



Patriarch Kirill calls on intl community to protect followers of Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine

“Radical political forces are making efforts to involve the Church in a conflict by making it a religious conflict. Raiding takeovers of churches by representatives of non-canonical religious groups, unfortunately, with the support of nationalists, and often local authorities, now continue,” the patriarch said at an Easter social function in the Russian Foreign Ministry on Thursday.

The patriarch said 31 churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate have now been taken over and 12 are at risk of takeover.

“This massive violation of human rights, religious freedom that now occurs in Ukraine should attract everyone’s attention, especially the countries and public organizations that are really concerned about human rights problems. Raids and takeovers of churches cannot be called anything else; the massive battery of believers have already attracted the attention of the international community, including human rights organizations, but we would like this voice to be stronger, to stop the lawlessness that is now occurring in Ukraine,” the patriarch said.

The patriarch expressed concerns about the informational pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and reiterated that this Church is “the only public force that maintains a real peacekeeping potential.”

The patriarch also pointed out that the ceasefire achieved in southeastern Ukraine “thanks to the joint efforts taken by Russia, the European powers, has saved many innocent lives and saved the churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from further devastation.”

The patriarch said bishops and priests, who “bravely continued their ministry to civilians, suffering, and sometimes dying with them, in a harsh situation of military action” deserve special praise.

“We sincerely hope that the lengthy negotiations will be a success and peace will return to the long-suffering Donbass land,” he said.