

A Series of Bad Judgments: The Moscow Patriarchate & the Russo-Ukrainian War

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From the very early days of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the Patriarchate of Moscow put the Church in Russia in service to the needs of the Russian state. The Moscow Patriarchate has been very sensitive to the actions and reactions of the Kremlin and has tried hard to match its political priorities. While some acts of the Russian church appear to be illogical and even illiterate, some others make it look like a department of the Russian government and a junior upstart church not yet fully in control of its jurisdiction. The Moscow Patriarchate has been busy identifying and punishing enemies of the Kremlin's war within the ranks of the Russian church, and has achieved remarkable results in scaring its clergymen into blind compliance with the Kremlin's foreign policy objectives. Ruthless enforcement of the policy objectives of the state authorities will inevitably damage the Russian church's credibility and reputation both in Russia and abroad.

The Russian armed forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. From February 2022 to mid-2025, more than 1,000 priests of the Moscow Patriarchate provided services to frontline troops. Even though the office of chaplains was restored in the Russian armed forces following the 2009 initiative by the Moscow Patriarch, the active chaplains could not account for all these deployments. A significant number of clergymen visiting the frontlines have been volunteers. Over three years since the war began, the church and the Russian Ministry of Defense have organized more than 3,000 trips for Russian clergy to areas of active combat. Among those actively

involved in the routine activities of Russia's combat troops, approximately 100 priests serve in areas of military conflict on a daily basis, most of whom are volunteers.¹

During the same period, from spring 2022 to summer 2025, the church in Russia collected thousands of tons of humanitarian aid in the form of food, clothing, and other items of necessity. In 2022, the church collected more than 2,700 metric tons of humanitarian aid; of this, 1,600 tons were sent to the Russian church diocese operating in the occupied parts of Ukraine. Around the same period, the church collected 390 million rubles (around USD 4.8 million) to help those injured and displaced in the "areas of conflict." This type of activity has continued since. In 2024, the church collected more than 3,300 metric tons of humanitarian aid, of which 2,200 metric tons were sent to the areas of Russia's "special military operation"² – an official Russian euphemism for the war the Kremlin wages against Ukraine.

These numbers appear to be impressive, but considering the size of the Russian church and its influence in Russian society, they are rather mediocre. The Moscow Patriarchate has more than 40 thousand clergymen, more than 35 thousand of whom are presbyters. The current war with Ukraine has been the largest and deadliest military conflict Russia has been involved in since World War II, in which the entire church was involved. In comparison, the current war only attracted 1/40th of the Russian clergy. At the same time, not all clergymen who have volunteered for the frontlines have gained approval or support from either the church or the state. In fact, some of them have been punished and defrocked for not doing things exactly as Moscow demanded.

In July 2024, the Moscow Patriarchate defrocked Priest Vitalii Belyaev, one of the volunteer clergyman frequently visiting the frontlines in Russia's war against Ukraine.³ According to the reports in Russian mass media, Priest Vitalii was especially fond of the Wagner mercenary forces. His visits to Wagner were tolerated until a group of Wagner mercenaries organized a revolt against Russian authorities in June 2023. After that,

¹A. A. Makovsky, "The Spiritual Front: The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church on the Issues of the Special military Operation" (in Russian), *Political Institutions, Processes and Technologies* (in Russian), Irkutsk State University, 2025, Vol. 51, pp. 6-16.

²Ibid.

³"За блуд и воровство. Патриарх Кирилл лишил сана ездившего на Украину священника," *gazeta.ru*, July 24 2024 <<https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2024/07/24/19450855.shtml?updated>>

church authorities warned Belyaev not to stop visiting mercenaries, but he kept insisting “Russian fighters” needed his support. Belyaev, who was charged with a series of offenses and subsequently defrocked, served as a priest in the Russian church since 2009.

