



Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church Synod of Bishops

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Registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation on October 19, 1998, № 239.

To: the President of the Russian Federation, The Honorable V.V. Putin
23 Iliyinka Street, Moscow, 103132, Russian Federation

To: the President of the United States of America, The Honorable George Bush

From: Valentine, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir
2 Teremki Street, Suzdal, Vladimirskaya obl., 601293, Russian Federation
Tel. (7-49231) 2-06-04.

Re: The cessation of intolerable living conditions aimed at destroying the existence of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church on the part of the government offices in favor of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is forced to appeal to you to request your assistance in defending the rights and the obligation that we have as pastors in caring for the souls of the parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Beginning in the year 2000, in many regions of the country, the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate, with the help of local, regional, provincial and municipal government authorities, took away several of the churches which had belonged to the Free Russian Orthodox Church, (later reorganized as the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church), in the cities of Kainsk, (Novosibirskaya Oblast'), Noginsk, (Moscovskaya Oblast'), Oboyan' (Kurskaya Oblast'), Zheleznovodsk, (Stavropol'skaya Oblast'), Sanino (Vladimirskaya Oblast'), and Votkinsk (Udmurtskaya Respublika).

In 2007, in the city of Trubchevsk (Bryanskaya Oblast'), the local officials put the church of the Prophet Elias, which belongs to us, up for auction. At the present time, in the city of Suzdal, (Vladimirskaya Oblast'), the Office of Rosimushchestvo is attempting to sue us for possession of 15 churches, which we have restored from ruins.

The criminal circumstances that have developed in relation to the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC) on the part of government officials in executive positions in the government are quite obvious. Their very goal of inhibiting and nullifying our Church Canon Laws run counter to our present Constitutional, as well as international, legislation. Since, obviously, the actions of these government officials in executive positions of the Russian Federation, are directed against our exclusive rights and responsibilities, as established by the Constitution of the Russian Federation (art. 28), with the goal of preventing us

from fulfilling our pastoral obligations towards our parishioners, society and God, these actions are punishable by criminal prosecution.

The above-cited criminal circumstances can be confirmed by examining a document called: "Appeal of the Chief of the Territorial Administration of the Office of the Federal Agency for the Administration of Federal Property for the Vladimirskaya Oblast', V. L. Gorlanov," addressed to the Court of Arbitration for the Vladimirskaya Oblast'; by another document called: "Notice of Intent to Sue," dated December 18, 2007, № 5700-06 (copies enclosed), and by another document called: "Decision to Carry Intent to Sue into Effect;" by the preparation of the case for judicial review, and by the assignment of the case to a preliminary hearing dated January 28, 2008 (case № АИИ -336/2008 -КІ-15/47).

However, these circumstances and court documents explicitly confirm:

- That on June 22, 1993, the Bylaws of an organization called: the "Free Russian Orthodox Church" (later renamed the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church), were approved and registered. This fact is confirmed by the "Bylaws and Certificate of Official Registration № 239."
- That on October 26, 1998, the Bylaws of a religious organization called: the "Suzdal Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church" were approved. This fact is confirmed by the "Bylaws and Certificate of Official Registration of a Religious Organization, dated December 14, 1998, № 414."
- That according to these bylaws, the Church and the Diocese are "a juridical corporation from the moment of its official registration, with the right to possess private property, maintain accounts – payable and receivable, to hold cash and other kinds of accounts in banking institutions, the right to acquire real property and personal non-real property in its own name and to carry indebtedness, to bring suit and to answer suit in court." This is confirmed by points 1.4 and 1.5 of the general provisions in the bylaws.
- That in accordance with Contract № 16-23-99 concerning the "Maintainance and Use of a Real Historical and Cultural Monument of Religious Significance, (a church – *translator*)" dated April 21, 1999, the real estate at issue as noted in the "Notice of Intent to Sue," dated December 18, 2007, and signed by the Chief of the Territorial Administration, a Mr. V. L. Gorlanov, had been transferred to the Suzdal Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.
- That according to the Deed by which the transfer/reception of the architectural monuments (churches – *translator*) was affected, dated April 21, 1999, № 16-23-99: the "said real estate is transferred to the Suzdal Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, and approved for use without remuneration."

