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## **Jehovah's Witnesses face illegal seizure of property**

JW Official Website (22.09.2011) / HRWF (03.10.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Religious Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine faces the illegal seizure of a portion of its property through a landgrab scam commonly known in Ukraine as a property raid. Such scams involve the illegal sale of a property to a third party without the knowledge of the legitimate owners. The sale is then validated by the court and any appeals by the legitimate owners are dismissed by Ukraine's Supreme Economic Court.

In the present case, the nearly 19-acre complex located in Briukhovychi (Lviv region) was legally purchased by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1998 from OJSC Kinescope and was then largely reconstructed. Nine years later, in 2007, the liquidator of OJSC Kinescope unexpectedly filed a claim with the court, falsely asserting ownership rights to a portion of the property. Before the claim was even considered by a court, Kinescope sold the disputed property in July 2008 to a third party, the Sport Development Center LLC (SDC), without the knowledge of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The unlawful transaction by OJSC Kinescope and the assumed right of ownership by the SDC were subsequently confirmed by the Lviv Regional Commercial Court on September 4, 2008, and again on July 21, 2009. These decisions were made without notifying

Jehovah's Witnesses that ownership of their property had been disputed. On three occasions, the Supreme Economic Court denied Jehovah's Witnesses a right of appeal, claiming that no violation had occurred since the lower courts did not mention the name of the Religious Center in their decisions or in the July 2008 sale contract to the SDC. Decisions of the Supreme Economic Court of Ukraine are not subject to appeal.

Lower courts, including the Court of Appeal, declared that the actions of Kinescope as well as the July 2008 contract of sale were both illegal. Yet, the Supreme Economic Court refuses to recognize such actions as unlawful. The final maneuver of the landgrab scam is to seize the land and property by forcing the local municipality to change the ownership on the land registry. This process has already commenced.

The attempt to illegally seize the property owned by Jehovah's Witnesses jeopardizes their ability to operate their national headquarters and threatens the freedom of worship of more than 270,000 citizens of Ukraine. Jehovah's Witnesses have sought to protect their property rights by appealing to law enforcement authorities as well as the courts to intervene. Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister, the Prosecutor General, and the Governor of the Lviv region have all been made aware of the issues.

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## **Ukrainian nationalists try to beat WW2 veterans in LVOV**

Rossia Molodaya (19.05.2011) / HRWF (18.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - On 9 May in Lvov in Ukraine a ceremonial laying of flowers of the Field of Mars and at the monument to the Unknown Soldier was held. The event was marred by a raid by Ukrainian nationalists from the "Svoboda" organization (formerly the "National Socialist Party of Ukraine"). At first the teenagers in masks did not want to let veterans enter the Field of Mars, but police secured the passage. The nationalists began shouting "Away with KGBers!" "Hang the commie!" and "Shame!"

Afterwards the nationalists tried to begin a scuffle and to fight with the World War II veterans, but the police separated the opposing sides. Another clash occurred near the "Hill of Glory" memorial complex. The nationalists lined up on the approaches to the memorial and tried to get everybody who wanted to lay flowers at the grave of the Unknown Soldier to remove their St. George's ribbons. Several women with children did not want to do this and in their turn the nationalists did not let them proceed. The police intervened in the affair. (tr. by PDS, posted 10 May 2011)

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## **Russian Jewish community requests Ukrainian leadership and U.N. to assess events in Lvov**

Interfax-Religiia (10.05.2011) / HRWF (18.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia (FEOR) expressed dismay regarding events that occurred in Lvov on 9 May. "We are extremely upset by the fact that on this glorious holiday Ukrainian nationalists created mass conflict in order to disrupt the celebration of the Day of Victory," the FEOR president, Alexander Boroda, said in a statement delivered Tuesday to Interfax-Religiia.

The statement indicated that nationalists tore St. George ribbons and medals off of veterans and attacked a delegation of the Russian diplomatic mission, "tearing and trampling the wreath that the diplomats were carrying to lay at the graves of liberating warriors."

"It is obvious that the revisionist policy with respect to Ukrainian collaborators that has occurred in Ukraine in recent years has finally manifested itself in yesterday's events. In essence it was a recognition of the permissibility of the existence and implementation in practice of the extremist and terroristic ideology of radical Ukrainian nationalism," A. Boroda declared. He said that if previously Ukrainian nationalists had restricted themselves to hostile declarations against veterans of the Great Patriotic War, now "these groupings have gone from words to direct assault and violence."

"We demand of the leadership of Ukraine, the United Nations, and other major international organizations to make an adequate assessment of these events that occurred on 9 May 2011 in Ukraine. If no statements from Ukraine and UNO on this matter are forthcoming, then it will be possible to speak frankly of a complete rehabilitation of Nazism in Europe and the world as a whole," the statement says.

The author also called the international community and the leadership of Russia and Ukraine "to make an appropriate moral assessment of the frightful activity which was committed by the Nazis and their helpers during the war and at the same time to make a clear assessment of revisionism."

