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## **'Transfer' of churches from the Moscow Patriarchate to the Kyiv Patriarchate**

HRWF (27.12.2014) – The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have exacerbated the relations between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the

jurisdiction of Kyiv Patriarchate. On 26 December, the press service of the Rovno diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate reported that in the night from 25 to 26 December, two churches of the Rovno diocese were seized: in the village of Badovka, of Ostrog deanery, and in the village of Ptichya, of Dubna deanery Patriarchate. On the same day, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate published the following statement on its website:

"On 26 December 2014, there appeared on the official website of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate a news report to the effect that in the village of Ptichya of Dubna district and the village of Badovka of Ostrog district "two churches were seized by schismatics." In connection with this, the press service of the Rovno diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate, with the blessing of Archbishop of Rovno and Ostrog Ilarion, provides an official commentary regarding the above mentioned events.

Recently, seeing a gradual transfer of Orthodox parishes from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate into the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate, supporters of the former have tried to halt this process by their own fabrications and lies.

First of all, we recall that the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate in honor of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God of the village of Ptichya of the Dubna deanery and the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate in honor of the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene of the village of Badovka of the Ostrog deanery transferred into the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev patriarchate by majority votes.

Until today, the parish churches of the above mentioned parishes were sealed, because of which they did not have the possibility of conducting their worship services. From day to day the resolution of this problem festered although the case was constantly dragged out. Such actions disturbed people and therefore the parish decided to open their legally owned church buildings.

We emphasize that at the time of the opening of the church buildings there were no clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate Rovno diocese in the villages of Ptichya and Badovka. They arrived later for performing services on the invitation of the parish.

We also note that the parishes of the village of Ptichya and Badovka did not take their churches by force. The churches belonged to and they now belong to the people who reside in these villages and are their parishioners. In accordance with the constitution and the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations," each religious community has the right to freely select their adherence to one or another religious center. In this case, the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate in honor of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God of the village of Ptichya of the Dubna deanery and the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate in honor of the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene of the village of Badovka of Ostrog deanery left, in a legal manner, the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate and entered the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate.

The Rovno diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate is also open in the future to a constructive dialogue and cooperation for creating in Ukraine a united local Orthodox church. We wish that all misunderstandings between the churches of the two patriarchates would be resolved not by inter-confessional conflict but by means of dialogue.

We believe that through the uniting of our efforts, hostility among Orthodox Ukrainians will cease and the peace and unity of our people will be achieved, and real steps for the creation in Ukraine of a united local Orthodox church will be realized. (tr. by PDS, posted 26 December 2014)

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## **Ukrainian Orthodox leaders disagree over seizures of churches**

### ***Chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate speaks about takeovers of buildings of this Church by schismatics***

Newsru.com (12.12.2014) -\_The chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate (UOC/MP), Metropolitan of Borispol and Brovary Antony, stated that to date 14 (UOC/MP) parishes have been seized by the so-called Kiev patriarchate (UOC/KP).

"To date, 14 UOC/MP parishes have been taken over, six parishes are under threat of capture, and only three parishes have changed jurisdiction voluntarily, in accordance with the Ukrainian law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations." Actually, relative to the 12,000 UOC/MP parishes, this number is insignificant, but one is upset by the fact that church buildings are being seized, in violation of state laws," RIA Novosti quotes the bishop's words, referring to a report on the UOC/MP website.

Metropolitan Antony thinks that it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts "seizure" and "transfer." "Illegal takeover of a church building by means of violence and deceit cannot be called transfer. According to law, transfer occurs when a decision is made unanimously by members of a parish and not by residents of a village. Even if 10 UOC/MP believers do not want to change the jurisdiction of a parish, and the church is transmitted to UOC/KP, this cannot be called a transfer," the representative of the Kiev metropolia emphasized.

The UOC/MP chancellor noted that "people who commandeer church buildings of the canonical church are violating not only state laws but also the commandments," since a Christian cannot indulge in beating another person, damaging a church building, or inciting people to hatred and confrontation and trying to take control of the property of others. "Almost all of this happens during so-called transfers of churches to the so-called Kiev patriarchate," the metropolitan added. (tr. by PDS, posted 13 December 2014)

### ***More than 30 UOC/MP parishes transferred this year to UOC/KP – Patriarch Filaret***

[Portal-Credo.ru](http://Portal-Credo.ru), 8 December 2014

This was stated in Chernigov to journalists by Patriarch Filaret, a correspondent of Ukrinform transmitted on 7 December.

"Only 30 parishes have been transferred so far. Primarily in Rovno diocese although there also were some both in Kiev and in Dnepropetrovsk dioceses, and in the south. But this is only the start of transfer," Filaret said.

He is sure that the process of unification into a united local church must be peaceful, without seizure of church buildings which also belong to Ukraine and "this will happen

when God wills it. And he will wish it when the people of Ukraine repent of their sins and overcome corruption."

"When we overcome this evil, then everything will be fine. Then the Lord at one stroke will change everything and we will be united in one church," the patriarch emphasized, after noting that next year will be difficult not only for the Donbass but also for all of Ukraine, "because it will be a year of struggle with corruption, which is not easy to overcome."

"We must be prepared for struggle, because there will be many provocations surrounding this. And it will be necessary to be reasonable and separate good from evil," Filaret added.

The head of UOC/ KP was in Chernigov on an archpastoral visit. He led a festive liturgy on the occasion of the double holiday: the day of the commemoration of Great Martyr Ekaterina, the patronal holiday of the cathedral church of St. Ekaterina, and the church-wide day of commemoration of St. Merkury of Chernigov, the hegumen of Briginsk. Filaret's participation in these prayer services has become traditional. (tr. by PDS, posted 13 December 2014)

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## **Rebels' campaign to eliminate non-Orthodox churches continues**

### ***Militants of Luhansk People's Republic seize central church of Baptists in Krasnyi Luch***

[Religiia v Ukraine](#) (28.10.2014) - On 26 October, after the evening meeting, in the city of Krasnyi Luch in Luhansk province, pro-Russian militants ordered the transfer of the central church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists [EKhB] to their ownership, Religiia v Ukraine reports with reference to NKHM.

"Today after the evening meeting in the city of Krasnyi Luch of Luhansk province, militants ordered the transfer of the central EKhB church to their ownership. They will arrive in the morning for documents and keys. Prayers are requested for ministers of the church and all believers who stayed there," parishioner Yuri Karameneshta wrote on his Facebook page.

This news was confirmed by Elisei Pronin, the pastor of the Regeneration church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the city of Pervomaisk, Luhansk province: "After the evening meeting, camouflaged and armed 'guests' visited the EKhB church of Krasnyi Luch. The ultimatum of the new 'authorities' was simple as always: tomorrow before 8:00 a.m. the building of the house of prayer must be evacuated and transferred 'to the defenders of common people.' I ask you to pray for our brothers and sisters that their faith will be strengthened. . . ."

We remind you that militants of the DPR and LPR are conducting regular raids for the liquidation of non-Orthodox confessions. (tr. by PDS, posted 28 October 2014).

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## **Kidnapped protestant pastor released**

### ***Pastor Sergei Litovchenko released from captivity of militants of "DPR"***

Institute of Religious Liberty (16.10.2014) - On Thursday, 16 October, it was reported that a pastor of the local parish of the Church of Seventh-Day Adventists in Gorlovka, Sergei Litovchenko, who spent 20 days in captivity of militants of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), has been released.

This report was confirmed for the Institute of Religious Liberty in the Kiev office of the church.

The released pastor soon met with his family and ministers of the church. Nothing is yet known about his state of health and the conditions of his confinement. Believers of the church thank everybody who prayed for his release.

As was reported, on 27 September 2014 in the city of Gorlovka, Donetsk province, militants of the DPR, armed with automatic weapons, stormed into the house of prayer of the Church of Seventh-Day Adventists, where the ritual of communion was being performed at the time. They disrupted the service and forced the believers to disperse.

Pastor Sergei Litovchenko was ordered to close the church building and he was forced to get into one of the militants' vehicles and he was taken off in an unknown direction.

The attackers explained their actions by the fact that "this is Orthodox land and there is no place in it for different sects." When the believers asked them who they were and on what basis that were doing this, and also asked them to present document, the armed people answered rudely that "this is not your business," the church's website reported. . . . (tr. by PDS, posted 17 October 2014)

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## **Ultimatum to Crimea's Muslims: Three months to hand over banned Islamic texts**

Asia News (16.10.2014) <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Ultimatum-to-Crimea's-Muslims:-Three-months-to-hand-over-banned-Islamic-texts-32436.html> - The pro-Moscow president suspends police searches in Muslim homes and gives a December deadline for compliance with Russian law: "Some religious texts are prohibited." Meanwhile, the Tatars denounce the campaign. Since annexation to Russia at least 18 members of the community have "disappeared".

The authorities of Crimea (now Russian) have given Muslims three months to voluntarily surrender the literature on Islam, authorized under Ukraine but outlawed by the Russian Federation.

"We call on Muslims in possession of this material to deliver it to the religious authorities over the next three months," said the president of the Crimea, Sergei Aksenov, as reported by Interfax. Until the end of December the police will not confiscate the "forbidden literature", but on the first of January, "everything must be in compliance with Russian norms". He guaranteed that the list of banned books will be published in the press and there will be an awareness raising campaign among the local population.

Since September, several members of the Muslim community in different areas of the peninsula on the Black Sea have reported police raids in their homes in the hunt for "forbidden literature." The same reason was given by the authorities of Simferopol in September to justify their raid and then closure of the office of the Majlis, the 'representative body of Crimean Tatars.

This Muslim community represents 12% of the local population and from the beginning has strongly opposed to the annexation of the Crimea to Russia, confirmed after a controversial referendum. Aksenov has promised to suspend the raids and granted a 'transition' period to comply with Russian laws.

But the Crimean Tatars, who were victims of Stalinist deportations, are on their guard. In recent months, their representatives have denounced a real campaign of persecution, made up not only of raids and intimidation, but also of kidnapping and physical assaults.

The first of October a 25 year-old Tatar who had disappeared under mysterious circumstances on September 29 was found dead in an abandoned sanatorium in Evpatoria. One of the historical leaders of the Crimean Tatars, the former head of the Majlis Mustafa Zhemilev, denounced in front of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the disappearance of 18 Tatars "since the peninsula was united with Russia."

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## **Collateral effect of the conflict: Ukrainian Orthodox parishes leaving the Moscow Patriarchate**

**By Willy Fautré, *Human Rights Without Frontiers***

HRWF (17.09.2014) - Six parishes - two in Rovno (Rivne), two in Volyn, and two in Bukovina - have changed their jurisdiction, leaving the Moscow Patriarchate and joining the Kyiv Patriarchate.

In the village of Pasichna of the Baryshevka district of Kiev province (Borispol diocese of UPTsMP) a meeting was organized by the village community on 13<sup>th</sup> September to pray for peace in Ukraine and for the souls of the deceased to rest in peace. It was attended by the dean of the Baryshevka church district, the secretary of the Kiev diocese and priests from nearby villages.

On this occasion, the parishioners decided to leave the Moscow Patriarchate and affiliate to the Kyiv Patriarchate. After this, there was an attempt to seize the church building. The clergy of Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate along with parishioners shut themselves up in the church, which was surrounded by local residents and several dozen young people led by representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate. The event was attended by representatives of news media, local authorities, and police.

After long negotiations and after the all-night vigil was finished, the clergy and believers left the church. The church building was sealed and it was decided to continue negotiations about the fate of the church on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

During his visit at a forum of publishers in Lviv on 12<sup>th</sup> September, Patriarch Filaret assured that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Kyiv Patriarchate was ready for a dialogue with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate for the sake of unification of the churches.

The primate of Kyiv Patriarchate said that although priests of the Moscow patriarchate in Ukraine often have pro-Russian positions, he is open to dialogue with them.

Patriarch Filaret said that if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate is able and wishes to separate from Moscow, then the unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox churches will proceed quickly.

According to RISU, "the patriarch also described priests and parishioners of the Moscow patriarchate who transfer to the Kiev patriarchate: 'There are not so many of them, but this process occurs. Many simply begin attending our churches, but it is possible for a whole parish to transfer.' In order to do this, it is necessary to organize gatherings where parishioners and priests determine that they want to transfer to the Kiev patriarchate. 'Each religious community may select its own center,' Patriarch Filaret explained, 'because to change patriarchates is a legal right.'

