The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Estonia Banishes Russian Orthodox Leader as 'Security Risk' – Police

By AFP

January 18, 2024



Metropolitan Eugene of Tallinn and All Estonia. **Moscow Theological Academy / flickr**

Estonia said on Thursday it would not renew the residence permit of the head of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, saying the Russian national was "a security risk."

The decision means Metropolitan Eugene must leave before his current permit runs out on Feb. 6.

"The Estonian state is not extending the residence permit of the head of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate," the Estonian police and border guard said.

"His actions are a security risk to Estonia."

Police said the religious leader, whose legal name is Valery Reshetnikov, had repeatedly been asked to stop justifying Russia's invasion of Ukraine and defending the Kremlin.

"His public actions and speaking support the aggressor and he has not changed his behavior despite warnings," said Indrek Aru, head of the northern prefecture's border guard office.

Related article: Estonia Arrests Russian University Professor Suspected of Spying for Moscow

A number of Estonian politicians had called for Reshetnikov to be expelled in January 2023 after the Church announced a joint prayer service "for peace" with a pro-Kremlin political movement called Koos (Together).

One of the leaders of Koos, Aivo Peterson, was detained after visiting Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine and is being investigated for treason.

Orthodox Christians form about 16% of Estonia's population.

Some 150,000 of them belong to the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Another 270,000 are members of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church.

Both bodies consider themselves legal heirs to the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church that was active between 1920 and 1945.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/01/18/estonia-banishes-russian-orthodox-leader-as-security-risk-police-a83765