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## **Almost one third of Ukrainian churches protestant**

### ***Ukraine has become one of the most religious nations of Europe***

RISU (06.05.2011) / HRWF (19.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Disappointment with the institutions of authority and low living standards have turned Ukrainians into one of the most religious nations of Europe, the publication "Korrespondent" writes.

According to data of a survey of the International Project of Social Research, which analyses societal processes in Europe, Ukrainians have forgotten about their communist and atheistic soviet past and on a mass basis have gone to church. Thereby they have achieved fifth place on the continent in religiosity.

As the publication writes, in the country now 71.4% of the population consider themselves believers, which means that on this indicator Ukrainians are behind only the Catholics of Poland, Orthodox Cypriots, and pious Portuguese and Slovaks. Moreover, the number of those who believe in God is continuously growing. Results of a survey of the Razumkov Center show that in the past ten years the nationwide Ukrainian flock has increased by 13%.

As Korrespondent writes, the number of believers is growing vigorously even in the eastern regions of the country, where, in contrast to western Ukraine, religious traditions were greatly weakened during the soviet period. For example, the number of parishes in the Lugansk diocese has grown by leaps and bounds. "For every 100 thousand persons there previously were two churches, and today there are 16 and they are all filled," reported Archpriest Alexander Avdiugin of the Lugansk diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The growth in the number of believers has taken place against a background of the continually growing authority of the church, which becomes more noticeable as the confidence in the state as a whole and its separate institutions, along with the welfare of Ukrainians, has been falling rapidly. The publication notes that a supplemental "evangelist" in the business of the flourishing of religiosity is the fad of faith—a kind of backlash which was a reaction to the years-long planting of atheism in soviet Ukraine.

At the same time, sociologists of the Razumkov Center established that only a sixth of Ukrainians attend church regularly, that is, at least once a week. On this indicator, the country occupies far from first place in the European rankings of religiosity, falling between the Slovenes and Swiss.

At the same time, according to the observations of the director of the Department of Information of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Igor Yatsiv, there are more and more youth among believers. "We recently opened a church in Brovary. We did not put up announcements anywhere, but the church is filled with youth," the priest notes.

The most religious region of the country remains the west, where 34.5% of the parishes of all Orthodox churches are located, while there are only 15.9% of them in the east. And although the majority of believers are members of the Orthodox Church, the flock of protestant and Muslims confessions is expanding dynamically. The share of these churches has grown respectively from 26.5% to 29% and from 1.5% to 4.3% in the past decade. (tr. by PDS, posted 6 May 2011)

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## **In Memoriam: Soviet-era rights activist, dissident Ivan Hel**

***Will be remembered for great work on legalizing banned Catholic Church***

Kyiv Weekly (25.03.2011) / HRWF (10.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - At a time of pressure and chipping away of human rights, Ukraine lost a phenomenal human rights activist last week when Ivan Andriyovych Hel passed away at the age of 74. Hel was also head of the Committee to Protect the Rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which managed to "legalize" the church that had been banned in the USSR. Born in Lviv Region in July 1937, he was repeatedly convicted of so-called anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and spent 16 years in jail. In early 1987, during Gorbachev's perestroika, Hel returned home and became a member of the editorial board of the revived Ukrainian Herald magazine. In late 1987 he headed the Committee to Protect the Rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which sought legal ways to officially register the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which had spent 40 years underground. Ivan Hel worked as an active local politician in independent Ukraine and in 2009 received the Order of Liberty "for significant contribution to the revival of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church."

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## **Does President Yanukhovich favour the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchy?**

Golos Pravoslavya (05.2011) / HRWF (10.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - There are some controversies in Ukraine about the relations between the current president and the various Churches. Among other things, President Yanukhovich is said to grant a privileged treatment to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchy (UOC/MP), especially with regard to the ownership of places of worship and other religious buildings. In its 2011 issue Nr 5 (293), Golos Pravoslavya (Voice of Orthodoxy) reproduced a long interview of Bishop Evstratiy (UOC/KP) for "Church.info" in which the clergyman addressed the issue of the equal treatment of Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchy (UOC/MP) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchy (UOC/KP).

### **Excerpt of the interview**

"The Kiev Patriarchy is accused of "pursuing a pre-emptive tactic" of "staging persecution."

Possibly, someone would wish his opponents to have a similar opportunity to use this "tactic" and "pretend" in the same way, but I will not do this because one would not wish this even to an enemy.

I am a convinced supporter of the assertion, that "bad peace is better than good war". During all the 2010 the Kiev Patriarchy tried to avoid conflicts with the state, to begin a normal dialogue but our opponents had obviously interpreted our patience and readiness to dialogue as a weakness and every month aggravated their pressure. In December, open attacks against our parishes started. Did we have to keep quiet and wait when they'd begin to occupy our churches not by one, but by tens or hundreds? Did we have to declare that the state-church relations were normal when in reality the authorities ignored not only us, but also all religions, except for the Moscow Patriarchy?