He said that the Moscow patriarchate often accuses them of seizure of churches. However this is untrue. After all, the transfer occurs with the general agreement of the parish. "We do not drive anyone into the Kyiv patriarchate by force," Patriarch Filaret emphasized, 'but if people voluntarily want to transfer into our church, we are always open'."

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## **Many Catholic parishes in Donbass not functioning**

Religiia v. Ukraine (12.09.2014) -

[http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian\\_news/26844-katolicheskij-episkop-rasskazal-o-polozhenii-veruyushhix-na-donbasse.html](http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/26844-katolicheskij-episkop-rasskazal-o-polozhenii-veruyushhix-na-donbasse.html) - The Roman Catholic vicar bishop of the Kharkov and Zaporozhye diocese, Jan Sobilo, described the life of the local community of believers in Luhansk and Donetsk, which are under the control of militants with the support of Russia, in an interview on Radio Vatican on 2 September, Religiia v Ukraine reports, citing Portal-credo.ru.

The situation in east Ukraine in the regions of military activity is very difficult for Catholic parishes also, the bishop noted. Many Catholics have been forced to leave their homes for the sake of their families' safety, seeking shelter with relatives and friends in regions that are not enveloped in fighting. Civilians have often become victims of the conflict, and the performance of worship in many places has become practically impossible.

"In our diocese, which is consumed by fighting, we are experiencing very difficult times. There are practically no priests in the majority of parishes of Luhansk and Donetsk provinces. It is impossible to perform the Eucharist there because of bombardment and shelling, because people are afraid to leave their homes, and besides the majority of parishioners have left Donetsk. Life there is paralyzed just like the activity of our parishes. Priests who are located outside the boundaries of their parishes are taking care of refugees from hot spots and are organizing aid for them and finding a roof over their heads. In other parts of the diocese, where our parishes are still operating, we pray for and support those people who have fled from regions of fighting. We get news with great difficulty. We know, for example, that a building was destroyed somewhere in which our parishioners lived, but we do not know where they were at the time of the explosion—at home, fleeing, or they had left before that time. We know that as a result of fighting, some Catholics have died. The solidarity of our parishioners in the provinces that have not been affected by armed conflict is great: they open the doors of their homes and take refugees in as their own brothers and sisters," Bishop Jan Sobilo said.



We recall that recently the apostolic nuncio in Ukraine, Archbishop Thomas Gullickson, called the countries of the West to support Ukraine more actively in the struggle with Russian aggression. (tr. by PDS, posted 15 September 2014)

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## **Rebels confiscate Baptist church for Orthodox**

RISU (09.09.2014) – Militants of the Luhansk People's Republic seized a church building in the city of Antratsit (Luhansk province) on 8 September. Armed persons entered the house of worship and demanded the evacuation of the church premises.

We recall that the pastors of the "House of prayer for all nations" organized in the basement of the premises a bomb shelter and a soup kitchen. In addition, there continually were in the church people with disabilities.

Aleksei Gordeev, who investigated this subject, reports that in the morning of 8 September church attendants prepared a charity dinner. At 11:00 a.m. two automobiles drove up to the house of worship with armed persons. According to a source, they "requested" rudely that the premises be evacuated within 20 minutes, noting that they did not now belong to the church and were being transferred to ownership by the Orthodox Church for conducting services. At the same time they demanded not only the evacuation of the building but also surrender of church documents (right of ownership) and the seal.

The militants explained that they were acting with a priest's blessing. All this time, the "holy father" from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate (there are no other Orthodox churches in the city) was sitting in a car, observing what was happening.

Then the militants drove out the parishioners who had been in the church without even letting them collect their things. An eyewitness to these events said that the supporters of the LPR answered the question "Why?" by saying your confession supported the war ("against the wishes of residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics"—A.G.) and now there will be an Orthodox Sunday school here or something else.

As reported earlier, in June armed persons broke into a building belonging to a Buddhist parish in the village of Pankovka, Luhansk province, and ordered to leave the building. In July in Luhansk, terrorists of the LPR closed the Roman Catholic parish of the Holy Virgin Mary. At the same time, terrorists of the DPR seized the church of the Protection of the Holy Theotokos of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Donetsk. This was reported by Informator. (tr. by PDS, posted 9 September 2014)

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## **New Muftiat and mosque seizures as divide and rule in the Crimea?**

KHPG (08.09.2014) <http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1410122385> - The first pronouncements by the head of a new muftiat formed in the Crimea and a scandalous mosque seizure have aroused suspicion that the moves are aimed at creating a schism among Crimean Muslims and weakening the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People which has consistently opposed Russia's occupation of the Crimea.

The formation of the 'Tavrida Muftiat' was announced on Aug 22 after a meeting of around 100 Muslims from different parts of the Crimea. Its name in full - the 'Central

Spiritual Directorate of Crimean Muslims' - directly competes with the Spiritual Directorate of Crimean Muslims [SDCM]. The latter is the largest spiritual administrative centre of Ukrainian Muslims and its muftiat includes a representative of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People.

The Tavrida muftiat, headed by Ruslan Saitvaliev, was formed with the assistance of the head of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Russia. Shortly afterwards Saitvaliev gave an interview to a Russian newspaper in which he claimed that the majority of mosques in the Crimea are led by supporters of 'non-traditional Islam', specifically 'vakkhabites' or members of Hizb ul-Takhrir.

Since Hizb ul-Takhrir is a banned organization in the Russian Federation, this is no small assertion. It is also nonsense.

SDCM has written to the High Mufti of Russia asking for an explanation and expressing concern that the latter is facilitating schism among Crimean Muslims. They ask for clarification as to the High Mufti's role in the formation of the Tavrida Muftiat and for him to refute the worrying reports if they are false.

Roman Silantyev, described by well-known commentator Paul Goble as *"notorious for his attacks on Muslims in the Russian Federation but close to the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian security agencies"* had only positive things to say about the new muftiat in an interview given to ITAR-TASS. *"This organization, previously known as the Spiritual Centre of Crimean Muslims has in the space of several months become one of the important Muslim forces of the Crimea - believers trust it more and more since the values of traditional, moderate Islam are espoused, without political slogans"*.

He added that it has good prospects "since they're supported by Muslims from other regions, in particular the High Mufti of Russia".

On June 24 this same Silantyev asserted that "a lot of Muslim educational institutions are controlled by religious radicals". He was commenting on the first search carried out of a Crimean madrasa, or Muslim school by armed and masked FSB officers who burst into the school when the 13 children were asleep.

Silantyev claimed that the madrasa might be "a base for religious extremists", and that the Russian FSB are planning to "liquidate radical Islamic organizations in the Crimea". Goble notes that *"Silantyev has often been among the first Russian commentators to talk about crackdowns by the Russian security services and thus his predictions for what will happen next in Crimea and to its Muslims, most of whom are Crimean Tatars, needs to be taken seriously."*

Since that time there have been more raids of Muslim educational institutions and clerics' homes, as well as of the homes of Crimean Tatar families. The FSB are ostensibly searching for 'extremist literature' which is not difficult to find given a list of prohibited books in Russia with well over two thousand titles and the fact that Ukraine has no such list. It is however very clear that the people targeted are accused of 'extremism' because, for example, they took part in protest over the 5-year-ban imposed, with force, on the world-renowned Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemiliev returning to his native Crimea. Or, in the case of Mustafa Osmanov, because he provided the EuroMaidan protesters with hot food and has a Ukrainian flag on his car.

With elections to the Crimean parliament approaching, the occupation regime is using all methods to try to either coax Crimean Tatars to take part in the elections, or intimidate those who support the Mejlis which has called for their boycott.

It is likely that the effective seizure of the renowned Juma-Jami Mosque in Yevpatoria is linked and may not be the last of such religious land grabs. A group of Yevpatoria Muslims assert that the imam of the mosque, Elmar Abdulganiev decided to hold a meeting to elect new members of the community, without informing many of the members. A vote was taken in their absence with 12 new members elected. The community's safe was also broken into and all the money taken.

It is unfortunately no surprise that the new members have refused to be under SDCM and have turned to the new Tavrida Muftiat.

In the six months since Russia' invasion and annexation of the Crimea, the Mejlis or representative body of the vast majority of Crimean Tatars has refused to buckle under and accept Russian rule. The head of the Mejlis Refat Chubarov and a Mejlis adviser Ismet Yuksel have, like Mustafa Dzhemiliev, been banned from the Crimea for five years. Claims of 'extremism' have been increasingly used against the Mejlis and those who remain loyal to it. It is unfortunately likely that the creation, with Russian endorsement, of a new muftiat is part of this same offensive.

### **More information on Crimea collected by HRWF**

FSB preparing to close Muslim institutions in occupied Crimea, Silentyev says (1 July 2014) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/fsb-preparing-to-close-muslim-institutions-in-occupied-crimea-silantyevev-says>

St Petersburg Imam moves to Crimea to push Moscow's agenda (14 June) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/st-petersburg-imam-moves-to-crimea-to-push-moscows-agenda/>

Moscow trying to force Crimean MSD to break with Crimean Tatars (22 May 2014) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/moscow-trying-to-force-crimean-msd-to-break-with-crimean-tatars/>

Thousands of Crimean Tatars mark 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of deportation (18 May 2014) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/thousands-of-crimean-tatars-mark-70th-anniversary-of-deportation/>

FSB says Crimean Tatars must submit to Russian rule, face prison or risk 'disappearanc', Cemilev says (29 April 2014) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/fsb-says-crimean-tatars-must-submit-to-russian-rule-face-prison-or-risk-disappearance-cemilev-says/>

Crimean Tatars reaffirm choice to pursue autonomy within Ukraine (30 March 2014) by Paul Goble in The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/crimean-tatars-reaffirm-choice-to-pursue-autonomy-within-ukraine/>

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## **Prominent Jewish community member murdered by Kremlin-backed militants**

KHPG (08.09.2014) - <http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1410003742> - On Aug 30 Georgy (Eliayagu) Zylberbord was murdered in Donetsk by pro-Russian militants. He and a security guard had tried to stop the terrorists from plundering the cottage settlement on the outskirts of Donetsk where he lived. The Kremlin-backed militants murdered both men.

The Eurasian Jewish Congress reports (<http://ejc.org/page16/news47064.html>) that Zylberbord was 47 years old, a businessman, supporter of the arts and community, and a member of the board of the Donetsk Jewish Community.

Rabbi Pinkhas Vyshedski, a close friend of the murdered man, says that Zylberbord was a regular synagogue goer and generous supporter of the Donetsk Jewish community. For him and his wife Zylberbord was like a member of their family.

Rabbi Vyshedski left Donetsk because of the troubles and has opened an office of the Donetsk Jewish community in Kyiv. This helps Jewish people from Donetsk who've been forced to flee and have sought refuge in Kyiv and other parts of the country.

Most Jewish people from Donetsk have left the city and are living in camps for displaced people, community centres or renting flats in other cities. Some fled to Mariupol and are now again in danger as the militants together with strong Russian reinforcements advance.

Although there were concerns among the Jewish community in Donetsk back in April over leaflets purporting to be from the self-proclaimed Donetsk people's republic, there is no reason to believe that Zylberbord was killed because he was Jewish. Militants from the DPR have gained notoriety over recent months for plundering; violence; hostage-taking and also killings.

In one of the graves uncovered in Slovyansk after the militants fled, the mutilated bodies were found of four members of a Slovyansk evangelical church - the two sons - Ruvim and Albert - of Pastor Alexander Pavenko from the Slovyansk Evangelical Church of the Transformation, as well as deacons of the church Viktor Brodarsky, and Volodymyr Velychko.

Once again there is no evidence that the four were killed because they were Christians, although they were abducted from a church service.

The pro-Russian militants have, however, made it quite clear including in something they call their constitution that they recognize only the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Those clerics, such as Mufti Said Ismagilov and Pastor Sergei Kosyak who have remained in Donetsk both to help in evacuation efforts and to provide spiritual support for local believers, are thus in constant danger from the militants.