Another clergyman who was closely involved in the distribution of humanitarian aid to Russian displaced persons from the Kursk region was punished for criticism of Russian secular authorities. Priest Vladimir Boyarskii was defrocked in early March of 2025.⁴ According to his parishioners, he was defrocked for highlighting the incompetence of Russian officials in charge of helping internally displaced persons as a result of Ukraine’s capture of parts of Kursk Oblast in late 2024.⁵ It appears that the war against Ukraine has made Russian authorities harsher in punishing critical voices among the clergy. Among those who were defrocked in 2024 was a village priest, Dimitri Larionov from Armavir, father of six children. He had been investigated since 2019, when he was reported to have critical views of Russian authorities who, as a rule, would neglect the needs of poverty-stricken Russians.⁶

Among those defrocked by Moscow have been those priests who have expressed their opposition to the bloodshed in Ukraine in a very mild and modest way. Those priests who oppose the war against Ukraine have chosen an addition to the liturgical service introduced by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. When it became clear that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was accompanied by heavy losses for the Russian armed forces, Patriarch composed a prayer titled “Prayer for Holy Rus” (*Молитва о Святой Руси*). Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’, offered a prayer for Holy Rus’ at the Divine Liturgy celebrated on September 25, 2022, at the Alexander Nevsky Skete near Peredelkino, the suburbs of Moscow. After that service, the Moscow Patriarchate demanded that all

⁴ “Российского священника, который помогал бойцам СВО, лишили сана,” *SekretFirmi*, March 2 2025 <<https://secretmag.ru/zhizn/kurskogo-svyashennika-kotoryi-pomogal-boicam-svo-lishili-sana-zachto-02-03-2025.htm>>

⁵ “В Курской области лишили сана священника, который помогал жителям приграничного района,” *Meduza*, March 2 2025 <<https://meduza.io/news/2025/03/02/v-kurskoj-oblasti-lishili-sana-svyaschennika-kotoryu-pomogal-zhitelyam-prigranichnogo-rayona-okkupirovannogo-vsu>>

⁶ “Патриарх Кирилл утвердил лишение сана четырёх священников,” *RadioSvoboda*, July 17 2014 <<https://www.svoboda.org/a/patriarh-kirill-utverdil-lishenie-sana-chetyreh-svyaschennikov/33040275.html>>

Russian priests deliver this prayer during all divine liturgies. As far as it is known, the vast majority, if not all, presbyters have complied with this order, except a handful of them have made a minor change: they have replaced a single word for victory (*победа*, “pobeda”) in the text with the word for peace (*мир*, “mir”). This is the text of the prayer in the original Russian:

Господи Боже сил, Боже спасения нашего, призри в милости на смиренныя рабы Твоя, услыши и помилуй нас: се бо брани хотящия ополчишася на Святую Русь, чающе разделить и погубити единый народ ея.

Возстани, Боже, в помощь людем Твоим и подаждь нам силою Твоею победу.

Верным чадам Твоим, о единстве Русския Церкви ревнующим, поспешествуй, в духе братолюбия укрепи их и от бед избави. Запрети раздирающим во омрачении умов и ожесточении сердец ризу Твою яже есть Церковь Живаго Бога, и замыслы их ниспровергни.

Благодатию Твоею власти предержания ко всякому благу настави и мудростию обогати!

Воины и вся защитники Отечества нашего в заповедех Твоих утверди, крепость духа им низпосли, от смерти, ран и пленения сохрани!

Лишенныя крова и в изгнании сущия в дома введи, алчущия напитай, недугующия и страждущия укрепи и исцели, в смятении и печали сущим надежду благодную и утешение подаждь!

Всем же во дни сия убиенным и от ран и болезней скончавшимся прощение грехов даруй и блаженное упокоение сотвори!