While it was possible to bear our burden, we kept patience and remained silent but in December, this limit was overstepped. So we started to make statements. We saw that the law in fact could not protect us, the authorities sided with the Moscow Patriarchy in their actions, and the only way out was to appeal to the society. In addition we had to warn our parishioners because tomorrow dishonest dealings that take place in Kam'yanka, Makariv, Yasnogorodets, Rizhki and Rososha can begin anywhere.

We do not want Ukraine to return to the early 1990s, when the question of a parish belonging was solved by force and even bloodshed.

We do not want the authorities to stop their attempts to struggle against the Kiev Patriarchy only after something like the "Bloody Tuesday". We do not want the enemies of our state system to destroy Ukraine with the Ukrainians' hands. So that is why we warn.

It is better to extinguish a fire which is only flaming up, than when everything around is inflamed."

"Didn't the Kiev Patriarchy have support of the government under the previous presidents? Now the authorities simply withdrew their support from the UOC/ KP and you began to be afraid."

The support of Kiev Patriarchy by the authorities is one of the myths circulated by the MP. For example, here are plane numbers: during the years from 1992 to 2004 per every seven temples transferred to the UOC/MP, only one was transferred to the UOC/KP.

Already in the days of President V. Yuschenko in Kiev fifteen land lots a year were allocated to UOC MP to build churches, whereas our parishes got only three land plots. It was under Yushchenko that the UOC MP received three hectares of land to build a cathedral in the capital.

Did the previous President contribute to the transfer of churches to the UOC/ KP? Let those who think so name them. Except for St. Catherine Church in Chernigov, which the community claimed during 15 years, our Patriarchy got no other churches. As to the St. Catherine Church, such noise was made around it that even the Metropolitan of Kythira from Greece was involved in signing an angry letter to the address of the President with a request not to transfer it. All this has occurred at the time, when in the same Chernigov the MP got ten large historical churches, whereas the UOC/KP only two small ones.

Under President Yushchenko the questions which the UOC/KP put before the authorities from the 1990s were not solved: the churches in Dnepropetrovsk, Zhitomir, Kharkov, and Pereyaslav about which our communities and bishops sent applications for over 15 years were not transferred to them. In Lugansk, Donetsk, and Simferopol the land lots

which had not been allocated before Yushchenko, were not allocated under his presidency.

At the time, when in the Kiev-Pecherskaya Laura the monastery of the UOC/MP occupied by hook or crook dozens of buildings our Church already under Victor Yushchenko had to ask during three years for an empty building in the complex of the St. Michael Gold-Domed Monastery. The Kiev-Pecherskaya Laura annually gets financing of million hryvnas from the state budget, whereas we could not secure any state financing to paint the bell tower at St. Michael Monastery on the occasion of its 900th anniversary. The tower obviously did not beautify one of the central squares of the capital with its peeling off facade; so having got nothing and we made repairs at our own cost.

Therefore we had no special support from any authorities. The attitude toward us was either the same as toward the UOC/MP, or worse. It never was better.

However, never before there were such occurrences as we observe presently – direct struggle against the Kiev Patriarchy. Also earlier the authorities did not ignore the existence of our Church and other religions. The Presidents met with all the heads of Churches and religious organizations, and not only with the representatives of the MP, as it happened during the last year.

We do not want and do not expect support. We only want the authorities to withhold from interfering into our life.

We do not write laws – they are established by the state. And it is provided by the laws, that the state must have the same attitude toward all denominations, that all religions are equal before the state. We see that this provision of the law is ignored.

Why must we keep silent? Our civil duty is to remind the state of its own laws, if it forgets about them.

Father Nicholas acknowledges that when the authorities ignore some denominations, this is wrong but he points out that the UOC/MP has nothing to do with this.

It is excellent that in the UOC/MP they realize the wrongness of the situation but their statement that their Church is not involved in it is unconvincing, to put it mildly. All the state leaders are parishioners of the Moscow Patriarchy. President V. Yanukovich in public named Metropolitan Vladimir (Sabodan) his confessor. Therefore this Church has a special influence on its parishioners. However, I did not hear any official statement of the UOC/MP trying to turn the attention of the authorities to the necessity of an equal attitude toward all religions.

With all my respect to Father Nicholas, the level of his statements is not such that it would influence the state government and the hierarchy keeps silent for some reason. If the UOC/MP is really against the discrimination of denominations, they should write a letter to the President or at least try to convince him to change the direction of his religious policy in a private conversation. As the saying goes, let them prove their position not with words, but with deeds.

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## **35,800 religious organizations and 30,000 priests – official report**

Institute for Religious Freedom (24.03.2011) / HRWF (04.05.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - The State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions

prepared annual statistics reports reflecting annual indicators of religious activity development in Ukraine.

The official information about the network of churches and religious organizations in Ukraine and their provision with religious buildings is approved by the State Committee's Order №09 of 28.02.2011, reports the Institute for Religious Freedom.