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## **Enforced departure of Turkish imams; FSB surveillance**

Forum 18 News Service (03.09.2014) - Russia's Federal Migration Service in the Crimean regional capital Simferopol has rejected all attempts by the Muftiate to allow for 23 Turkish imams and religious teachers to continue their service in Crimean mosques and madrassahs. Only five of the 23 remain, but will have to leave when their residence permits expire. The Crimean Muftiate had been helped by Turkish leaders in a programme that had been running for two decades. "We can't invite anyone now as they say we have no legal status," Jemil Bibishev of the Muftiate lamented to Forum 18 News Service on 26 August. "They told us to register first and then come back to them."

The spokesperson for Russia's Federal Migration Service in Crimea, Yana Smolova, confirmed that the Turkish imams and religious teachers had been required to leave. "If they want to begin mission work in Crimea they will have to get a visa from the Russian

embassy in Turkey in accordance with Russian law," she insisted to Forum 18 from Simferopol on 1 September.

Told that the Turkish imams and religious teachers were not seeking to "begin mission work in Crimea" but to continue work they have been doing in Crimea at the invitation of the Muftiate over many years, Smolova said the requirement to get a visa in their home country was independent of whether or not they have been working in Crimea.

The enforced departures of the Turkish imams and teachers came as a wide range of religious communities in Crimea complained to Forum 18 of surveillance by the Russian FSB security service (see below).

### **Legal status or not?**

Russian officials have given contradictory information to local religious communities over their legal status since Russia controversially annexed Crimea in March and imposed Russian law. The annexation has not been recognised by Ukraine or the international community.

The Crimean Department of the Russian Justice Ministry refused to tell Forum 18 from Simferopol on 26 August whether religious communities' previous registration under Ukrainian law remains valid. The Russian authorities are requiring all religious communities which want legal status to register under Russian law, with a deadline of 1 January 2015.

However, many religious communities which are subject to religious organisations in Ukraine – including the Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran and Armenian Apostolic Churches – remain uncertain whether and how they will be able to retain legal status (see forthcoming F18News article).

### **Turkish imams and teachers**

Crimea's Muftiate has had an agreement over many years with Turkey's Diyanet (the state-backed body with oversight over the Muslim community) for it to supply imams and teachers to help Crimea's Muslim community. "These Turkish imams and teachers helped our communities to develop and people liked them and got used to them," a Muftiate spokesperson told Forum 18 from Simferopol on 13 August. "Of course we wanted them to continue working here."

The spokesperson noted that the Muftiate has new local leaders in training but stressed that the abrupt enforced departure of the Turkish guests was "inconvenient for them and us and not pleasant for us".

The spokesperson was speaking the day the Diyanet representative in Crimea, Mevlut Seyhan, had been forced to leave. The previous day Deputy Mufti Ayder Ismailov on behalf of the Muftiate had officially thanked him for his work in Crimea in a formal presentation, according to the Muftiate website.

"Mevlut Seyhan was due to have been here for five years, but in the end he was here for only a year," the Muftiate spokesperson lamented to Forum 18. "We were very satisfied with all the imams and teachers and very grateful to them."

Bibishev, the official of the Muftiate involved in overseeing the foreign visitors, insists that the need for the Turkish imams and teachers remains. "We have 16 mosques without an imam," he told Forum 18. "Nor do we have enough religious teachers."

## **Uncertainty over foreign religious leaders**

In addition to communities belonging to the Crimean Muftiate, a number of other religious communities fear it will become more difficult to secure adequate numbers of clergy. While many religious leaders are Ukrainian citizens (some of whom may be prepared to take Russian passports), others are led by citizens of other countries.

A number of religious leaders left after the March annexation, either because of the uncertainty or because they did not want to remain in a Russian-ruled Crimea. Among them were Protestants, Jews and Orthodox priests of the Kiev Patriarchate.

One of the most recent to depart was Salvation Army Captain Ruslan Zuyev in June, though the two Crimean Salvation Army communities continue under local leaders. Zuyev was vocal in expressing publicly his pro-Ukrainian views, which led to his repeated summoning by the Russian FSB security service (see below).

"One of our priests – a Polish citizen – was told directly he won't get a visa in future," a representative of the Roman Catholic Odessa and Simferopol Diocese told Forum 18 on 2 September. The Roman Catholics have 12 priests in Crimea (eight Polish and four Ukrainian citizens). In addition they have eight sisters (five Ukrainian, one Latvian and two Polish citizens).

"The Ukrainian citizens among them said they would not take Russian passports which are being offered, so we don't yet know what will happen," the Catholic added. "All continue to serve at present."

The Lutheran Church – which has seven communities in Crimea – currently has no pastor. The previous pastor, Markus Göring, and his wife Lilli, returned to Germany in late August for family reasons, Lutherans told Forum 18. One local deacon remains. Expected visitors from Germany to a Lutheran summer camp in Crimea in August called off the visit because of the new requirement for a Russian visa, Lutherans added.

## **FSB security service surveillance**

Representatives of a range of religious communities have told Forum 18 that they are under surveillance by the Russian FSB security service. "Of course all our calls are listened to," one Muslim told Forum 18 in late August in a typical response. "They know all about everything we do." A member of a non-Muslim religious community told Forum 18 in late August that fellow community members were being pressured to write reports on him and other community leaders. A member of yet a third community told Forum 18 that "they are constantly watching and putting pressure on us".

One Roman Catholic priest was approached by a man who claimed to be from the FSB, Catholics told Forum 18, asking that the priest not be identified. The man showed him "some kind of identification" and asked the priest to inform on the activities and actions of other Catholic priests. The priest refused.

Greek Catholic priest Fr Bogdan Kostetsky, who serves in the Holy Virgin parish in Yevpatoriya, has been summoned by the FSB several times, his fellow priest Nikolai Gavrilyuk told the Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU) for a 3 September article. Among other questions, FSB officers asked him about his attitude to Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who headed the Greek Catholic Church until his death in 1944.

A sermon on the Catholic faith given by Sheptytsky in 1900 was added to Russia's Federal List of Extremist Materials in October 2013.

Fr Kostetsky and 15 parishioners were seized by unknown people as they travelled to Yalta on 2 September, RISU noted. They were freed the following day, but the priest declined to explain who had held them.

The duty officer at the Yevpatoriya FSB – who declined to give his name – told Forum 18 on 3 September that the head, Igor Danshin, was out of the office. Told about the FSB questioning of Fr Kostetsky, the duty officer responded: "And you believe this?" He insisted that he had never heard of such summonses and interrogations. "I would know if this had happened." Asked to declare categorically that Fr Kostetsky had never been summoned to the Yevpatoriya FSB security service, the officer then said: "I can't confirm this for certain."

The duty officer also claimed not to know about the apparent kidnapping of Fr Kostetsky and 15 of his parishioners on the way to Yalta.

No one at the Yalta police was prepared to discuss with Forum 18 on 3 September the apparent kidnapping of Fr Kostetsky and his parishioners.

Captain Zuyev of the Salvation Army was repeatedly summoned by the FSB security service before his June departure. "But this was more a political issue connected with his vocal pro-Ukrainian views," a Salvation Army official told Forum 18 from the Ukrainian capital Kiev on 3 September. "The Salvation Army is an apolitical organisation."

### **FSB-led raids and prosecution**

In addition to conducting surveillance of religious communities and their leaders, the Russian FSB security service is heavily involved in raids particularly on Muslim mosques, madrassahs and private homes in the hunt for religious literature controversially banned as "extremist". The FSB helped bring the first known administrative prosecution for "extremism" for religious literature since the Russian annexation of Crimea. Esadullah Bairov was fined on 26 August at Dzhankoi District Court in northern Crimea.

Bairov – one of Crimea's Deputy Muftis - has not appealed against the fine as he is too busy with tasks in the Muftiate, he told Forum 18 on 3 September. Nor has he yet paid the fine, though the verdict does not go into legal force until 8 September according to the court website.

Bairov added that a separate prosecution is also being prepared against him in his capacity as director of Terciman Muslim bookshop in Simferopol (the name of the shop – which means "Translator" – is the title of a journal published from 1883 by the noted Crimean Tatar scholar Ismail Gasprinsky).

An official from the FSB security service, accompanied by other officials who did not identify themselves, raided the bookshop in July. The officials found several copies of two books which have controversially been banned under Russian "extremism" legislation. "We did an audit of all the books in the shop using the online version of the Federal List of Extremist Materials," Bairov told Forum 18. "We missed these two because the listed titles were not exactly the same – one had an extra comma in it."

### **Arson attack**

On 21 July, unknown attackers set fire to the country home in the village of Mramornoe in Simferopol District belonging to Archbishop Kliment (Kushch), head of the Kiev Patriarchate's Simferopol and Crimea Diocese. The arsonists did not touch the next-door Transfiguration Church, which is built on his property.

Archbishop Kliment told Radio Free Europe's Crimean Service on 23 July that the arson attack was a further attempt to intimidate and drive out the Kiev Patriarchate. He complained that the police do nothing to catch the perpetrators of actions against his Church or prevent further attacks.

On the morning of 1 June, a mob attacked the Kiev Patriarchate church in a military base in the village of Perevalnoe in Simferopol District. They prevented the Sunday service from going ahead and took over the building. The church's priest, Fr Ivan Katkalo, was one of several Kiev Patriarchate priests forced to leave Crimea.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted the 21 June attack on Archbishop Kliment's country home in a 17 August report on human rights in Ukraine, made public on 29 August. The report also noted the enforced closure of four Kiev Patriarchate churches in Crimea, two of them on military bases and two through "administrative pressure".

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## Two churches shelled in Luhansk region

Religious Information Service of Ukraine (22.08.2014)

[http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/community/temples\\_church\\_property/57440/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/temples_church_property/57440/) - Two Orthodox churches were recently shelled in the Luhansk region: one in Luhansk and another in the village Novosvitlivka.

On August 20 terrorists attacked the Holy Protection Church in the village Novosvitlivka (Luhansk region).

"In the church at that time civilians were hiding from shelling. Soldiers of the battalion Aidar, which controls the town, had to retreat from their positions so that the terrorists ceased shelling the church," said Aidar sources.

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## Chronicle of terror: Religious persecution by pro-Russian militants in east Ukraine

Institute for Religious Freedom (19.08.2014) -

[http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=421:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=421:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61) - Militants from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) terrorist organizations continue to steal, kill, and threaten priests/pastors and Christians in the separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

Also, pro-Russian militants continue to seize church buildings and rehabilitation centers to serve as their headquarters, ammunition depots, and firing points from which they continually attack Ukrainian anti-terrorism forces.

Here are the facts from June to July, 2014, as summarized by the Institute for Religious Freedom:

**On June 8**, during the Trinity Sunday holiday, gunmen under the command of Russian Igor Girkin (Strelkov) kidnapped four members of the Transfiguration Evangelical Church in terrorist occupied Sloviansk, Donetsk Oblast.

Among them were deacons Volodymyr Velychko and Viktor Bradarskyi and Ruvym and



Albert Pavenko, two adult sons of the church's senior pastor. According to one of Sloviansk's deputy prosecutors, who escaped the DNR's captivity, the church members were tortured and shoot the next day, June 9, and some were burned in their own car to portray their deaths as the result of shelling from the Ukrainian army.

"The victims' bodies were buried by the terrorists in a mass grave at the Children's Hospital in Sloviansk, alongside the bodies of two dozen dead terrorists," said Anton Herashchenko, advisor to the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

**On June 14** in Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, pro-Russian terrorists tragically killed Sergiy Skorobahach, pastor of the Restoration Protestant Church and chairman for the City Council of Churches. According to local residents and media sources, the pastor's vehicle was shelled by DNR militants.

**On June 15**, armed militants looted the premises of the New Generation Evangelical Church in Horlivka, Donetsk Oblast. They stole computers and other equipment from the office, as well as legal documents related to the church's charitable funds.

**On June 16**, armed members of the self-proclaimed DNR occupied the Word of Life Church's building in Horlivka. "Yesterday, after the work day, there was a prayer meeting at the church. Men with guns came and demanded we open all the rooms. They kept us there for about 1.5 hours and then ordered us to leave. They told us that it would now serve as their headquarters and the building itself was nationalized," one of parishioners said.

**On June 17**, militants in Donetsk seized the Evening Light Christian Rehabilitation Center. Initially terrorists captured 27 patients, then the head of the center and his assistant, all of whom were held in the basement. Fortunately, they were released the next day.

