



УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦЕРКВА В КАНАДІ
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May 25, 2016

Statement
Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
On the Release of Nadiya Savchenko

Reverend clergy and beloved faithful of the UOCC,

Христос Воскрес! Christ is Risen!

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada rejoices in the wonderful news of today, May 25, 2016, that Ukrainian senior lieutenant and political prisoner Nadiya Savchenko has been released from 708 days of incarceration in Russia and returned to Ukraine. We greet our brothers and sisters in Ukraine with the joyous return of their symbol of hope. Nadiya has been greeted in Ukraine as a true hero and symbol of victory.

Nadia has spent 708 days in captivity after being taken as a prisoner of war on June 17, 2014 and illegally transported to Russia. She was put on trial in Russia on falsified charges. The trial concluded on March 9, 2016, sentencing her to 22 years. Nadiya Savchenko's release was part of a prisoner exchange. In Fall 2014 she was elected to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and was chosen as one of Ukraine's representatives to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Episcopate has appealed to the clergy and faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to pray during the Divine Liturgy and in personal prayers for the well-being and protection of Nadiya Savchenko and for the well-being and protection of Nadiya's family, her mother Maria and sister Vira, who have worked tirelessly for Nadiya's freedom. Parishes and the faithful have responded, praying continually for Nadiya, particularly during her hunger strike and court trial. Furthermore, the UOCC episcopate has conveyed the case of Nadiya Savchenko during meetings in forums such as the Canadian Council of Churches, Orthodox Hierarchy gatherings and interactions with Canadian political leadership to bring understanding of this case of injustice to broader society.

The All-Merciful God has heard our prayers and has gifted us this day with an unexpected gladness. Nadiya Savchenko's long-awaited release reminds us of the power of prayer and that if we leave our most difficult questions in the Lord's Hands, all things are possible. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man." (Ps 117) We are reminded that God takes care of each of his children (Mt 6:25). We express our most humble thankfulness to God for his love and mercy towards us for hearing our prayers.

At the same time, we must not forget that, as a result of the conflict in Ukraine's eastern oblasts and in occupied Crimea, hundreds more Ukrainian citizens remain as political prisoners in Russia and prisoners of war in the terrorist-controlled Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. We appeal to the clergy and faithful to continue to pray for their well-being and release. Nadiya's release gives hope that they too may be freed.

O Master, Who has freely vouchsafed us Your benefits, we stand before You and we offer unto You thanksgiving according to our strength, and glorifying You as our Benefactor, we cry aloud: Glory to You, O Most-Merciful Lord! O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

For you are the King of Peace and the Saviour of Souls and to You we send up glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

With Hierarchical Blessing,

† *YURIJ, Metropolitan*

† *ILARION, Bishop*

† *ANDRIY, Bishop*