According to the report in accordance with Form 1, as of the beginning of 2011, the religious network in Ukraine included 35,861 religious organizations, which is 677 organizations more than in 2010. In Ukraine 1,884 religious communities are not legal entities, that is, they are not registered, which is not obligatory.

There are 32,521 religious communities with the status of legal entity (which is 581 communities more than last year), 88 (+3) centers, 274 (+9) departments, 459 (+20) monasteries, 357 (+10) missions, 78 (+2) brotherhoods, 200 (+1) religion educational institutions.

There are 12,762 (+4) Sunday schools in Ukraine, attached to religious organizations, and 386 (+9) religious periodicals. 30,199 priests administer the affairs of churches and religious organizations.

The information indicates a continual growth in the network of churches and religious organizations in Ukraine in all studied aspects.

"To a considerable extent, it was facilitated by the current Law of Ukraine 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' of 1991, which established the proper democratic conditions for the free development of the network of religious organizations, and which promotes interdenominational peace," – concluded the experts at the roundtable on the Church-State dialogue, which took place on December 20, 2010.

In accordance with Form 2 of the report, in all, religious organizations use 23,159 (+372) religious buildings and buildings modified for religious use. This number includes 3,947 buildings that are architectural monuments and 7,718 buildings that have been modified for religious use.

According to official information, 2,403 (+5) religious buildings are under construction. Churches and religious organizations rent 6,963 (+166) buildings for divine services and religious and social activities.

If to compare the number of the registered religious organizations with the number of buildings and rooms used by them, then it becomes evident that only 68 percent of churches and religious organizations are provided with religious buildings for divine services.

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## **Ukrainian court favors Moscow patriarchate**

### **Donets administrative court transfers church of Kiev patriarchate to Moscow patriarchate**

Portal-credo.ru (21.02.2011) / HRWF (25.02.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Donets district administrative court made a decision on 15 February in the case regarding the jurisdictional affiliation of the church of the Ascension of the Lord in the village of Kamenka, Telmanov district, Donetsk province of Ukraine. After a two-week trial, the deed of transfer of the church to the UPTsKP in 1996 was ruled invalid and the building



was returned to the local territorial parish. In effect this signifies its transfer to the jurisdiction of UPTsMP.

According to a report from "Portal of nonpolitical news," the court took an active interest in the current condition of the church. The defendant in the case, the Donetsk provincial state administration, displayed no special interest in the case. The ruling of the court evoked protest from representatives of UPTsKP, who, by their own admission, were morally prepared for such an outcome of the trial.

According to attorney Yury Fartushnii, "the suit should have been left without review since the statute of limitation on administrative cases is six month. Here 15 years have passed. In a law-guided state, there would be no chance of winning this case, but in Ukraine strange decisions often are made."

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## **Ukrainian government not consulting religious organizations**

### ***Ukrainian confessions ask Azarov to revive work of Commission on guaranteeing exercise of rights of religious organizations***

Institute of Religious Freedom (21.02.2011) / HRWF (25.02.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Leaders and authorized representatives of churches and religious organizations sent to Ukrainian Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov a request to revive the work of the Commission on Questions on Guaranteeing exercise of rights of religious organizations under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Institute of Religious Freedom reports.

The appeals noted that at sessions of the commission it is necessary to discuss legislative initiatives affecting rights to freedom of confession and of activity of religious organizations.

The issues are the draft of a new edition of the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations," a draft law on return of houses of worship to religious organizations, and changes in procedures for registration of religious organizations.

"The legislative initiatives noted above immediately relate to the constitutional right of freedom of religious confession and of the activity of religious organizations and thus they should be developed in dialogue and in keeping with obligatory consultations with churches and religious organizations," the appeals say.

Representatives of confessions think that within the format of the indicated commission it will be possible to work out agreed upon suggestions and recommendations for the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine that take into account the opinions of religious organizations as interested subjects of the community.

In accordance with point 7 of the regulation on the commission, a number of members of the Commission on Questions on Guaranteeing exercise of rights of religious organizations appealed to its chairman, Vice-Premier Boris Kolesnikov with an initiative for conducting in the very near future an extraordinary session for review of the indicated questions.

The appeal to the leader of the government was sent by the following:



Ukrainian Orthodox church (in unity with the Moscow patriarchate);

Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Kiev patriarchate;

Ukrainian Greek Catholic church;

All-Ukrainian Union of churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith—Pentecostals;

All-Ukrainian Union of churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists;

Ukrainian Christian Evangelical church;

Association of Jewish religious organizations of Ukraine;

Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Ukraine.

*Note:* The Commission on Questions on Guaranteeing exercise of rights of religious organizations was created by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in 2008 as a permanently operating consultative body. In 2009 the commission had two sessions. During 2010 and to the present time, no sessions of the commission have been convened.