**On June 19** they captured the Word of Life Evangelical Church in Torez (Donetsk Oblast), which is a member of the Protestant Church of Ukraine. "Armed people with Cossack Guard insignia stormed the church building. They ordered us to take the furniture and get out, insisting that these churches are sects and they will be destroyed. The people in the building were threatened with a firing squad if they made a fuss about the incident," said Donetsk pastor, Sergiy Kosiak.

**On June 21**, armed militants seized the Word of Life Protestant Church in Shakhtarsk, Donetsk Oblast. They also captured Pastor Nikolai Kalinichenko, who was later released, and stole his car. "The terrorists declared that, if the pastor continued to engage in religious activities, he would be shot," a statement indicated. Later, media reported that the Word of Life Church building was used by terrorists of the DNR to hold men aged 20-40 years in order to forcefully recruit them into the militia's ranks.

**On June 26**, militants broke into the building of the Evangelical Church of Winners in Druzhkivka, Donetsk Oblast, and took Pastor Pavlo Lisko and his wife to their headquarters. "Armed militants stole money, documents from the safe, and the office computer and took them along with the pastor and his wife to the militants' headquarters, a building near the Druzhkivka City Council," said a clergyman. The pastor and his wife were held captive in separate cells and accused of cooperating with Americans and giving assistance to people leaving Donbas. After almost a week of captivity, the church ministers were released.

**On July 3**, DNR terrorists in Donetsk took captive Greek Catholic priest Tykhon (Sergiy) Kulbaka. Prior to that, he repeatedly received threats, including his car being vandalized with graffiti of Nazi symbols. Finally, on July 14, the priest was released from captivity by the militants, but with compromised health.

**On July 3**, Patriarch Filaret (Denisenko) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) stated that in the Luhansk region "worship services are not actually being held in our temples because the separatists-terrorists prohibit it." He also said that armed men threatened to execute UOC-KP Bishop of Luhansk and Starobelsk, Afanasiy (Yavrovskiy). Later, militants forcibly expelled the Bishop of Luhansk and also tampered with the brakes of his car, obviously hoping to cause an accident leading to his death.

**On July 8**, Donetsk terrorists kidnapped UOC-KP Archpriest Juriy Ivanov. "Earlier, separatists came to the priest's home and demanded that he request an urgent visit from the Archbishop of the Kyivan Patriarchate in Donetsk, Sergiy (Gorobtsov), apparently with the intent of additional abductions," said UOC-KP Archbishop, Yevstratiy (Zorya). On July 30, after three weeks of captivity, the priest was released and transported to a safe place.

**On July 9**, armed militants seized the Donetsk Christian University and read this order: due to the military situation in the city, the Donetsk Christian University will be made available to military units of the DNR, including all property, equipment, and other supplies and those who do not obey will face court-martial.

This was reported by former Rector, Mykhailo Cherenkov. He added that dorm residents and the University's employees were kicked out, but on the next day they were allowed to take computers, documents, and personal belongings.

"At this moment, armed militants are living in the dorms of the Donetsk Christian University. The gates are blocked, there are checkpoints, people are being held prisoner on the property, and much of the militants' weapons and equipment is being kept there," said Oleg Shtein, University Vice-Rector of Administration, in comments to the IRF.

**On July 15**, Catholic priest Victor Vonsovych, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Parish in Horlivka and Donetsk Dean of the Roman Catholic Church, was arrested. He was held in the occupied SBU (Ukrainian Secret Service) building and was released from captivity on July 25. Militants warned the priest that he would be shot if he returned to Horlivka.

"Now they prey on Catholic priests," said Bishop Stanislav Shyrokoradiuk from the Ordinary Kharkiv-Zaporizhia Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. According to him, there are many provocations against peaceful civilians and the clergy are doing everything possible to rescue people.

**On July 27**, the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Debaltseve, Donetsk Oblast, was destroyed by artillery fire. The Church website said: "Directly opposite the church building was a deployment of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic's militia. They hid in the bushes with weapons, alongside Grad, and began firing mortars. Gunmen used volley tactics, firing from one location and then quickly moving to another part of the city to continue firing."

**On July 27**, near Ilovaisk, Pastor Oleksandr Kobzev of Christ Church was kidnapped. This was reported by Donetsk Mufti Said Ismagilov. The pastor's location remains unknown.

These facts indicate that pro-Russian terrorists are deliberately attacking the religious communities they object to areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts under their control.

It should be recalled that in May 2014, the self-proclaimed "People's Republic of Donetsk" declared in its "constitution" that, in their captured territories, "the original and dominant

faith is Orthodox faith... adhering to the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)."

As reported by the IRF, the Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine called on the international community, including the monitoring missions of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and the EU, "to make an effort to prevent the continuation and escalation of religious intolerance in the areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by armed separatists."

Translated by Julia Vityuk, edited by Elizabeth Martin

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## **Russia to ban books from Crimean Muslims**

Muslim Village (07.08.2014) <http://muslimvillage.com/2014/08/07/56600/russia-ban-books-crimean-muslims/> - The Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea has called on Muslims living in the disputed Black Sea peninsula to destroy books and material that is on the Russian black list.

Around 300,000 Muslims in Crimea, mainly native Crimean Tatars, are having to adjust to new laws enforced by Russia after their homeland was annexed from Ukraine following a referendum in March.

As Russia's Federal List of Extremist Materials comes into effect in the region, a number of Islamic religious books, that under Ukrainian law was deemed legal, have now been outlawed.

"The Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea informs Muslim religious organizations, and society that Russia's federal list of banned extremist materials extends over Crimea. Therefore distribution, production or storage of materials mentioned in the list is forbidden and will entail responsibility," said a statement released on the Religious Administration's website.

"Please study the list and take measures to eliminate prohibited materials if they exist," the statement advised.

The Federal List of Extremist Materials was compiled by the Russian Ministry of Justice on July 14, 2007 and contained 1,058 items as of December 25, 2011. Producing, storing or distributing the materials on the list is an offense in Russia, the Qirim News Agency reported.

Some Islamic books that have been banned include the work of popular 20th century Turkish scholar Said Nursi and the famous "Fortress of the Muslim" book of supplications of Prophet Muhammad, which was collected by ancient Muslim scholar Saeed Bin Ali Bin Wahf Al-Qahtani. A certain biography of the Prophet Muhammad is also banned.

The list also includes texts and books such as Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf, Jehovah's Witness publications.

Since the annexation in March, around 3,000 Crimean Tatars have left the peninsula for mainland Ukraine.

The U.N. has also pointed to the erosion of human rights in Crimea, which remains under the occupation of pro-Russian militias who particularly threaten the Crimean Tatars.

Crimean Tatars have complained that they have been targeted for speaking their Turkic language in public and have had their homes marked by pro-Russian militiamen.

The Crimean Tatar Mejlis (Parliament) was also threatened with closure after they organized protests for former Mejlis head Mustafa Jemilev, who has been barred from entering the peninsula for five years along with current leader Refat Chubarov.

The Crimean Tatars have largely opposed the annexation of Crimea by Russia, fearing a repeat of the events of 1944 when they were completely expelled as part of former Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's policy.

They gradually started returning in the early 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union, but still live as a minority in their homeland as they were displaced by ethnic Russian settlers who migrated there later on.

Since the annexation, Russia has been granting Russian citizenship to the people of Crimea in replacement of their Ukrainian nationality. Crimean Tatars, who have campaigned to reject Russian citizenship, reserve the right to remain as Ukrainian citizens, but will by default become foreigners in their homeland.

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## **Inaction of law enforcement officials results in impunity and further injury**

JW Official Website (28.07.2014)

<http://www.jw.org/en/news/legal/by-region/ukraine/religious-hate-crimes-impunity/> -

"When a crime is not punished, people feel it is safe to do wrong." This proverb is proving true in Ukraine, where a rising number of Jehovah's Witnesses are victims of hate crimes. Jehovah's Witnesses are grateful that the government of Ukraine guarantees freedom of worship, yet they are alarmed that hate crimes against them are increasing and that authorities are allowing perpetrators to act with impunity.

### ***Escalating attacks***

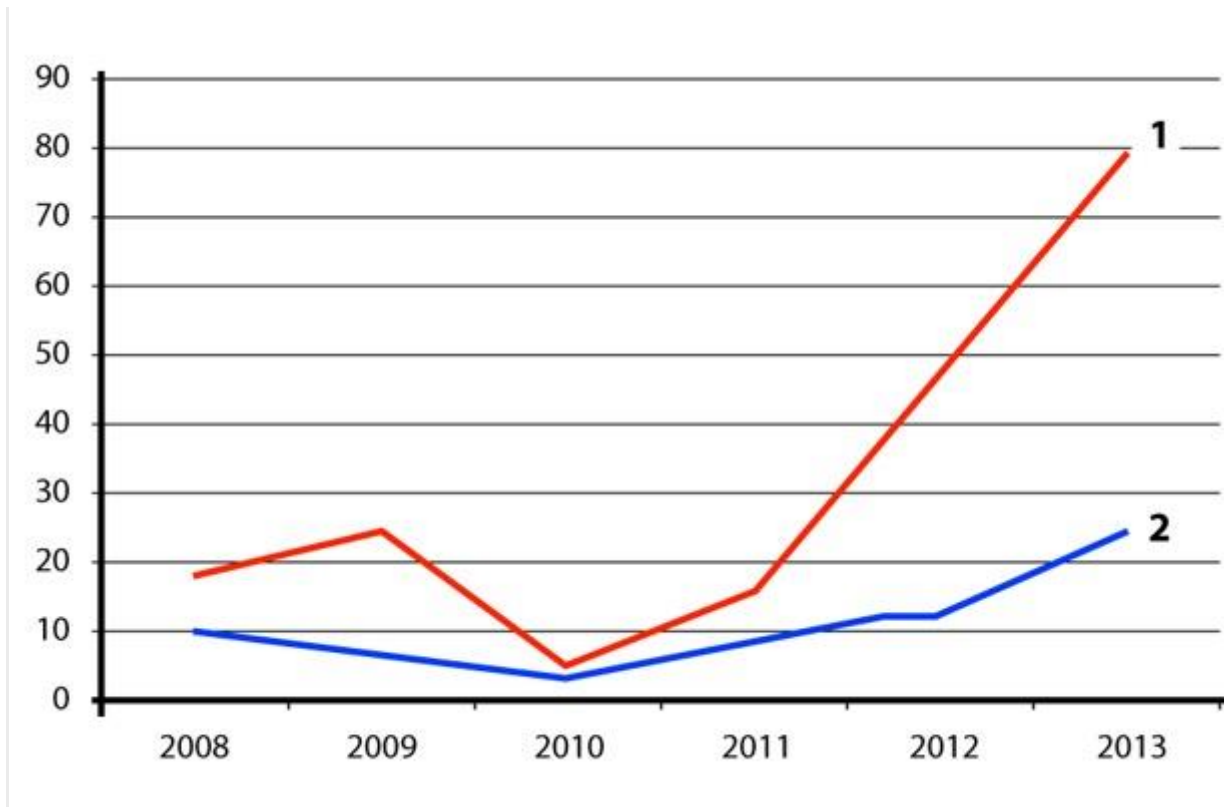
Since 2008, there have been 64 physical assaults in Ukraine against Jehovah's Witnesses while they were engaged in or had just completed religious activity. Sixteen of these assaults were committed by Orthodox priests.

From 2008 to 2013 there were also 190 acts of vandalism against Kingdom Halls and perpetrators made 13 attempts to destroy the buildings by arson. During 2012 and 2013, acts of vandalism against Kingdom Halls doubled compared to the previous four years.

The severity of the attacks is also increasing. In 2012, two Kingdom Halls in the Donetsk Region were completely destroyed by fire. In 2013, two incidents of physical assault caused injuries so severe that the victims required extended hospitalization.

### ***Attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine***

The graph below illustrates the increasing attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses and their Kingdom Halls in Ukraine.



[1] Acts of vandalism; [2] Physical assaults

The Witnesses have turned to the authorities for protection but have found no relief because the authorities have not conducted prompt and effective investigations or acted to appropriately punish the offenders.