All of the circumstances laid out above explicitly confirm that the property at issue was given to the Suzdal Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church for its unremunerated use in accordance with the procedures established

by the legislation presently in effect, and that it cannot be taken away from it in favor of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP ROC), especially in light of the fact that we received these properties in ruins and have restored them to a decent condition, which cost us huge sums of money, not one penny of which came from the government.

In accordance with the procedures established for the Court of Arbitration of the Russian Federation, (article 4 АПК РФ), only concerned parties have the right to appeal to the Court of Arbitration in defense of its violated or contested rights and legitimate interests, according to the order established by the Court of Arbitration of the Russian Federation itself. However, the plaintiffs, – executives of the Russian Federation – did not mention which of their rights were being violated in the “Notice of Intent to Sue,” because there are no such violations. It is quite clear that what they want is to confiscate the property that we rescued from oblivion and restored at the expense of our believers, and give it to the Moscow Patriarchate in an effort to nullify our exclusive rights and freedom to worship as we see fit, and to deprive us of our rights to carry out our service and fulfill our religious obligations before God, society and our parishioners, i.e. in an effort to establish intolerable living conditions for us, and even threaten us with physical destruction via the billy clubs of the Special Forces.

Based upon the aforementioned, and upon the enclosed documents, we ask you to instruct your Deputy Chief in the Department for Human Affairs and Social Policy in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation for Internal Affairs, Mr. Alexander Iliyich Kudryaev, a member of the Council for Mutual Cooperation with Religious Associations, to read over our appeal and not allow the intolerable living conditions to continue, as well as the physical denial of our exclusive rights and the hindrance of our ability to fulfill our pastoral obligations to our parishioners, society and God. In accordance with the acting Constitution of the Russian Federation (article 28, article 56), these are punishable by criminal prosecution according to article 357 of the УК РФ (genocide).

*President of the Synod of Bishops
Metropolitan Valentine*

*Members of the Synod of Bishops
Archbishop Theodore
Bishop Irinarkh*

*Secretary of the Synod of Bishops
Igumen Theophan*

*February 28, 2008
Suzdal*

Enclosure: A listing of the churches being claimed by the Chief of the Territorial Administration of the Office of the Federal Agency for the Administration of Federal Property for the Vladimirskaya Oblast', V. L. Gorlanov, as stated in the “Intent to Sue,” dated December 18, 2007:

1. Tsarekonstantinovskaya Church (1707 A.D.), Suzdal, Torgovaya Ploshchad', December 18, 2007, № 569-06.

2. Skorbyashchenskaya Church (1750 A.D.), Suzdal, Torgovaya Ploshchad', December 18, 2007, № 569-06.
3. Uspenskaya Church (17th century), Suzdal, Kremlevska Street, December 26, 2007, № 582-06.
4. Lazarevskaya Church (1667 A.D.), Suzdal, Lenin Street, December 18, 2007, № 5701-06.
5. Kresto-Nikolskaya Church (1770 A.D.), Suzdal, December 18, 2007, № 5702-06.
6. Bogoyavlenskaya Church (1781 A.D.), Suzdal, Schmidt Street, December 26, 2007, № 5821-06.
7. Ioann-Predtechenskaya Church (1739 A.D.), Suzdal, Schmidt Street, December 26, 2007, № 5825-06.
8. Kosmodamianskaya Church (1725 A.D.), Suzdal, Krasnaya Gorka, December 26, 2007, № 5923-06.
9. Church of Archdeacon Stephen (1780 A.D.), town of Kideksha, December 18, 2007, № 5705-06.
10. Kolokolnya (18th century), town of Kideksha, December 18, 2007, № 5703-06.
11. Ograda with holy gates (18th century), town of Kideksha.
12. Antipyevskaya Church (1745 A.D.),
13. Tikhvinskaya Church (17th century).
14. Voskresenskaya Church (17th century) town of Novoselki.