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## **Ukrainian city government restricts Baptists**

### ***Authorities disperse Baptist festival in Cherkassy province***

Portal-credo.ru (26.01.2011) / HRWF (18.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Authorities in the city of Smela, Cherkassy province, did not permit Baptists to conduct a "God is always there" festival, Protestant.ru reports, citing RISU.

The festival, which was conceived and chiefly organized by Pastor Valery Beliaev, had been planned over the course of several months. An application for permission to conduct a Christian festival in the city was submitted to the city council. The authorities signed the application, but they did not allow it to be conducted.

As the press service of the VSO EKHB reported, this event was planned as one of mass evangelism. Organizers invited American Evangelist Don Betts, the choir of the Cherkassy Baptist church, and musical ensembles. The city was prepared for the festival in advance—announcements and invitations were sent out and posters were put up. For a small city (around 70,000 residents) this was a big event.

On Sunday, 23 January, at 3:00 p.m. around 700 persons assembled at the central House of Culture. But it turned out that the entrance to the auditorium was closed and thus the people had to squeeze into the lobby. The director of the House of Culture disappeared and no representative of the city government answered phone calls.

Around 3:30 the deputy mayor arrived with a squad of police and forbade conducting the festival, explaining the decision of the authorities by the fact that the venue supposedly did not conform to certain requirements. His announcement evoked outrage on the part of residents of Smela. But the organizers of the festival were forced to stop the program.

According to information from the press service of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Association, on Friday, two days before the festival, at a session of the Smela city council, the leader of the presiding fraction issued an ultimatum, declaring that he was "ready to fire many people if this event occurs in Smela."

Today representatives of Baptist churches and organizers of the festival are awaiting the reaction of news media and the public to this event, the press service of the association reports.

This was not the first notorious occurrence on religious grounds in Smela. As RISU [Religious Information Service of Ukraine] reported earlier, in the night of 11-12 January a group of unknown persons attacked the "Regeneration" Christian rehabilitation center, which operates within the "Light of Life" protestant church of Smela. And in the night of 18-19 December unknown persons attacked the premises of the church of the Nativity of John the Baptist of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox church in Smela.

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## **Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) opposes hasty changes in law**

Institute of Religious Freedom (24.01.2011) / HRWF (18.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - The Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Kiev Patriarch [UPTsKP] expressed concern with regard to the initiative to introduce changes into the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations," and particularly with regard to the attempts of representatives of the state to adopt its new edition speedily.

This is said in an appeal of the bishops' council of UPTsKP to President V. Yanukovich, Prime Minister N. Azarov, Supreme Soviet Chairman V. Litvin, and people's deputies of Ukraine, the Institute of Religious Freedom reports.

On 23 January the bishops' council resolved to express in the name of UPTsKP its disagreement both with the proposed changes in principle in the law and with the hasty means of its adoption without taking into account the opinions of the confessions.

The appeal notes that the existing Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations" is recognized as one of the best of its kind in the world. However the introduction into the law of changes of principle, especially in the procedure of registration of religious organizations and their attaining the status of legal entity [juridical person] "violates the precarious interconfessional harmony, which would be very difficult to restore."

The bishops of UPTsKP are convinced that "on the base of the existing law by means of joint efforts of the state and the churches, it has been possible to quench sharp conflicts and the violent confrontation which marked interconfessional relations in the first half of the 1990s."

"However conflicts have remained finally unresolved, and thus any changes of principle in legislation, particularly change in the criteria of registration and attaining legal entity status, will inevitably lead to the revival of violent conflicts," the appeal of the bishops' council emphasizes.

The UPTsKP also thinks that "in the question of changes in the law we think that appeals to the recommendations of PACE are baseless, which do not at all take into account the realities of state-church and interconfessional relations in Ukraine."

Thus UPTsKP urgently calls the leadership of Ukraine to postpone development and adoption of a new edition of the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organization" until a time when the contents of the proposed changes go through a comprehensive discussion with the sides of the confessions and experts and find a consensus of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations.

The extraordinary bishops' council also called attention to the absence of meetings of the leadership of the state with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, despite frequent written suggestions of conducting such meetings, which had previously been traditional. The council expressed a separate concern in connection with the public demonstrations by highly placed representatives of the government of inclination toward only one of the confessions existing in Ukraine, when legislation establishes the equality of all confessions.

In connection with this, UPTsKP again "calls Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and other representatives of authority to a constructive dialogue."

We recall that by decree No. 24/2011 of 12 January 2011 the Ukrainian president instructed the Ministry of Culture to work out jointly with the Ministry of Justice a new edition of the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations." According to the decree, the draft law should be presented to the government by 1 February 2011 for subsequent introduction into the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine for review.

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## **Ukrainian president promotes change in religious policy**

### ***New edition of law on freedom of conscience provides new procedure for registration and termination of religious organizations***

RISU (19.01.2011) / HRWF (18.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A new edition of the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations," which was prepared by the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions, proposes a complex of innovations in the sphere of securing the right of freedom of religious confession, registration of religious organizations, and state-church relations.