Исполни нас яже в Тя веры, надежды и любви, возстави паки во всех странах Святой Руси мир и единомыслие, друг ко другу любовь обнови в людях Твоих, яко да единеми усты и едином сердцем исповемся Тебе, Единому Богу в Троице славимому. Ты бо еси заступление, и **победа**, и спасение уповающим на Тя и Тебе

славу возсылаем, Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу, ныне и присно, и во веки веков.
АМИНЬ.⁷

An English version of the prayer:

O Lord, God of hosts, God of our salvation, look with mercy upon Thy humble servants, hearken unto us, and have mercy upon us: for behold, those desiring fight have risen up against Holy Rus', hoping to divide and destroy her united nation.

Arise, O God, to the aid of Thy people, and grant us victory by Thy power.

Help Thy faithful children, zealous for the unity of the Russian Church, strengthen them in the spirit of brotherly love, and deliver them from troubles. Rebuke those who, in the darkening of their minds and the hardening of their hearts, rend Thy garment, which is the Church of the Living God, and overthrow their plans.

By Thy grace, guide those in power to every good deed and enrich them with wisdom!

Strengthen the warriors and all defenders of our Fatherland in Your commandments, grant them fortitude, and preserve them from death, wounds, and captivity!

Bring homeless and exiled ones into their homes, feed the hungry, strengthen and heal the sick and suffering, and grant good hope and consolation to those in confusion and sorrow!

And to all those killed in these days and those who died from wounds and illnesses, grant forgiveness of sins and blessed repose!

Fill us with faith, hope, and love in You, raise up again peace and unity in all the lands of Holy Rus', and renew love for one another in Your people, so that with one mouth and one heart we may confess to You, the One God glorified in Trinity. For You are the intercession, and **victory**, and salvation of those who trust in You, and to You we send up glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.⁸

⁷ “Молитва о Святой Руси,” pravoslavie.ru<<https://pravoslavie.ru/148421.html>>

⁸Emphasis added.

Moscow Patriarchate’s reaction to this minor change has been extreme: several priests have been investigated, tried, and defrocked. One of the most widely discussed cases was that of Archpriest Alexei Uminski. On January 13, 2024, Father Alexei was convicted by a Russian church court of violating Rule 25 of the Rules of the Holy Apostles. The court delivered the following verdict:

It is established that, based on Canon 25 of the Holy Apostles, Father Alexei Uminsky is subject to defrocking for violating his priestly oath (perjury) – refusing to fulfill the Patriarchal blessing to read the prayer for Holy Rus' during the Divine Liturgy. This decision is submitted for approval to His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'.⁹

Patriarch Kirill approved the court decision early in February 2024.¹⁰

Canon 25, or Rule 25 as it is called in Russian, of the Canons of the Holy Apostles has become a standard charge for those priests in Russia who change one word in the text of the prayer declared to be mandatory in all liturgical services. The Canons of the Holy Apostles, or Nomocanon (Νομοκανών) form part of the Canon Law of the Church. Its origin dates back to St. John Scholasticus, Patriarch of Constantinople (565-577). The Canons of the Holy Apostles used by the Russian church has 85 Canons. Canon 25 states the following:

A bishop, presbyter, or deacon convicted of fornication, perjury, or theft shall be deposed from the priesthood, but shall not be excommunicated. For Scripture says, "You shall not avenge one thing twice" (Nahum 1:9). Likewise, and other clergy.¹¹

The crime Father Alexei was charged with was formulated as *клятвопреступление* or “oath-breaking” or perjury (Greek: ἑπιουρκία, Latin:

⁹ AleksandrSoldatov, “Не отрекся от Христа-миротворца,” *NovayaGazeta*, January 13 2024 <<https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2024/01/13/ne-otreksia-ot-khrista-mirotvortsa>>

¹⁰ “Патриарх Кирилл утвердил решение церковного суда о лишении сана протоиерея Алексея Уминского,” *NovayaGazeta*, February 8 2024 <<https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2024/02/08/patriarkh-kirill-utverdil-reshenie-tserkovnogo-suda-o-lishenii-sana-alekseia-uminskogo-news>>

