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## **Letter to Patriarch Aleksii II**

Your Holiness,

The deputies of the State Duma have the deepest respect for the Russian Orthodox Church and sincerely share the anxiety expressed in your letter to the president of the State Duma.

Not having the moral or the legal right to interpret the canons of Orthodoxy or the resolutions of the Local Council and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the deputies of the State Duma do not in any way question the defrocking of Gleb Yakunin. There is also no doubt that deputy Yakunin does not represent the Russian Orthodox Church in the State Duma.

However, the law on separation of church from state means that it is not possible for the State Duma to order G. P. Yakunin to wear a particular type of clothing or behave in a particular way.

Respect and defence of the right of a citizen to hold any political views is one of the fundamental principles of parliamentarianism. However, a significant number of members of parliament share the view of the Orthodox hierarchy that attacks on the church leadership are aimed at bringing about schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and thereby promoting division in society. Confirmation of this can be found in the doubts expressed at the session on 20 January about the appropriateness of including deputy Yakunin in the Committee of the State Duma on social and religious organisations.

As it writes to you, Your Holiness, the State Duma simultaneously and sincerely requests colleague Yakunin to accept the admonition of the Holy Synod and of the patriarch himself and not to appear in public wearing vestments appropriate to those Holy Orders of which he has been deprived, and thereby to avoid burdening his conscience with the sin of imposture.

In conclusion we ask you, Your Holiness, to accept our protestations with deepest respect and gratitude for your kind wishes to the State Duma.

Adopted at the session of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 11 February 1994, Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

A. Nevzorov<sup>2</sup>

### **Notes and References**

<sup>1</sup> In fact this document was not adopted.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandr Nevzorov, a deputy from St Petersburg and editor of the television programme '600-Sekund', is an extreme patriot and supporter of Metropolitan Ioann.

(Translated from the Russian by Alice Vessey and Emma Watkins)