According to the conclusions of experts from the Institute of Religious Freedom, the greatest changes in the draft of the new edition of the law pertain to the procedure for religious organizations' receiving the status of a legal entity (juridical person) and an expansion of the list of reasons for terminating their activity by judicial procedure. This is connected with the extension to religious organizations of the requirements established for other legal entities by the Ukrainian law "On state registration of legal entities and physical persons and enterprises."

The draft law was made public for the first time during a session of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations." The text is the latest version that was prepared by the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions in November 2010 in accordance with an order by the president of Ukraine. It was based on the text that was developed in 2006 by a working group in the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice.

We recall that on 9 December of last year, the head of state signed a decree regarding the liquidation of the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions in order to optimize the system of offices of executive authority.

After this, President V. Yanukovich on 12 January instructed the reorganized Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine to develop jointly and by 1 February present to the government a new edition of the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations" for subsequent presentation to the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine for review.

In light of the extremely short period of time granted for developing the draft, experts suggest that the new executors of the presidential instruction will take for its base the draft law prepared by the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions.

At the same time, experts maintain, one cannot rule out further changes in the text of the draft, particularly in the parts on the registration of religious organizations and the functions of the state office for religious affairs. Such amendments may occur in connection with the liquidation of the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions and the transfer of the functions of registration of religious organizations to the newly formed State Registration Service of Ukraine.

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## **Bishop Yevstratii: Moscow's plan to liquidate UOC-KP is aimed against Ukrainian statehood**

RISU (28.01.2011) / HRWF (17.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - In an interview to RISU, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP) Bishop Yevstratii (Zoria) of Vasylkivtsi said that the situation in the church life of Ukraine from 1991-1992 has been the result of the realization of the church-state plans of Moscow and called Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church "the main architect of the present divide of the Ukrainian Church."

At the same time, Bishop Yevstratii noted that in view of the close connection between the authorities and the church in Russia, the plan to liquidate the UOC-KP, disclosed in Patriarch Filaret's New Year's statement, cannot be called a plan of only the Moscow Patriarchate: "It is rather a Moscow or Russian plan that is to be implemented in Ukraine through the Moscow Patriarch and, probably, through other channels as well."

According to him, the main element of the plan is the fact that the Kyivan Patriarchate "lost the support of the authorities," and the Moscow Patriarchate "has been granted the support of the authorities." In the opinion of the bishop, priests of the UOC-KP are being persuaded to transfer to the Moscow Patriarchate exactly on that basis.

Pressure is being put on the clergy of the UOC-KP through officials of the district level, sponsors of the construction or through their acquaintances, who are priests of the Moscow Patriarchate, noted the bishop. According to him, the fact that it is done "on an instruction from above" is indicated, in particular, by the coordination of actions of the officials of the state district administration officials in this question.

According to the bishop, the mentioned plan of Moscow regarding the UOC-KP is aimed, on one hand, to marginalize that church in the whole territory of Ukraine: "Some 'harmless' dozen of parishes in each region, which would not have sufficient power to influence anything, will be left. We can see that the plan is being implemented in central and eastern Ukraine through the activity of the Moscow Patriarchate and that the UAOC [Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church] is becoming more active in the west of Ukraine. Therefore, attempts will be made to transfer our parishes to the UAOC."

On the other hand, the authors of the plan thereby seek to create a constantly unstable internal situation in Ukraine using the problem of interchurch relations as well as the problem of the language and history, the issue of the relations between different parts of Ukraine. According to the bishop, "Moscow's agents of influence" are trying to create an unstable situation in Ukraine, and some of them "even officially hold posts supported by Moscow and officially state that they work for specific structures." Violations of the main rights and freedoms of citizens will help to stir the society, provoke a reaction of Europe and, consequently, "give President Yanukovich no possibility to manoeuvre between Russia and the West, make him a leader who will have to cooperate only in one political area, the area of Moscow, and eventually turn him into a puppet of Moscow."

Bishop Yevstratii stresses that "representatives of the Ukrainian authorities who are being used today for the realization of that plan should understand that it is aimed not so much against the Kyivan Patriarchate as it is against the Ukrainian statehood in general."

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## **Ukrainian bishops criticize government actions**

### ***Extraordinary bishop's council of UPTsKP expresses profound concern over conditions of state-church relations in Ukraine***

Portal-credo.ru (24.01.2011) / HRWF (17.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - An extraordinary bishops' council of Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Kiev Patriarchate, meeting in Kiev on 23 January under the chairmanship of Patriarch of Kiev and all-Rus-kraine Filaret, expressed "profound concern with the current shape and prospects of the development of church-state relations in Ukraine on the whole and the relations between the state and the Kiev patriarchate in particular," a Portal-credo.ru correspondent reports.