¹¹ “Правила Святых Апостолов и Вселенских соборов с толкованиями,” *Азбука веры* <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Nikodim_Milash/pravila-svjatyh-apostolov-i-vselsenskih-soborov-s-tolkovanijami/25>

perjurium). In short, the court of the Russian church established that Father Alexei perjured himself when he replaced the word “victory” with the word “peace” in the Patriarch’s Holy Rus’ prayer text. Father Alexei served in the Russian church as the rector of the Holy Lifegiving Trinity in Moscow for more than 30 years.¹²

Father Alexei was not the first priest to be punished by the Russian church in this manner. In early May 2023, Priest Ivan Koval was defrocked by a church court – he was also charged with perjury for alleged violation of Canon 25.¹³ Father Ivan served in the St Andrew First-called parish in Liublino, Moscow suburbs. Father Alexei’s trial was not the last one either. On July 10 2024, a church court defrocked Priest Andrei Kudrin of the Theotokos of the Lifegiving Spring parish in Moscow.¹⁴ Father Andrei started serving in the church at the age of 12, during Soviet times. He served as a priest for 28 years.¹⁵

In early July 2024, Priest Vadim Perminov from the Novosibirsk region was defrocked. He was charged earlier in the year with violating Canon 25 – Father Vadim, who had served the Russian church for almost 30 years, would skip the Patriarch’s “victory prayer” in the liturgical services.¹⁶ In early September of 2024, Priest Peter Ustinov of Chelyabinsk was banned from performing priestly duties by his bishop for his refusal to read the “victory prayer” in its original rendition. In addition to the usual charge of violating Canon 25, Father Peter was also charged with violating Canon 39.¹⁷

¹²Aleksandr Soldatov, *Novaya Gazeta*, January 13 2024.

¹³ “Церковный суд Москвы постановил лишить священного сана клирика храма Андрея Первозванного в Люблино иерея Иоанна Ковалю, который заменил в молитве слово «победа» на слово «мир»,” *Meduza*, May 13 2023 < <https://meduza.io/news/2023/05/13/tserkovnyy-sud-lishil-sana-moskovskogo-svyaschennika-zamenivshego-v-molitve-slovo-pobeda-na-mir>>

¹⁴ “Решение о лишении сана священника Андрея Кудрина направлено на утверждение патриарху Московскому и всея Руси Кириллу,” *Союз православных журналистов*, July 14 2024 <<https://spzh.eu/ru/news/81154-za-otkaz-chitat-molitvu-o-pobede-v-rpts-lishili-sana-eshche-odnoho-svjashchennika>>

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶ “Российского священника лишили сана за отказ читать «молитву о победе»,” *gazeta.ru*, July 4 2024 <<https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2024/07/04/23387575.shtml>>

¹⁷LeraFurman, “Против войны? Снимай крест!” *Novaya Gazeta Evropa*, September 7 2024 <<https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2024/09/07/protiv-voiny-snimai-krest>>

According to the learned interpretation of members of the Russian church, this canon regulates disposition and management of church property.¹⁸ This interpretation is based on an argument by Theodore Balsamon, a 12th-century Patriarch of Antioch. This is a formulation of Canon 39:

Priests and deacons are not to do anything without the bishop's permission. For the Lord's people are entrusted to him, and he will answer for their souls.¹⁹

According to Patriarch Balsamon, since canons 38 and 40 deal with church property, it follows that the canon that is in between these two should also be understood in terms of property matters (Canon 41 also deals with church property). Other authoritative scholars interpret this canon in terms of important decisions dealing with faith.²⁰ Regardless, no authoritative scholar of canons has ever interpreted Canon 39 to be dealing with changing a word in a prayer.

