

Moscow Patriarchate Condemns Move to Ban Ukrainian Orthodox Church

By [AFP](#)

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Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Orthodox Church on Tuesday condemned a vote by Ukrainian lawmakers to ban the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which many believe to be aligned with Moscow.

"This is an unlawful act that is the grossest violation of the basic principles of freedom of conscience and human rights," Russian Orthodox Church spokesman Vladimir Legoida wrote on Telegram.

On Tuesday, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada passed a bill outlawing religious organizations with links to Russia. That ban would include the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which lawmakers accuse of maintaining links with Moscow.

Legoida said the bill creates "a legal basis for the total liquidation of the parishes of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church — the religious community that unites the majority of

Ukrainians."

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Legoida warned that implementing the law would "lead to acts of mass violence against millions of believers."

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which officially broke ties with the Russian Orthodox Church in 2022, has been accused by some lawmakers of maintaining covert connections with Russian clergy despite the ongoing war.

In 2019, the Istanbul-based head of the Eastern Orthodox Church granted the Orthodox Church of Ukraine — a breakaway faction — religious independence from the Moscow Patriarchate. The split was triggered by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war between Kyiv and Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Despite the schism, many parishes and worshippers continued to follow the church with suspected links to Moscow.

Russian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill said later on Tuesday described a "very difficult time when many have turned against us... not because we are bad but only because we are different."

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