

Sweden Cuts Support for Russian Church After Intelligence Warnings

By [AFP](#)

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St. Sergius parish of the Russian Orthodox Church in Stockholm. stockholm.cerkov.ru

A Swedish agency for grants for faith institutions said Thursday it was cutting support to the Russian Orthodox Church, after Sweden's intelligence service warned the church was used for intelligence activities.

The Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities said in a statement that it was also cutting financial support for the Church, also known as the Moscow Patriarchate, for not living up to its "democracy criteria."

It said that Sweden's Security Service (Sapo) believed the Church was used by the Russian state "as a platform for gathering intelligence and other security-threatening activities."

"In the Swedish Security Service's remarks, it appears that representatives of the religious community have had contact with people who work for Russian security and intelligence

services," the agency said in a statement.

It added that the Church had received significant funding from the Russian state, and that representatives had acted in a manner that seemed to encourage "support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine."

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The agency also noted that the Russian Church denied the allegations made against it.

The Moscow Patriarchate was already among the smaller recipients of grants for faith-based institutions, and in 2022 the Church received just under 200,000 kronor (\$19,300) from the Swedish state.

In its annual assessment published last week, Sapo pointed to Russia as one of the main threats to Sweden.

In January 2023, a former Swedish intelligence officer was handed a life sentence for spying for Russia.

And in September, a Russian-Swedish national went on trial accused of passing Western technology to Russia's military. A Stockholm court found he had exported the material but ruled his actions did not amount to intelligence gathering.

Sweden also dropped two centuries of military non-alignment and applied for NATO membership in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and is expecting to become a full member within days after the last holdout Hungary ratified the country's membership on Monday.

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