Early on in the Russo-Ukrainian war, Russian state authorities would charge clergymen who denounced the war. In 2022, Priest Maxim Nagibin of Krasnodar was charged with “discrediting of the army.” Father Maxim called the war against Ukraine a “great shame.” Subsequently, the charges were dropped but Father Maxim was removed from his priestly duties.²¹ In June 2023, Priest Ivan Budrin was defrocked after being charged with “heretical pacifism” and violation of Canon 25.²² He was also charged with the political offense of “discrediting the army” – a go-to charge by Russian authorities against those who voice their opposition to the war in Ukraine.

Some clergymen of the Russian church were forced to leave the country. Just as with the cases of priests charged with various canonical offenses, not all such cases have

¹⁸ “Правила Святых Апостолов и Вселенских соборов с толкованиями,” *Азбука веры* <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Nikodim_Milash/pravila-svjatyh-apostolov-i-vselenskih-soborov-s-tolkovanijami/39#note213>

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹ “Патриарх Кирилл утвердил лишение сана четырёх священников,” *RadioSvoboda*, July 17 2014.

²² “РПЦ запретила в служении читавшего панихиду по Навальному священника и его коллегу,” *Holod*, April 24 2024 <<https://holod.media/2024/04/24/rpts-zapretila-v-sluzhenii/>>

been reported. In July 2024, two clergymen from the Kuban region of Russia left the country – historically, Kuban has had a large number of Ukrainians. Protodeacon Georgiy Kustanov of Krasnodar and a village priest, Konstantin Tkachenko, left Russia in protest of the Ukraine war. They followed the example of Priest Andrey Drugai, who left Russia earlier in 2024.²³

The Russian church has also delivered punishments to those clergymen who reside and serve outside Russia, but in parishes that belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. In June 2022, the website of the Russian Orthodox diocese in Lithuania announced that five of their clergymen were defrocked for “heavy canonical crimes.”²⁴ The five clergymen were charged and convicted of violating Canon 25 and a series of other canons. The reason for the charges and the convictions: clergymen Vitalii Motskus, Vitalii Dauparas, Georgiy Ananiev, and Vladimir Seliavko denounced Russia’s war against Ukraine.²⁵ In early 2023, Archpriest Andrei Kordochkin, an Oxford-educated clergyman, was removed from his position as a priest of Mary Magdalene Cathedral in Madrid, Spain.²⁶

There have been many more clergymen defrocked in Russia since the Russian armed forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. However, the church courts do not always make their work public, and often the reasons for the decisions are not given. Sometimes the lists of those defrocked are made public. For example, only for the second quarter of 2024, thirty clergymen were defrocked.²⁷ Of these, 28 were priests

²³ “Еще два кубанских священника покинули Россию из-за несогласия с войной против Украины,” *Kavkaz.Realii*, July 4 2024 <<https://www.kavkazr.com/a/esche-dva-kubanskih-svyaschennika-pokinuli-rossiyu-iz-za-nesoglasiya-s-voynoy-protiv-ukrainy/33021418.html>>

²⁴ “В Литве лишены сана пять клириков, выступивших против войны и политики патриарха Кирилла,” *Ahilla*, June 30 2022 <<https://ahilla.ru/v-litve-lisheny-sana-pyat-klikov-vystupivshih-protiv-voyny-i-politiki-patriarha-kirilla/>>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ “Russian Orthodox priests persecuted for opposing war,” *El Pais*, March 14 2024 <<https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-03-14/russian-orthodox-priests-persecuted-for-opposing-war.html#>>

²⁷ “Список изверженных из священного сана священнослужителей за последнее время,” Циркулярное письмо митрополита Воскресенского ГРИГОРИЯ,” *Благодатный Огонь*, July 18 2024 <<https://blagodon.ru/news/1057/>>

and 2 deacons. Of the priests, 11 were of the monastic order. The list references canons which these clergymen allegedly violated, but it does not identify specific offenses. Archpriest Alexei Uminski, who was defrocked for essentially praying for peace, is listed among those who violated Canon 25.²⁸

