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Letter to the Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation Ivan Petrovich Rybkin

Dear Ivan Petrovich,

It is my duty to inform you and all deputies of the State Duma that the deputy Gleb Pavlovich Yakunin was deprived of holy orders in November of last year for serious violation of the canons of the Orthodox Church, in that in defiance of an earlier decision of the Holy Synod he expressed the firm intention of participating in the parliamentary elections as a candidate for deputy, and that he expressed a definite wish to take up professional political activity, which is inadmissible for a priest according to the canons of Orthodoxy.

Having been summoned to a session of Holy Synod, the former priest Gleb Yakunin in conversation with myself and members of the Synod categorically rejected our exhortations and our warning that he should not violate canon law. Subsequently he advanced false arguments in his defence, attempting to equate the occasional participation of priests in the activities of government organs with his own activity in the Duma and even referring to the resolutions of the Local Council (*Pomestny Sobor*) of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1917–18, which were adopted in quite different historical circumstances and do not prevent the church today from legally adopting new resolutions in response to the radical changes in society.

Regardless of whether G. P. Yakunin accepts the decision to defrock him or not, this decision means that he does not have the right to wear the vestments of a priest or to perform any priestly activity.

I must emphasize the fact that G. P. Yakunin does not in any way represent the Russian Orthodox Church in the State Duma, but, on the contrary, as he himself has repeatedly announced, he considers his aim to be to struggle with the church leadership, which he calls 'the church *nomenklatura*' and which he discredits in every possible way. Members of the State Duma ought to know that G. P. Yakunin is actively working to create schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and thereby to promote division in our society.

I must also point out that the political activity of G. P. Yakunin is evoking protest from clergy and believers, as shown by the large number of letters addressed to me and also to the religious and secular press.

We treat any political position with respect and G. P. Yakunin, as a citizen of Russia, has the right to hold any political views. However, I have to say that his prejudice and animosity towards the Orthodox Church and its leadership, as shown in his recent comments in the press, mean that it is impossible for G. P. Yakunin to maintain an objective approach to questions of church–state relations. If G. P. Yakunin participates in any discussion of such questions, I ask you and the members of the State Duma to bear these circumstances in mind.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your colleagues the help of

Almighty God in your work which is bringing peace, harmony and prosperity to Russia and her people.

With the deepest respect

Aleksi, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

8 February 1994

(Translated from the Russian by Emma Watkins)