### ***Inaction by authorities***



### ***Arson and vandalism of Horlivka Kingdom Hall, Donetsk Region, June 5, 2014***

**Vandalism.** The police fail to respond or are slow to respond when an incident is reported. If a criminal report is filed, authorities often refuse to initiate proceedings or delay in doing so. Even if legal action is instituted, either the prosecutors fail to charge the perpetrator or the courts impose only a token punishment. From 2008 through 2012, authorities brought no criminal charges against the perpetrators in the 111 incidents of vandalism.

**Physical attacks.** Police often do not investigate the attacks properly or make efforts to identify the perpetrators. When proceedings are instituted, authorities seldom charge or punish the offenders. When courts do punish perpetrators, punishments imposed are not commensurate with the crimes because the attacks are not classified as hate crimes.

This scenario of impunity emboldens the perpetrators to continue the pattern of violence

### ***Beating of Oleksandr Tretiak***



A particularly egregious attack occurred on November 26, 2013, against Oleksandr Tretiak, a 41-year-old Witness who was returning home after engaging in religious activity. Three men viciously beat Mr. Tretiak for over 20 minutes. He identified the attackers as Ruslan Ivanov; Anatoliy Dovhan, a retired lieutenant colonel of the police; and Evheniy Ihlinskiy, Dovhan's son-in-law and a traffic officer. Mr. Tretiak managed to escape and was rushed to the hospital with severe injuries, including multiple cuts and bruises, a craniocerebral injury and a broken nose.

Despite his condition, the investigator characterized the crime as a "minor" bodily injury inflicted by three "unidentified" persons. After two weeks in the hospital, Mr. Tretiak was prematurely released—a longer hospital stay would have compelled authorities to designate the attack as more than a "minor" crime. His severe injuries required that he be readmitted to the hospital the very next day. In total, he spent 23 days in the hospital.

Recently, charges were brought against Ruslan Ivanov, one of the attackers, but only after he fled. Mr. Tretiak fears that the perpetrators may target him again. He states, "I am convinced that the attackers were motivated by religious hatred for Jehovah's Witnesses and intended to kill me."

### ***Will officials respond?***

Ukraine is a country where over 150,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses have enjoyed freedom of worship for years and where officials have proved helpful with past difficulties. The Witnesses hope that law enforcement officials in Ukraine will properly investigate criminal acts and prosecute the perpetrators so that they no longer act with impunity.

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## **Roman Catholic clergy targeted in eastern Ukraine**

### ***Militants abduct Roman Catholic priest in Gorlovka***

Religiia v Ukraine (16.07.2014) - Militants of the Donetsk People's Republic detained Viktor Vonsovich, a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine. According to news from Pastor Sergei Kosiak from Donetsk, the priest was detained at a checkpoint at the exit from Gorlovka, Donetsk province, Religiia v Ukraine reports, citing InVictory.

"Father Viktor was riding in his Opel Astra auto, wearing clerical clothing. He had on his person documents attesting his identity and priestly office. It is difficult to imagine what provoked the arrest of a minister of God by armed people," the Donetsk pastor wrote on his page.

We recall that yesterday it was learned that UGKTs priest Tikhon Kulbaka was released, who had been held captive by the Russian Orthodox Army.

Earlier, the Ukrainian interior ministry reported that a grave with two priests from Sloviansk, Donetsk province, who had been martyred by militants, was discovered. (tr. by PDS, posted 16 July 2014)

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## **Russian lies about Sloviansk church members murdered by militants**

By Halya Coynash

Human Rights in Ukraine (16.07.2014) /

<http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1405482662> - Faced with the murder by Kremlin-backed militants of four members of a Sloviansk evangelical church, Russia's state-owned 'Voice of Russia' radio could have stayed silent. It opted for a far more cynical approach. Against all evidence, it [reports](#) that the men were murdered by the Ukrainian army for helping 'insurgents'.

In so doing, it turned upside down a report by Anton Herashchenko, advisor to the Minister of the Interior on Monday. Herashchenko [is reported](#) to have stated that a grave had been found with the tortured bodies of two priests and the two sons of one of them. Herashchenko asserted that they had been tortured for taking food to soldiers of the Ukrainian army.

Most incredibly, Voice of Russia actually [quotes](#) Herashchenko as its source, without providing any link which could be checked. In its version, however, the Interior Ministry spokesperson said that the men had been killed by "Ukrainian nationalists"

Herashchenko gave no details with this used by Voice of Russia to enable mention of a couple of people who have allegedly supported separatist calls. The Russian radio station could not even refrain from slandering one priest, Father Yury Ivanov, from the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate. [As reported here](#), Father Yury disappeared on July 8, and there is every reason to believe that his abductors were from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.

The same militants are also believed to be behind [the abduction](#) on Tuesday of Polish Roman Catholic priest from Horlivka, Father Viktor Wasowicz

[The murder victims were in fact](#) the two sons – Ruvim and Albert - of Pastor Alexander Pavenko from the Sloviansk evangelical Church of the Transformation, as well as deacons of the church Viktor Brodarsky, and Volodymyr Velychko.

Their abduction during a religious service [was reported](#) on June 8 with Sloviansk Pastor Petro Dudnik cited as the source of the information. It was quite clear that they had

been taken hostage by the Kremlin-backed militants. The only doubt is, in fact, the motivation, since it seems likely from the reports that the militants were hoping to extort money in ransom for the young men.

Instead they tortured and murdered all four members of the church. Perhaps those EU leaders who are insisting, together with Russian President Vladimir Putin, that the militants must be part of the 'peace negotiations' could take the opportunity to ask them why.

**See also:**

- [Polish Catholic priest seized by Kremlin-backed militants:](#)

<http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1405458883>

- [Greek Catholic Priest taken hostage by militants freed:](#)

<http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1405370510>

- [Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest disappears in Donetsk:](#)

<http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1404473565>

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## **Two priests from Slavyansk killed for assisting self-defense forces**

The Voice of Russia (15.07.2014) / [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014\\_07\\_15/Two-priests-from-Slavyansk-killed-for-assistance-to-self-defense-forces-8489/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_07_15/Two-priests-from-Slavyansk-killed-for-assistance-to-self-defense-forces-8489/) - The mutilated bodies of two priests from Slavyansk and of two sons of one of them were found, confirmed the adviser of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Anton Gerashchenko. "We found a grave of two priests from Slavyansk, who were tortured and killed by the Ukrainian nationalists. The whole country and the whole world will know about the terrible atrocities that terrorists conducted. You will learn about it from concrete evidence," said Gerashchenko.

He said that the priests were killed for helping self-defense forces. According to him, the bodies of two sons of one of the priests were found in the grave as well. On July 8 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church announced that a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was kidnapped in Donetsk, Kiev Patriarchate Archpriest Yuri Ivanov.

In late May, an Orthodox priest Vladimir Maretsky who was detained by the Ukrainian military, was released and reported that he was beaten, in order for him to confess in his assistance to self-defenders.

Before that, the head of the Odessa diocese Metropolitan Agafangel confirmed the threats from the radicals.

In early April, the priest of Russian Orthodox Church Oleg Mokryak and the head of the Union of Orthodox Citizens of Ukraine Valery Kaurov were persecuted by Ukrainian Security Service, which found in their words calls for separatism. Secretary of the Odessa diocese, Archpriest Andrei Novikov left his hometown and moved to Moscow after "the



same investigator, who recently came for Archpriest Oleg Mokryak with Ukrainian Security Service, called him."

"I'm sure if this government keeps its position, it will handle the physical liquidation of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine," said Novikov to the newspaper Vzgliad.

Read more:

[http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014\\_07\\_15/Two-priests-from-Slavyansk-killed-for-assistance-to-self-defense-forces-8489/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_07_15/Two-priests-from-Slavyansk-killed-for-assistance-to-self-defense-forces-8489/)

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## **Protestant and Greek Catholics persecuted by separatists in East Ukraine**

**Human Rights Without Frontiers** condemns the attacks and acts of intolerance committed against believers and churches in East Ukraine that are not Orthodox Churches affiliated to the Patriarchate of Moscow. A video ([http://24tv.ua/home/showSingleNews.do?terroristi\\_proti\\_nas\\_voyuye\\_vatika\\_n\\_na\\_zhidobanderivski\\_groshi\\_video&objectId=459309](http://24tv.ua/home/showSingleNews.do?terroristi_proti_nas_voyuye_vatika_n_na_zhidobanderivski_groshi_video&objectId=459309)) appeared on the web on 28 June in which separatists, some of whom are people in Orthodox cassocks, urge to fight against the "fascists, Nazi and Jewish-Banderovite troops".

### **Ukrainian Protestants complain of persecution in rebel republics: Statement of heads of Evangelical Churches of Ukraine**

Institute of Religious Liberty (08.07.2014) / <http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?lang=uk> - From the time of the activation in eastern Ukraine of separatist movements and the proclamation of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" (DNR and LNR), Christians of the eastern provinces, especially of the evangelical confession, have increasingly become victims of religious persecution.

Deliberate attacks of armed militants against evangelical believers have been accompanied by abductions, beatings, tortures, shooting threats, pogroms in houses of worship, and commandeering of houses of worship, rehabilitation centers, and other worship and adjacent facilities, causing damage to the health and personal property of pastors and church personnel.

In the course of May and June 2014, incidents of abductions and beating of evangelical pastors and ministers occurred in Slavyansk, Gorlovka, Donetsk, and Druzhkovko. Terrorists of DNR and LNR not only prevent religious activity of evangelical Christians, but they also commandeer house of worship for locating their own headquarters, hospitals, and artillery bases. Such incidents occurred frequently in Donetsk and Gorlovka, as well as in Slavyansk, Shakhtersk, Druzhkovko, and Torez of Donetsk province and in the Luhansk region.

In addition, as a result of a terrorist act on a bridge in Mariupol, on 14 June militants of DNR killed the pastor of the Renewal church, Sergei Skorobagach, who was the chairman of the Council of Churches of the city.

The Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine has condemned any religious persecution and discrimination against believers of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, by whatever motives they may be justified

Intolerance and hostility on religious grounds are not inherent in Ukrainian society, in which for more than 20 years now representatives of more than 50 diverse confessions have coexisted peacefully and cooperated fruitfully. Freedom of religious confessions is an achievement of independent Ukraine, thanks to which inter-religious peace and harmony have been established in our state.

We call the international community, including monitoring missions of UNO, OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Union, to devote efforts for preventing the continuation and escalation of religious intolerance in territories of eastern Ukraine that are controlled by armed separatists. We are sure that the entire world community must condemn the restriction of religious liberty in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, which has reached a level of physical violence toward non-Orthodox, including a real threat to the lives of evangelical Christians in the east of Ukraine.

We ask believers around the world to join with our prayers for peace in the east of Ukraine, an end to terrorism and bloodshed, and reestablishment of normal life and fullness of rights and liberties of citizens of Ukraine living in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, regardless of their nationality, religious confession, language, and worldview.

Signed by members of the Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine and published in Kiev on 8 July 2014:

Anatoly Gavriiliuk, senior bishop of the Center of Independent Charismatic Christian Churches of Ukraine (Full Gospel);

Valery Antoniuk, chairman of the All-Ukrainian Union of churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists;

Mikhail Panochko, senior bishops of Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine;

Vasily Raichinets, senior presbyter of the Union of Free Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine;

Sergei Shaptala, chairman of the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Ukraine;

Sergei Datsko, chairman of the board of the Association of Missionary Churches of Evangelical Christians of Ukraine;

Nikolai Salamakha, deputy senior bishops of the Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church;

Vischeslav Gorpinchuk, bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church;

Anatoly Kaliuzhnyi, bishop of the Council of Independent Evangelical Churches of Ukraine.

(tr. by PDS, posted 8 July 2014)

### **Greek Catholic priest still captive of rebel republic**

RISU (06.07.2014) / [http://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all\\_news/community/scandals/56965/](http://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/community/scandals/56965/) - The Donetsk exarch of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGKTs), Stefan Menok, called believers to pray for Fr Tikhon Kulbaka, who was kidnapped by Donetsk terrorists. The priest suffers from diabetes and needs daily medication.

"We received information that Father Tikhon is being forcibly held by representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic. Where exactly he is being held and who exactly is holding him, we do not know. For several days now I have been trying to find someone with whom it would be possible to conduct negotiations for Father Tikhon's release, but all has failed," Vladyka Stefan told the Department of Information of UGKTs.

As is known, for several days now there has been no communication from the secretary of the Council of Churches and Religious Organizations of Donetsk province, UGKTs priest Tikhon Kulbaka.

