



January 20, 2014

**Statement of Concern of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute
of Eastern Christian Studies in Ottawa, Canada
Regarding the Government of Ukraine's Recent Attempt to
Restrict the Legitimate Activity of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church,
and the Present Escalation of Violence in Kyiv**

The Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada, expresses its profound concern over the recent attempts of Ukrainian government officials to intimidate the leadership and members of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (UGCC) in Ukraine. As Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Primate of the Church, has noted, the recent letter from the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior, censuring the legitimate religious activities of UGCC members on the *Maidan* in Kyiv, “is the first time since independence [in 1991] that the Ukrainian government has threatened to terminate the activities of the UGCC’s religious organizations.” The Ministry’s threat to take legal action against the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church, simply for engaging in prayer, is entirely unacceptable and a violation of basic democratic rights. It is redolent of the dark days of Stalinism and the USSR when the UGCC was persecuted by the Soviet government.

While representatives of the Ukrainian government attempted last week to allay the concerns of the Church with conciliatory statements, the recent escalation of violence in Kyiv requires all of those concerned about justice and freedom in Ukraine to remain vigilant. We pray that a peaceful solution to the present crisis will be found, and that the government will allow all religious believers – indeed all the people of Ukraine – to exercise their legitimate rights to assembly and free expression. Certainly assemblies of the faithful for the purpose of beseeching the Prince of Peace during this time of turmoil should be encouraged, not penalized.

Our Statement of Concern is being forwarded to His Excellency, Dr. Andrew Bennett, Ambassador of the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom. Dr. Bennett is very familiar with the situation in Ukraine. It is our hope that he will make representations before the Government of Canada and the Embassy of Ukraine in Ottawa.

Signed: The Professors, Staff and Students of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada