

Ukrainian church leader gives blessing to fight 'Russian invaders'

“We're defending our land. Protecting ourselves is not a sin.”



Ukrainian Orthodox Church leader, Metropolitan Epiphanius I of Kyiv, on Monday blessed his people to "fight against the Russian invaders," according to reports released by Ukraine's national news agency [Ukrinform](#).

The archbishop also stated that killing Russian soldiers isn't a sin.

"We, as a nation, do not wish death to our neighbors," Epiphanius said. "However, since they came to our land, we're defending our land. Protecting ourselves is not a sin. The [Orthodox Church] blesses everyone for this military feat."

This was not the first time Epiphanius made [strong declarations](#) in opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a statement last month, he wrote, “The spirit of the Antichrist operates in the leader of Russia. This was [Nazi leader Adolf] Hitler during World War II. This is what [Russian President Vladimir] Putin has become today.”

The church head further asserted that there are “signs” revealing the “pride, devotion to evil, ruthlessness [and] false religiosity” of Putin, just as it was for Hitler.

Epiphanius [thanked](#) Ukraine’s military for standing up for their God-given Motherland and the Truth of Christ.”

“Great honors and gratitude to all our warriors defending their native Ukraine from the aggressor as a living, reliable shield! Our hearts, sincere prayers, and support are always near you,” he said.

"I believe that God will hear our prayers and grant us a just peace – the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, together with millions of Ukrainians and people of goodwill around the world, pray for this every day."

For centuries, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine has had historical ties to the Russian Orthodox Church, which set it apart from independent Orthodox churches, such as those in Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and other Eastern Orthodox Christian churches.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church split in 2018 with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate falling under Russian jurisdiction while the church that Epiphanius leads is the independent Orthodox Christian Church based in Kyiv.