Vladyka Stefan expressed deep concern over the forcible detention of Fr Tikhon, since the priest is ill with diabetes and he has a weak heart. "As is known, people with a diagnosis of diabetes need daily medications. Therefore we are very worried and we are praying that all will be well for our priest," Vladyka Stefan noted.

According to the Donetsk exarch, Fr Tikhon often spoke out critically about the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. (tr. by PDS, posted 7 July 2014)

### **Protestants rejoice over liberation of their church and city**

Invictory.com (05.07.2014) /

[http://www.invictory.com/news/story-51954-](http://www.invictory.com/news/story-51954-%D0%A1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%8F%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA.html)

[%D0%A1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%8F%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA.html](http://www.invictory.com/news/story-51954-%D0%A1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%8F%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA.html) -

Militants have left the "Good News" church that they had earlier commandeered in Slaviansk, Donetsk province, Ukraine, and they also have left the city. This was reported by the church's pastor, Petr Dudnik, the Christian megaportal [invictory.com](http://www.invictory.com) transmits.

"What a good morning; simply splendid news. There is not a single person in a military uniform left in our church. The brothers who had been in the basement of SBU have been released and they are leaving town. It seems that the militiamen have left the city and this means that neither the one side nor the other side will be shooting and peace will come. Grant that we will see this," Dudnik wrote on his Facebook page.

The information was confirmed by MVD Minister Arsen Avakov. "They are fleeing. By morning intelligence is reporting that Girkin and a substantial portion of militants have fled from Slaviansk, sowing confusion among the few stragglers. They are moving to Gorlovka. Along the way, our armed groups are 'greeting' them. The terrorists have suffered losses and are being captured," he wrote on Facebook. . . . (tr. by PDS, posted 6 July 2014)

### **Terrorists seize church in Shaktarsk and threaten to shoot its pastor**

RISU (24.06.2014) / [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/community/scandals/56842/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/scandals/56842/) -

Supporters of the Donetsk People's Republic seized a church of the Protestant Church Word of Life in the city Shakhtarsk, Donetsk region, *Donetskie Vesti* reports.

Pastor Mykola Kalinichenko was also taken prisoner. The newspaper said the pastor was later released, and his car was taken away.

The terrorists told the pastor that they would shoot him if he continued his religious activity, reads the statement.

This is the seventh case of illegal entry and seizure of church buildings in the Donetsk region.

It was also stated that religious intolerance is increasing with the growth of military tension.

Earlier it was reported that church buildings in Gorlivka and Toreza were destroyed and seized.

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## **Desecration and arson attack on Horlivka Kingdom Hall**

European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (20.06.2014) - The latest arson attack on a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses took place in the town of Horlivka in Donetsk Region on 5 June 2014.

As recorded on surveillance cameras, at about 9:00 p.m., a group of armed people broke into the property, removed the door lock and entered the building. They destroyed furniture, lecterns, doors, windows, bathroom furniture, sound equipment, and religious literature. They sprayed walls, chairs, and furniture with inflammable liquid and set it on fire. Even though the fire was extinguished shortly thereafter, the damages amount to approximately UAH 600 000 (USD 60,000).

The crime was immediately reported at the Horlivka Central-Town Police Station. However, the police officer on duty said that the fire must have been accidental and therefore he would not send policemen to inspect the scene. It was only due to persistent requests that one day later the policemen appeared at the scene of crime.

The police officers refused to accept the crime report submitted by the representatives of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, including their demand to institute criminal proceedings under Article 178 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (*Damage of House of Worship*). These demands were deliberately ignored, nor did the police follow the established legal practice, and the provisions of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. The police instituted proceedings under Article 194(2) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (*Damage of Mere Property*). However, thus far no investigation has been conducted.

Sadly, this house of worship was set on fire previously in February 2013, and then vandalized three times since (on 11 November 2013, 20 November 2013 and 7 January 2014). No steps have been taken by the prosecutor or investigators despite the fact that a young man whose identity was clearly established from a recording on surveillance cameras. During the 7 January 2014 incident a police officer even encountered the perpetrator vandalizing the house of worship. The police officer did not apprehend the offender, obtain his personal information nor open an official protocol.

About a week later, the representatives of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses were verbally informed at the Horlivka Central-Town Police Station that the investigators were too busy to investigate the vandalism of the house of worship.

It is clear that the inaction of the authorities is emboldening the perpetrators to further unlawful and criminal activity. This will not only infringe on the religious freedom and security of Jehovah's Witnesses but also threaten freedom enjoyed by citizens of Ukraine.

### ***Chronology of desecration and arson attack on Horlivka Kingdom Hall***

*Arson attack* on Kingdom Hall on 5 February 2013. Not only did the police investigator conduct a superficial examination of the crime scene, but he also refused to accept the crime report from the representatives of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. On 11 February 2013, Investigator K.V. Dudnikova closed the proceedings for lack of evidence. The decision was later reversed by the town prosecutor. The proceedings are still in progress. No one has been charged with responsibility.

*Desecration* of Kingdom Hall on 11 November 2013. Police officers who arrived at the crime scene refused to accept the crime report. An investigation commenced five days

later. On 21 November 2013, the investigator closed the proceedings for lack of evidence. However, the town prosecutor reversed this decision on 30 November. The proceedings are still in progress. No one has been charged with responsibility.

*Desecration of Kingdom Hall on 30 November 2013.* Although an investigation has been opened, no progress has been made.

*Desecration of Kingdom Hall on 7 January 2014.* Despite the fact that the perpetrator was identified by a police officer while committing the crime, no one has been charged. The representatives of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses have not yet been provided with confirmation that their crime report was registered in the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations.

For more information and pictures about desecration and arson attacks on JW places of worship in Horlivka and other places in Ukraine, see:

Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee (108<sup>th</sup> Session, 8-26 July 2013)  
[http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/hrc/docs/NGOs/EAJCWitnesses\\_Ukraine\\_HRC108.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/hrc/docs/NGOs/EAJCWitnesses_Ukraine_HRC108.pdf)  
<http://www.cbs8.com/story/21971704/kingdom-hall-reopens-after-devastating-arson-attacks>

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## **Pro-Russian militants target non-Orthodox religious groups**

### ***Separatists trashed two protestant churches in Gorlovka***

RISU (17.06.2014) - On 16 June, armed persons in Gorlovka [Donetsk province] smashed the premises in which the New Generation church was located along with Valentina radio, Gorlovka.ua reports.

"They showed up on Sunday evening. The woman guard opened the door and people with automatic weapons climbed to the second floor where our offices are located and they began randomly breaking up everything," a parishioner of the church reported. He said that now all who had been coming to the church are afraid for their lives.

According to a report by the pastor of the Donetsk Assemblies of God church, Sergei Kosiak, besides New Generation, the office of another protestant church, Word of Life, was seized.

"Armed people who broke into the church forbade conducting worship services in the future, and they promised to take account of similar churches and to destroy them," the pastor wrote on his Facebook page. (tr. by PDS, posted 17 June 2014)

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## **Arson of Crimean mosque**

### ***Molotov cocktails thrown at Simferopol mosque***

UNIAN (13.06.2014) - In the morning of 13 June 2014, when the whole Muslim world was conducting one of its sacred nights, Berat [Kandili], unidentified persons threw

Molotov cocktails at a mosque in the Lugovoe district of Simferopol. The press service of the Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Crimea reported this to UNIAN-Religiia.

As a result of the arson, two plastic windows of the mosque were damaged but the building itself was not harmed. The vandals also affixed a fascist swastika on an adjacent fence with the date "13 June 2014."

As the imam of the mosque, Muhammed Islamov, explained, a videotape from an outside surveillance camera shows that at 5 a.m. the mosque was approached by one person dressed in white with black gloves. On his head was a hood, his face was not visible, and he had a knapsack on his back. The imam of the mosque is sure that the attacker was a professional in his work and he was thoroughly prepared.

"From his manner in committing the crime it is evident that the man was prepared. He lit the Molotov cocktails skillfully and quickly threw three bottles at the mosque and ran away fast," the imam noted.

Muhammed Islamov is very upset at what happened since at the end of May in this same mosque, which is called "Chukurcha-Jami," another incident occurred in which unidentified persons removed and carried off the surveillance camera.

"It is difficult to speak of the pain in the heart because desecration of the most valuable things—mosques, temples, churches, cemeteries—is blasphemy, is base, is despicable. I think that this is not simply an act of vandalism. It stirs up inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations, is provocative, and bashes people's heads together," the imam of the burned mosque, Muhammed Islamov, commented.

The head of the local mejlis of the Lugovoe district of the city of Simferopol Ibraim Zinedinov, called the incident "a provocation, a planned action, aimed at inter-ethnic disruption."

Law enforcement personnel who arrived at the site of the incident will make a legal assessment of the event.

We add that in the autumn of 2013 the central mosque of the city of Saki, Crimea, was torched on one of the major Muslim holidays, Kurban-Bairam. (tr. by PDS, posted 15 June 2014)

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## **Infringement of Muslim rights in Crimea draws complaint**

### ***Muftiate demands Aksenov deal with incidents of disappearance and brutal murders of Crimeans***

RISU (12.06.2014) - The Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Crimea (DUMK—Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musulman Kryma) has addressed to representatives of the Crimean government a request to take necessary measures for investigation of the disappearance of people on the territory of the peninsula. This was reported by Espresso.TV, citing the press service of DUMK.

"The Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Crimea expresses profound concern over instances of the disappearance of people in Crimea and it appeals to the authorities of Crimea requesting that appropriate measures be taken for finding those who have disappeared and punishing persons guilty of illegal actions," the appeal says.

The DUMK noted that the first alarming report arrived early in March. At that time, Crimean Tatar Reshat Ametov disappeared, who was a Muslim by religious confession. The body of the brutally beaten man was found on 15 March. He left a wife and three small children. Investigators still have not provided any credible information about the course of the conduct of investigative measures.

In addition, at the end of May, within a week in Crimea, three activists of the public organization Ukrainian Home, one after the other, disappeared; they were Leonid Korzh, Timur Shaimardanov, and Seiran Zinedin, from Simferopol. "All three events occurred in accordance with a single scenario: a person disappears and then telephone communication with him is lost and there is no witness who could say anything about the whereabouts of the missing person. These and other violations of law testify to the increase in Crimea of illegal actions and the infringement of human rights and freedoms," the DUMK noted.

In the opinion of representatives of the muftiate, failure to punish actions of individual "elements of Crimean society may lead to the destruction of the fragile inter-ethnic and inter-confessional harmony in Crimea." (tr. by PDS, posted 12 June 2014)

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## **The conflict divides the Orthodox and threatens Catholics and Protestants**

By Nicolas Miletitch

AFP (02.06.2014) - The conflict between pro-Russian rebels and loyalist forces in eastern Ukraine divides the Orthodox, depending on whether one belongs to the Kiev or Moscow Patriarchate, and also represents a threat for Catholics and Protestants.

The Orthodox Patriarch of Kiev Filarète denounced in a message to the faithful two weeks ago "the aggression against Ukraine and assistance brought by Russia to terrorists and separatists."

The Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Kiev was created in 1992 after independence from Ukraine and in opposition to the Patriarchate of Moscow. Not recognised by the world's other Orthodox churches, in the Ukraine it has considerably fewer churches and followers than the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Archbishop of Lougansk and Altchevsk, Mitrofan of the Patriarchate of Moscow, has an entirely different view of the situation: "One must take into consideration the result of the referendum [on the independence of the region of Lougansk]. Those in power in Kiev must listen to the people of the southeast of Ukraine and take into account what they are thinking," he stated on the Ukrainian site [portal.tv](http://portal.tv).

But even in the heart of the Moscow Patriarchate support for the pro-Russian rebels is not unanimous: the hierarchy refuses to get involved politically and holds a strictly religious line, such as that of Ilarion, the Metropolitan of Donetsk and Marioupol.

"The Church does not have the right to support any of the parties in this fratricidal war, and there can be no divine blessing to override the commandment 'You shall not kill,'" declared the Metropolitan in his Sunday message to all the churches of the region.

Archbishop Mitrofan of Lougansk, even as he makes public his support for the separatists, has distanced himself from one of his priests, Father Vladimir Maretsky, who is accused of having participated in the attack on an office where the May 25<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian presidential election was taking place. The election had been banned by the pro-Russian rebels.

