video late Wednesday.

"We can't do this, whatever the pretext. We call today on our people... It is your duty to defend this holy place with us," he added.

The eviction was "worse" than the Soviet repressions against the clergy, he said.

"This is proof that there are no human rights, only violence, the devil has arrived.

"We won't throw stones, we'll just pray. But I can't guarantee safety because provocateurs will come".

Russia's Orthodox leader Patriarch Kirill has denounced the eviction as "monstrous".

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