The opposition to the war in Ukraine has not been the only political basis for defrocking priests in Russia. In April 2024, one priest was punished for serving a 40-day memorial service for a deceased political prisoner, Alexei Navalny. Father Dimitri Safronov was removed from his parish in Moscow, demoted to a reader, and sent to a monastery for three years.²⁹ Mr. Navalny, who died under suspicious circumstances in a remote prison in northern Siberia, was the most prominent political opponent of the current Russian regime.³⁰

Among those defrocked by the Patriarch of Moscow since the start of the Ukraine war are some of the most distinguished intellectuals of the contemporary Russian church. The most distinguished intellectual among Russian clergymen since the 1990s has probably been Protodeacon Andrei Kuraev. He got into the crosshairs of the Moscow Patriarchate in 2013, the year Russia invaded southeastern Ukraine and annexed Crimea, when he was fired from his professorial job at the Moscow Spiritual Academy in Sergiev Posad. Subsequently, for his criticism of Russian policy toward Ukraine – the invasion of 2014 and the annexation of Crimea – and for other critical comments, Protodeacon Andrei was assigned a series of punishments by the church. He was initially banned from service in January 2021, and was finally defrocked in April 2023.³¹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹ “Указ № У-02/77 от 15 апреля 2024 года // иерею Димитрию Сафронову,” Moscow (city) Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, April 23 2024 <<https://moseparh.ru/ukaz-u-0277-ot-15-aprelya-2024.html>>

³⁰ “РПЦ запретила в служении читавшего панихиду по Навальному священника и его коллегу,” *Holod*, April 24 2024.

³¹ “Указ № У-02/69 от 28 апреля 2023 года // протодиакону Андрею Кураеву,” Moscow (city) Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, April 28 2023 <<https://moseparh.ru/ukaz-u-0269-ot-28-aprelya-2023.html>>

In October 2023, Protodeacon Andrei was declared a “foreign agent” by the Russian government.³²

Another distinguished church intellectual defrocked by the Russian church for his criticism of Moscow’s war against Ukraine is Archimandrite Kirill (Govorun), a professor of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. The Ukraine-born Archimandrite has been a strong proponent of the independence of both the state of Ukraine and its church. After Moscow launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Archimandrite Kirill denounced the act of aggression, for which he was defrocked in September 2023. Father Kirill has criticized not only state authorities, but also the church leadership in Russia, who, in his opinion, had prepared ideological grounds for military aggression against Ukraine.³³ Among other things, he was charged with celebrating liturgy with clergymen from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and with violating Canon 25.³⁴

Almost all the reports about defrocked clergymen listed above identified parishioners as the sources of the reports given to higher church authorities in Russian dioceses and the Moscow Patriarchate. In other words, the defrocked priests were denounced by their own parishioners for not using proper verbiage in their prayers. Denouncing people and reporting their real or imagined offenses to authorities is a time-honored tradition in Russia, one that was fully perfected during the Soviet era. However, reporting people, especially priests, for changing a single word in a prayer is a new phenomenon even for Russia. The Orthodox Liturgy is a long service, in Russian practice lasting almost two hours. The “victory prayer” is one of many petitions that clergy read during the service, most of which is delivered in Church Slavonic, which is not fully intelligible to a modern Russian speaker (the Russian church is in the process of gradually revising the text of services to make it more understandable to lay people). Those who denounced the priests for replacing the word for “victory” with the one for

³²Lera Furman, “Пророквнеотечества,” *Novaya Gazeta Evropa*, December 23 2023
<<https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/12/23/prorok-vne-otechestva>>

³³ “«Скоро станет неприличным быть не лишенным сана»,” *NovayaGazetaEvropa*, January 20 2024
<<https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2024/01/20/skoro-stanet-neprilichnym-byt-ne-lishennym-sana>>

³⁴ “Archimandrite Kirill Govorun is banned from ministry,” *Raskolam.Net*, September 26 2023
<<https://raskolamnet.info/en/72030-ru-arhimandrita-kirill-govorun-zapreshhen-v-sluzhenii/>>

“peace” were either established parishioners who knew every word of liturgical prayers and paid very close attention to whether their priest followed everything verbatim, or they were spies charged with that purpose by higher authorities. Furthermore, if these reports to higher authorities were made by regular parishioners, they had to know how to act, where to report these alleged offenses, and how the means through which one might deal with higher authorities, whether secular or ecclesiastical, are far from transparent in Russia.