Local web sites have announced that Father Maretsky has been relieved of his pastoral duties, pending the conclusion an investigation into the incident.

For the many militant separatists in eastern Ukraine, to be a patriot means being for Russia, for Orthodoxy and for the Patriarch of Moscow.

### **Explicit Threats and Beatings**

The other denominations, the Orthodox of the Kiev Patriarchate, the Protestants, Eastern Rite Catholics and Roman Catholics, are considered to be foreigners to the Russian world and *a priori* opposed to the rapprochement with Russia of which the militant pro-Russians dream.

The Catholic bishop of the region, Jan Sobilo, has shared his concern in an interview with Radio Vatican: "The situation in becoming more difficult by the day. The separatists have paralysed the cities. In Kramatorsk [near Donetsk] they opened fire on a chapel. People are afraid to come to mass."

"I receive SMS messages with explicit threats," said Father Tikhon Koulbaka, who is responsible for an Eastern Rite church in Donetsk. "On the social networks, the pro-Russians give the address of our church and explain how to find me. I have spoken to the police about this, but they say they can't do much to help."

One of his friends, a Polish Catholic priest named Father Pawel Witek, was kidnapped last week by the insurgents and then released 24 hours later.

More seriously, Serguïï Kossiak, a Protestant pastor, told AFP that last Wednesday he had been beaten with sticks and batons for four hours at the pro-Russian HQ in Donetsk.

"There were several of them that beat me, even a woman got into it. The doctors took note of a cerebral concussion," emphasised the pastor with a hand bandaged and his body still bruised from the beating.

Photos taken after he had been released revealed his back streaked with marks from the beating (<http://sled.net.ua/node/14502>)

Kiev Patriarch Filarète noted on his side "numerous threats on the life of believers and priests of the Kiev Patriarchate" in the regions of Donetsk and Lougansk, where a large part is under the control of separatists.

The "People's Republic of Donetsk" proclaimed by pro-Russian rebels adopted in May a constitution which – according to published extracts – underscore that "the main and dominant faith is Orthodoxy as professed by the Russian Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Moscow."

A profession of faith for which there has been by no official comment from the Moscow Patriarchate but has raised concern among other religious denominations in Donetsk.

"Religious intolerance is increasing," observed Pastor Kossiak, who fears the return of persecutions such as were known by dissident religious communities during the Soviet era.

Translation French-English by Human Rights Without Frontiers

### **HRWF Comment:**

***The increase of hostilities between various church bodies in Ukraine is a worrying trend in the country's political crisis. As long as religiously-motivated violence remains random, it is often dismissed as having limited consequence; however, when religious intolerance becomes strongly identity-based and institutionalised, as is currently the case in the region, it becomes particularly dangerous. It is critical that all actors in the conflict take measures to ensure the respect of the civil and political rights of everyone in Ukraine, regardless of***



***their religious affiliation, including the right to life, the freedom of expression, the freedom of association and the freedom of religion or belief.***

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## **Church of Kyiv Patriarchate attacked in Crimea**

Risu (01.06.2014) /

[http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/community/religion\\_and\\_policy/56616/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/religion_and_policy/56616/) - A group of criminals identifying themselves as "Russian Orthodox Cossacks" this morning barged into a local church of the Kyiv Patriarchate in Crimea in village Perevalne during Sunday Divine Liturgy and beat members of the faithful, including a pregnant woman and a young girl with cerebral palsy, and then attacked the car of the parish priest. The gang members said they were seizing the building for the Moscow Patriarchate. Police came after three hours and stood on a side of the attackers saying that Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate is anti-Russian (Crimea was annexed by Russian Federation in the beginning of March).

Neither the local bishop nor any of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church have spoken against the act.

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## **Prayer tent in Donetsk attacked**

RISU (23.05.2014) / [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/community/vandalism/56523](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/vandalism/56523) - Today, at 1:30 p.m., in the center of Donetsk, an interfaith prayer tent was attacked. Donbass.UA referring to a Facebook post of pastor Serhiy Kosyak reports.

Fifteen armed men who had identifying marks of the so-called People's Republic of Donetsk attacked the prayer tent, in which at that time there were two people. The terrorists took the equipment, batteries, audio system, and threw into the river a banner and the torn tent.

The pastor said that the attackers threatened that if the believers gather here in the evening for prayer, they all be shot.

"In this difficult time for the country, people of different faiths throughout Ukraine are united in a common prayer for God to heal our country, send us peace, and so that people would not die, so that love and reconciliation prevail over hate," pastor Serhiy Kosyak wrote. He also urged the faithful to participate in a prayer, which is planned for tomorrow, May 24, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. on Constitution Square in Donetsk.

As RISU already reported, interdenominational prayer was organized in Donetsk in early March. Since then, every day dozens of believers take part in it.

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## **Religious leaders of Odessa confer with governor**

### ***Governor of Odessa province meets with heads of religious confessions***

Portal-credo.ru (15.05.2014) - A meeting of the governor of Odessa province, Igor Palitsa, with representatives of religious confessions of the region was held on 14 May. As RUPOR Odessa reports, the meeting's participants included ruling bishops of UPTsKP,

RPTsA(A), UGKTs, and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as leaders of protestant denominations and the Jewish and Muslim communities of Odessa.

Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmail Agafangel, who has fled from Odessa, sent his personal representatives to the meeting, but at the name plate "Metropolitan Agafangel" sat his namesake, the first hierarch of ROCOR(A), Metropolitan Agafangel, who does not plan to quit the city.

Igor Palitsa emphasized that for him there exist no differences among people based on their religious confession, skin color, and political convictions.

As to the events of 2 May in Odessa, the leader of the region emphasized: "I am trying to talk with people. We are gradually coming to a dialogue and we are finding common ground, and people understand that this tragedy should lead to peace and somehow unite us."

Igor Palitsa addressed to the clergy a request to provide him all the help they can in preserving peace in Odessa and the region as a whole. "Considering your great authority with your parishioners, I would very much hope that you will help Odessa and Ukraine, which for us are one, in this difficult situation. And I on my part will devote every effort to help you in the resolution of your problems," the governor said.

The result of the meeting was an agreement to sign a joint appeal of the leaders of religious confessions of the province to its residents calling for peace, which should appear in the press in the near future. (tr. by PDS, posted 15 May 2014)

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## **Scandal erupts between Moscow and Kiev: Metropolitan Hilarion "persona non grata" in Ukraine**

***The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate was refused entry at the border. Protest of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs : "A provocative and unprecedented act". The Metropolitan of Odessa leaves town.***

By Nina Achmatova

AsiaNews (15.05.2014) / <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Scandal-erupts-between-Moscow-and-Kiev:-Metropolitan-Hilarion-persona-non-grata-in-Ukraine-31082.html> - The refusal of entry to the Moscow Patriarchate's "foreign minister", Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, has raised yet another diplomatic row between Kiev and the Russian Federation, casting shadows on the fate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Among the most senior representatives of the Russian Patriarchate, the chairman of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations was rejected entry at the border and forced to return to Russia, on May 9. Arriving at the international airport of Dnepropetrovsk, Hilarion was stopped at passport control, before the authorities showed him an official note which prohibited him from entering the territory of Ukraine. As reported by the Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, no further explanation was provided.

Hilarion was slated to participate in the celebrations for the 75th birthday of Metropolitan Irinej of Dnepropetrovsk and Pavlograd , as the representative of the Patriarch of

Moscow, Kirill . The message sent by the Russian Orthodox primate was read to Irinej, who arrived at the scene after the mishap at customs, in a room at the airport.

The Russian Orthodox Church has strongly condemned the episode, calling it "an attempt to transfer the civil and political conflict in Ukraine to the religious sphere". Hilarion - who said he was "surprised" - warned that "what happened raises many questions, because the Church carries out only a mission of peace". "Whoever made that decision did not act very wisely, because the Russian Orthodox Church is outside of politics" Archpriest Igor Yakymchuk , who accompanied Hilarion in his visit to Ukraine told Kommersant. According to the priest, the Patriarchate will take measures in response to the incident, although " it is still not clear what".

The Russian Foreign Ministry has also intervened. It has demanded an apology and "exhaustive explanations" from the Ukrainian authorities, branding the episode as a "provocative and unprecedented" act. "Moscow is worried by the continuous measures by the current regime of Kiev, which only contribute to the further destabilization of the situation in the country", a statement from the ministry said, which emphasizes that "today even the canonical Orthodox Church has become their target".

After several days of silence, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry has distanced itself from the incident. "The right to entry, is up to the Border Service ," said spokesman Yevgeny Perebyinis .

Since last month , Ukraine has "temporarily" banned entry to Russian male citizens, aged between 16 and 60 years, for reasons related to the deteriorating situation in the eastern regions of the country.

Another sign of the intensification of diplomatic tension even around the state of the Orthodox Church regards the Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmail, Agafangel, who has been missing since last week . According to the online newspaper *Rupor Odessy* , citing the press service of the diocese , the religious left town on a previously organized "vacation", but without specifying where he currently is.

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## **Ukrainian rebels shoot unarmed persons**

### ***Ukrainian Orthodox priest shot in Donbass***

Religiia v Ukraine (12.05.2014) - In the night of 9 May a 40-year-old priest of UPTsMP, Archpriest Pavel Zhuchenko, was shot outside Slaviansk. He had served in the church of St. Dimitry of the Don in the city of Druzhkovka, Donetsk province. Police are establishing the circumstances of the event, Religiia v Ukraine reports, citing Vlasti.net.

A report about the shooting at a checkpoint that resulted in the death of the priest appeared 9 May on the blog of the chief editor of the Donetsk news agency OstroV. "At a checkpoint in Konstantinovka, separatists shot an Orthodox batyushka. He lived nearby and he came out to bring them to their senses. They did not agree," Sergei Garmash writes. A little bit later he clarified the report: "The priests who died in Konstantinovka was Father Pavel of UPTsMP, who served as rector in Alekseevo-Druzhkovka. Chechens did the shooting."

According to one of the local residents, the priest went out to the checkpoint during the time of curfew and he allegedly did not stop at the command of the patrol. Curfew operates in Konstantinovka from 23.00 to 6.00. The city council is under the control of

armed rebels. Several days ago a battle for control of the television tower raged in the city.

"He was driving alone in the car. When he drove past the checkpoint in Kondratievka, someone shot at him and hit his heart directly," Komsomolskaia Prava quoted residents of Druzhkovka.

Orthodox activist and head of the Moscow Association of Orthodox Experts Kirill Frolov, on the contrary, thinks that "the junta killed priest Pavel Zhuchenko." He wrote about this in his LiveJournal. "We ask for holy prayers for the martyr Father Pavel. He was a zealous, selfless batyushka who ministered spiritually to militiamen; a good preacher. The batyushka was driving alone in the car in the area of the checkpoint of Kondratievka and he was shot straight in the heart," Kirill Frolov writes.

The police have confirmed Pavel Zhuchenko's death and they are checking the circumstances of the tragedy. As the MVD directorate in Donetsk province explained, the incident occurred late at night on the highway between Druzhkovka and Konstantinovka.

"Zhuchenko's Mercedes raced through the roadblock. This alarmed people at the barricades. They ordered him to stop, but the driver did not react. Then they began shooting into the car," the director of the press service of the police of Donetsk province, Igor Demin, said.

According to Demin, medics found nine gunshot wounds on the man's body. He died because of them.

Police of Konstantinovka, near which the murder occurred, have already opened a criminal investigation and are determining the circumstances of the event.

The priest left three children.

The UPTs diocese of Gorlovka and Slaviansk reported that Father Pavel was a provincial cleric but they did not have detailed information about the tragedy that occurred, but they urged a cautious attitude toward attempts of news media to connect Fr Pavel with one or another side of the political conflict in the region. The diocese also urged that people refrain from untimely canonization of the dead man: "The priest was wearing civilian clothes. Just what happened law enforcement agencies are trying to find out," Pravoslavie I Mir quotes the press secretary of the diocese, Svetlana Okhrimenko.