Among the causes of this concern the participants in the council pointed to the absence of meetings of the state leadership with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, demonstration of support by highly-placed officials for only one religious organization, the absence--despite the requirements of the law--of answers to appeals from the Holy Synod and patriarch of UPTsKP to the president of Ukraine, the increase in the number of instances of interference by representatives of the government in the life of congregations of the Kiev patriarchate, the liquidation of the State Committee for Affairs of Religions and Nationalities, and the rapid development of a new law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations."

The bishops' council called the president of Ukraine and other representatives of authority to begin a constructive dialogue with Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Kiev Patriarchate and it also supported the appeal of Patriarch Filaret of 30 December 2010 which speaks of the development of a plan for liquidation of the Kiev patriarchate, inspired by Moscow and by Patriarch Kirill personally.

The council sent to the president, the prime minister, and the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine a special appeal regarding the impermissibility of restriction of the freedom of conscience in the country by means of the development of new discriminatory legislation.

The bishops of Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Kiev Patriarchate expressed their categorical dissent from the intentions to build on the site of the [tenth-century] church of the Tithe in Kiev a complex with a church of the Moscow patriarchate, recalling that at the time of the construction of this church, not only did this patriarchate not exist, but Moscow itself also did not exist.

The extraordinary council of the Kiev patriarchate called all true servants of their church and its supporters "to display attention, care, and civic action to do all possible to help the Kiev patriarchate get through the current trials."

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## **Ukrainian city approves construction of first mosque**

EarthTimes (15.02.2011) / HRWF (16.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A Ukrainian city on Tuesday gave a go ahead for the construction of its first mosque, in a major victory for the region's Muslims.

The city council of the Black Sea port Sevastopol approved the zoning of a central district land plot for the building project, with 71 of 72 council members voting in favour.

Once complete, the mosque would become the first-ever Islamic house of worship in a city dominated by ethnic Slavs following the Orthodox Christian faith.

Plans for the construction of a mosque in Sevastopol has been a bone of contention in the city since 2004 when ethnic Tartars applied for a building permit. Slavs objected on grounds that the city was traditionally Orthodox and Slavic, and over fears of ethnic conflict.

The proposed construction site for the Sevastopol mosque saw repeated anti-government demonstrations by Tartars beginning in 2008.

Between 13 and 20 per cent of the 1.4 million population of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula are ethnic Tartars, most of whom follow Sunni Islam.

"We have been working towards this for years ... it is about time," said Vasyl Dzhatriy, chairman of the Crimean council of ministers. "All ethnicities have a right to their culture and beliefs."

In recent years, the conflict in Crimea between Tartars and Slavs has included the fire-bombing of a mosque, mass brawls, police raids on Tartar homes and businesses, and the murder of a Tartar journalist investigating allegedly corrupt land sales.

Russians and Ukrainians largely have control of Crimea's government and economy. Tartars, with rare exceptions, live on poor land with access to few services.

Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin forcibly exiled Crimea's ethnic Tartars in 1944. Most were unable to return until the early 1990s, only to find ethnic Slavs holding title to the region's most valuable lands and businesses.

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## **Patriarcal feud: Filaret versus Kirill**

***"Our Ukraine" deputies send inquiry to prosecutor regarding pressure on priests to change from Kiev to Moscow Patriarchate***

Portal-credo.ru (12.01.2011) / HRWF (11.01.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - People's deputies from "Our Ukraine" have sent a deputies' request to Prosecutor General

Viktor Pshonka with regard to pressure on priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Kiev patriarchate (UPTsKP), RISU reported on 11 January, citing the press service of the party.

"We call your attention to the statement by Patriarch of Kiev and all Rus and Ukraine Filaret, in which he presents instances of illegal influence and pressure on priests and parishes of UPTsKP with the goal of forcing them to transfer to the Ukrainian Orthodox church (Moscow patriarchate)," the requests states.

Also the deputies request an immediate careful and objective investigation regarding such incidents in order to prevent violation of confessional equality. (tr. by PDS, posted 14 January 2011)

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## **Plan for destruction of Kiev Patriarchate**

### ***Declaration of Patriarch of Kiev and all Rus and Ukraine Filaret for news media***

Portal-credo.ru site (10.01.2011) / HRWF (11.01.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - On the eve of holidays one would not wish to talk about unpleasant things, but the rapid development of events and the increase of pressure on the Kiev patriarchate force one to do this.

I declare responsibly: In Ukraine there is taking place an attempt to implement a massive plan for the collapse and destruction of the Kiev patriarchate.

This plan was created in Moscow and was proposed by Moscow Patriarch Kirill and his subordinates for implementation in Ukraine. The chief role in this plan was reserved for the agencies of state authority.

The implementation of this plan began back in the time of the preparation for the visit to Ukraine in the summer of this year of Patriarch Kirill. The closest aide of the patriarch, Metropolitan Illarion, visited in the spring of this year a number of provinces of Ukraine where he ascertained the situation and sought for those who could be lured out of the Kiev patriarchate. By his own admission, he tried to persuade the late Metropolitan of Lvov Andrei to betrayal, but this plan fell through.