Being defrocked is the worst punishment for a clergyman. However, those defrocked by the Moscow patriarchate for praying for peace have an option to appeal the decision to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Several clergymen defrocked by Moscow have already done so, and they have been restored in their previous ranks and received by Constantinople to serve in various dioceses across Europe. In February 2023, the four Lithuanian priests defrocked by Moscow were restored by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, together with the fifth Lithuanian clergyman.³⁵ In June 2023, the Patriarch of Constantinople restored Priest Ivan Koval and received him under his omophorion.³⁶ Constantinople declared the Moscow decision to be invalid as it was made not on ecclesiastical but political grounds.³⁷ Similarly, in April 2024, Constantinople restored and received Protodeacon Andrei Kuraev.³⁸ Archpriest Alexei Uminski was also restored and assigned to a parish in France. Constantinople does receive those unjustly defrocked by Moscow, but there are not enough parishes to

³⁵ “Константинополь вернул в священный сан пятерых извергнутых из него литовских православных,” *EkspressNedelya*, February 17 2023 <<https://m.nedelia.lt/news-lt/51218-konstantinopol-vernul-v-svjaschennyj-san-pjateryh-izvergnutyh-iz-nego-litovskih-pravoslavnyh-dopolneno-komentarij-kanceljarii-litovskoj-pravoslavnoj-arhiepiskopii.html>>

³⁶ “Константинопольский патриархат восстановил в сане священника, которого отстранили от службы из-за замены слова "победа" на "мир" в молитве,” *Nastoyashcheevremya*, June 29 2023 <<https://www.currenttime.tv/a/konstantinopolskiy-patriarhat-vozstanovil-v-sane-svyaschennika/32481621.html>>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Протодиакона Андрея Кураева восстановили в сане во Вселенском патриархате,” *NovayaGazeta. Baltya*, April 6 2024 <<https://novayagazeta.ee/articles/2024/04/06/protodiakona-andreia-kuraeva-vozstanovili-v-sane-vo-vselenskom-patriarkhate-news-0cc6c95735b492d64998de9aeb9fe301b39b2941>>

sustain so many exiled priests. According to *Deutsche Welle*, many anti-war priests who found refuge in Germany struggle to support themselves and their families.³⁹

From 2018, the Moscow Patriarchate has been in a unilateral schism with Constantinople following the latter's decision to recognize autocephaly of the Church in Ukraine. However, Constantinople does not recognize this schism, and continues to recognize the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate within the internationally recognized state borders of the Russian Federation, and in those countries where Moscow has missionary diocese and parishes.

Since 2018, the Moscow Patriarchate has made a series of many bad and unfortunate judgments. The extreme reaction of the leadership of the Russian church to several clergymen's preference for peace over victory, indeed, demonstrates the acute political significance of the act. Invoking Canon 25 and other canons out of context and relevance both minimizes the importance of the canons and demonstrates ignorance or political bias of the courts of the Russian church. Most importantly, the persecution of those praying for peace damages the reputation of the Russian church. Under the current political conditions in Russia, it appears to be operating as a regular department of the Russian government, whose ill-advised judgments have to be corrected by another more senior patriarchate.

³⁹Alexey Voloshinov, "Anti-war Russian Orthodox priests struggle in German exile," DW, February 2 2025 <<https://www.dw.com/en/anti-war-russian-orthodox-priests-struggle-in-german-exile/a-71439788>>