Back in the summer of this year the Kiev patriarchate began receiving the first reports that through bureaucrats at the district level and below, as well as through sponsors of societies for priests and parishes, pressure began with the goal of forcing them to transfer to the Moscow patriarchate. In subsequent months this work only intensified; in individual dioceses up to 70% of priests went through such "conversations."

Sorry to say, representatives of agencies of local authority participated in all these events, and the coincidence and coordination of actions testify that they also had the support of offices in the capital.

In the Donbass the provincial administration put pressure on the village council in Kamenka, Telmanov district, with the goal of forcing it to transfer the old church of the Ascension of the Lord to be used by the recently created parish of the Moscow patriarchate.

In the Kiev region, provincial authorities secretly but quickly (in two weeks) back in October registered on the basis of falsified protocols changes in the charters of three parishes of the Kiev patriarchate, in Makarov and the villages of Yasnogorodka and Makovishche, of Makarov district. The members of the parishes learned only on 26



December that their parishes had been in the Moscow patriarchate for two months. It has already been discovered that of those whose signatures were placed under the protocol from Makarov, at least three persons knew nothing about such a document, which makes it inoperative. In Yasnogorodka also neither the priest nor parishioners knew anything about the "meetings," nor that they had already been delivered to the Moscow patriarchate.

Registration of changes in the charter of the parish in the village of Rizhka was being prepared. Only the timely discovery by parishioners of fraud on the part of the former rector helped in stopping the process of registration of the changes, because the entire parish unanimously opposed the transfer to the Moscow patriarchate. At the present time, the former rector and unknown persons are threatening parishioners and the newly appointed priest by telephone with punishment for their loyalty to their native church.

Also the situation regarding cemeteries in the capital has gained wide publicity.

In all these situations we see that representatives of the state have acted quickly, effectively, and consistently in the interests of the Moscow patriarchate, but when it comes to protecting the interests of the Kiev patriarchate, we hear about "studying, reviewing," and the like, and the time drags out and excuses are sought.

At the present time it is impossible to say when and where the next conflict will arise. But if the implementation of the Moscow plan is not terminated, conflicts will arise in the future too.

Through administrative and tax levers, pressure on sponsors who help parishes of the Kiev patriarchate will continue.

The irresolute and traitors among the clergy of the Kiev patriarchate will be sought who will be offered money and other help just like when the Sanhedrin sought traitors among Christ's disciples in order to catch him secretly.

After his visit for the inauguration of President V. Yanukovich, Patriarch Kirill declared that "the fad for schism will pass and the schismatics will return to the canonical church." In the past, pro-Moscow forces have been able to find in the Kiev patriarchate only a few traitors. So it is necessary for them before next summer's visit to collect as many confirmations of Kirill's words as possible, and all Moscow's ecclesiastical and political influence is being exerted on Ukrainian authorities for this.

I am convinced that the subsequent implementation of Moscow's plan threatens Ukrainian society with strong turmoil. We wish for peace and harmony for the Ukrainian people. However hitherto we have not heard anything from all our appeals to the authorities other than behind the back assurances about "equal respect for all confessions," which in practice turns out to be full cooperation with the Moscow patriarchate and pressure on the Kiev patriarchate.

Earlier there were attempts to destroy the Kiev patriarchate by the hands of the government in Moscow. The culmination of this were the events of "bloody Tuesday" on 18 July 1995: the beating by the police on Holy Wisdom Square of the procession with the body of the late Patriarch Vladimir. Our church survived this trial and only got stronger after it because all patriotic forces rallied around it. One would hope that the present authorities, like the authorities of that time, would not grasp the error of their actions relative to the Kiev patriarchate only after something happened similar to "bloody Tuesday."

We do not fear new persecutions of the Kiev patriarchate; the weak and disloyal ones may leave us, but, as in the time of all persecution, the spirit and power of the faith of

the true sons and daughters of the church will only be strengthened. However we do not wish for our state to be destroyed through plans imposed from the outside.

I call all parishioners to be vigilant; do not allow for changes and additions in parish charters to be adopted without your consent and knowledge, whereby your parish could be transferred to the Moscow patriarchate.

I call for society and the international community to pay attention to the violation of the rights of believers of the Kiev patriarchate and to the intensifying of pressure on our church. Your voice must be raised in defense of justice!

I call journalists to follow the events in religious life and to illuminate them truthfully and objectively.

And I urgently call the government and the head of state personally-it is time to begin a genuine and fruitful dialogue. Otherwise Ukraine risks returning to the interconfessional power struggle of the beginning of the nineties

I hope that changes for the better will occur in the new 2011 year.

I greet everyone on the upcoming Nativity of Christ, which inspires in us confidence that good and justice always conquer evil! I invoke God's blessing for the whole Ukrainian nation!

Filaret, Patriarch of Kiev and all Rus and Ukraine  
30 December 2010

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