A few days ago a similar tragedy occurred near Lugansk, where rebels shot a family of three. According to eyewitnesses, the car did not stop when the rebels who had set up a roadblock on the highway demanded, and it was shot with an automatic rifle. (tr. by PDS, posted 12 May 2014)

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## **Ukrainian authorities place sanction on high Moscow church official**

### ***Metropolitan Ilarion not allowed into Ukraine***

RISU (11.05.2014) - The head of the Department of External Church Relations (OVTsS) of the Moscow patriarchate, Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev, was not able to cross the Ukrainian border in order to participate in the celebration of the 75th birthday of UPTsMP Metropolitan of Dnepropetrovsk Iriney, Ukrainska Pravda reports.

As ITAR-TASS notes, referring to a statement of OVTsS, Ukrainian authorities "detained the Russian clergyman at the Dnepropetrovsk airport and handed him a written notification of the denial of entry into Ukraine without an indication of the reasons."

"Metropolitan Ilarion arrived at the Dnepropetrovsk airport on 9 May for the celebration marking the jubilee of the respected hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. While passing through border control he was detained. After a long wait the head of OVTsS was handed an official written notification that he was denied entry onto the territory of Ukraine without explanation of the reasons for such a prohibition," OVTsS noted.

Since the metropolitan was not able to cross the Ukrainian border, he delivered to Master Iriney the congratulations of Moscow Patriarch Kirill at the airport and there he handed the celebrant a church award—the order of the Holy Pious Prince Daniel of Moscow.

In the night of 10 May, the head of OVTsS left for the Russian federation.

We recall that several years ago Metropolitan Ilarion was named as a possible appointee of Moscow to the Kiev metropolitan see. And recently he criticized the leadership of UGKTs and UPTsKP for their active position during the events of the Maidan. (tr. by PDS, posted 12 May 2014)

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## **FECRIS vice-president, Alexander Dvorkin, persona non grata in Ukraine, criticizes the Maidan movement**

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (12.05.2014) – Alexander Dvorkin, vice-president of FECRIS (\*) and chairman of the Russian Association of Centres for the Study of Religions and Sects, has been complaining in numerous Russian media in the last few weeks that he was denied entry in Ukraine because of the international "sectarian lobby" behind the Maidan movement in Kyiv.

Dvorkin had been invited by the Archbishop of Lugansk and Alchevsk Mitrofan (Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate) to give some lectures about sects on 9-10 April in Lugansk (Eastern Ukraine). He was denied entry in Ukraine at the airport of Donetsk and sent back to Russia.

The official reason justifying his deportation was that he had been seen with the wife of Gubarev, the self-proclaimed governor of Donetsk.

During a broadcast of the Russian radio station "Komsomolskaïa Pravda", Dvorkin denied any link with Gubarev and accused the international "sectarian lobby" of standing behind "the coup of Kyiv" as well as his deportation.

Like other pro-Russian and Russian Orthodox extremists, Dvorkin discredited the Maidan movement, saying that the Acting President, Alexander Tourtchynov was a Baptist – which is true –, his Prime Minister Arseni Yatseniuk is a Scientologist his sister chairs a major scientologist organization in the USA – both accusations spread by Interfax-Religion, a Russian press agency, and checked as false by Human Rights Without Frontiers (\*\*).

With such allegations, pro-Russian extremists in Ukraine want to show that the Maidan movement is an American plot supported by non-Orthodox/ anti-Orthodox new religious

movements and that “foreign sects” are now in power in Kyiv with some extreme-right elements.

(\*) European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects

(\*\*) See <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=11127> (5 March 2014)

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## **FECRIS correspondent in Ukraine campaigns with China against Falun Gong in Ukraine**

HRWF (12.05.2014) – The **Ukrainian National Center Of Religious Safety And Help To Victims Of Destructive Cults Organisation "Dialogue"** a FECRIS correspondent in Ukraine, has launched a campaign against Falun Gong practitioners. It has published the following article on its website under the title “The Falun Gong sect recruits Kherson residents under the guise of an art exhibition”:

The Kherson branch of the Union of Artists of Ukraine for two weeks made available its showroom in Ushakov street, 30/1 to the Chinese Falun Gong sect to be able to recruit citizens. On 15<sup>th</sup> April the sectarians announced the opening of the Chinese painting exhibition “Truth, Compassion, and Forbearance”.

**HRWF Comment: The art exhibition is to show paintings made by artists who practice Falun Gong. See the website <http://en.falunart.org/> The goal of the exhibition is not “to recruit citizens” as visitors are never asked/requested to practice Falun Gong.**

Followers of the leader of the Falun Gong movement, Li Hongzhi , who was sentenced to death in absentia in China and is currently living in the United States, demonstrate the exhibition under this name in many cities around the world. The sectarians brought to Kherson 32 paintings painted by seven Falun Gong practitioners from Japan, United States, Taiwan and Canada, with the paintings made primarily with oil in the spirit of “traditional realism” and with ink on silk – in the “Chinese style”. At these exhibitions Falun Gong recruiters invite visitors to their ranks, introducing themselves as a community of “an ancient system of moral and physical perfection” – Falun Dafa. The repressions of the “perfected people” by the Chinese communist regime form a separate storyline.

**HRWF Comment: The wording of this anti-sect organization is meant to slander Falun Gong.**

**About the founder of Falun Gong, Mr. Li Hongzhi: he was living in New York before 1999 when the persecution started. The Chinese authorities cancelled his passport so that he could not travel. There was never a question of a death sentence; however, it is true that the Chinese authorities sent agents in order to kill him. All attempts failed.**

Thus the sectarians take measures against possible exposure: they already prepare the recruited people to the fact that while trying to learn more about movement, they will face verbal abuse from the People’s Republic of China. First, all Falun Gong adherents are afraid of information in the public domain about mass suicides amongst Falun Gong practitioners,, in the late 1990s in China, after which the sect was banned in China. In particular, the world then saw the videos of self-immolation. The leaders of the sect announced that these videos were of fanatics trained by the Chinese special forces.

These fanatics self-immolated with the sole purpose to discredit the peaceful teaching that became more popular than Maoism.

At the same time, Chinese specialists in the field of sects and their counterparts in other countries warned about the danger posed by the Falun Gong cult to the lives, welfare and mental wellbeing of its adherents. Unfortunately, the Kherson Art ministers thought that rent was more important. The Internet site "Ukraine the Sectarian" encourages the people of Kherson to boycott the exhibition and to warn others about the dangers of the sect."

***April 12, 2014 Igor Shershuny***

**HRWF Comment: All Falun Gong practices and teaching material are open to the public. To practice Falun Gong is open and free. The Chinese regime promoted it in the early 1990s for its beneficial effects on health and morality. After the persecution started, all the Chinese media began to slander and defame Falun Gong in support of the policy of the Chinese authorities based on repression and demonization. Orthodox radicals and former Communists in Ukraine are on the same line as Beijing on this issue.**

**In China, Falun Gong has never been linked to mass suicides, even in the state media. The Chinese authorities defame Falun Gong by making it responsible for individual cases of murders and suicides. These are all fabricated by the regime.**

**A self-immolation case at Chinese New Year Eve in 2001: see analyses of a video about a case of self-immolation issued by CCTV.**

**Washington Post:** *Reporter Finds Holes in China's Tiananmen Immolation Story*

**National Review:** *Beijing is Burning - More lies from the PRC*

**MediaChannel:** *The Fires This Time: Immolation Or Deception In Beijing*

**WOIPFG:** *Investigation Uncovers More Lies in Chinese Regime's Story of Tragic Self-Immolation Incident*

**FalunInfo:** *The Tiananmen Square "Self-Immolation"*

**Epochtimes:** *Tiananmen Square Self-Immolation? Actually a Hoax*

**Amnesty International:** *Another important part of the government's propaganda campaign has been to publicize statements from people identified as former Falun Gong practitioners...*

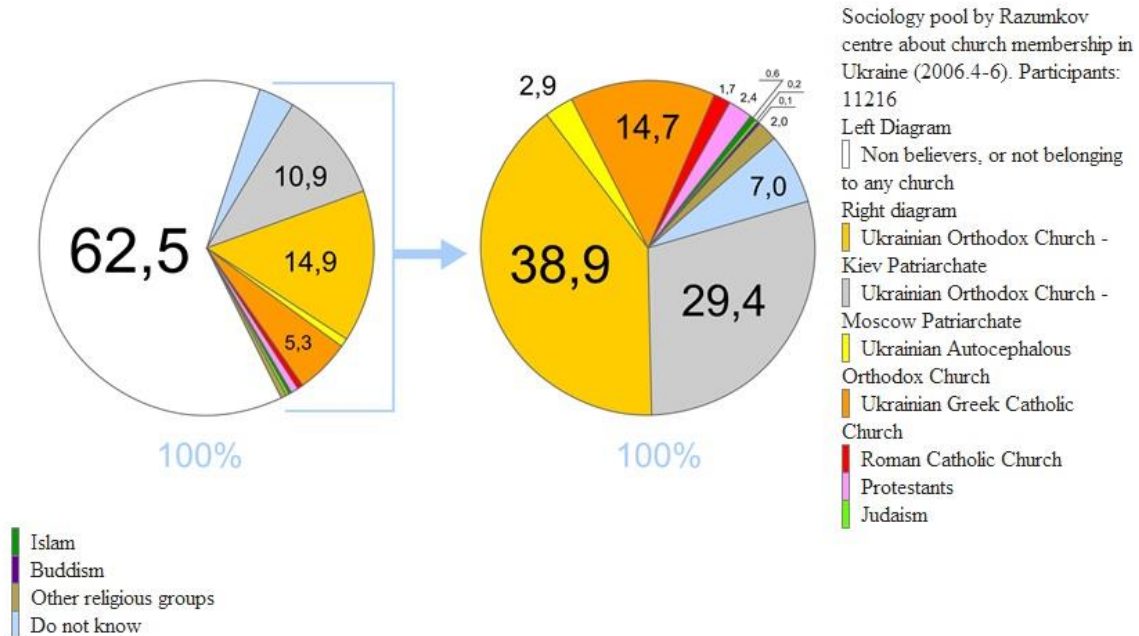
**Reporters Without Borders:** *China's determination to prevent the foreign press from covering the activities and government repression of the Falun Gong clearly illustrates its rejection of independent news gathering.*

**The English film "False Fire" <http://www.falsefire.com/>, which examines the suspicious points of the Tiananmen "self-immolation" incident, won an honorary award at the 51st Columbia International Film Festival for its analytical approach and exposure of this tragic event.**

**A Washington Post reporter Philip Pan went to China to investigate this self-immolation and found out those people were not Falun Gong practitioners. See his article "Human Fire Ignites Chinese Mystery".**

## Statistics on Ukrainian religious affiliation

Russia Religion News (06.05.2014)



## Moscow newspaper plays up danger to Jews in Ukraine

### Odessa Jews preparing to evacuate city

Interfax-Religiia (05.05.2014) - The Jewish population of Odessa is preparing for evacuation from the city, The Jerusalem Post reports, citing several leaders of the Jewish community of the city.

According to the head of a local Jewish charitable organization, Rabbi Refael Kruskal, last weekend the Great Choral Synagogue was closed and members of the community received telephone messages requesting that they not go outside except for an extreme necessity.

As R. Kruskal stated, several Jews were injured in Friday's clashes. He and other leaders of the community acknowledge that the actions of the instigators of the disorders were not aimed specifically against the Jewish population of the city, but they declare that there is a need to take into account various scenarios for the development of events.

In the event of the continuation of violence in Odessa, they are planning to move members of the Jewish community, primarily children, to another city and possible to another country. According to some reports, this could be Moldova.

Historically, there has been a large Jewish diaspora in Odessa. At the present time, according to The Jerusalem Post, about 30 thousand Jewish live in the city (according to



data from the all-Ukrainian census of 2001, there were 12,400, or 1.2% of the population). Before World War II Jews constituted about 40% of the population of Odessa. (tr. by PDS, posted 5 May 2014)

### ***Rabbi Kogan compares Odessa tragedy to holocaust; accuses Ukrainian Jews of pandering to neofascists***

Interfax-Religiia (05.05.2014) - The vice-president of the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations in Russia, Rabbi Zinovii Kogan, thinks that the cause of the tragedy in Odessa is an outbreak of fascism and russophobia.

"The tragic death of 46 residents of Odessa is a horrible murder committed by people who were nurtured by Maidan and poisoned by nationalism, russophobia, hatred, and cruelty," Z. Kogan told an Interfax-Religiia correspondent on Monday.

He placed blame for the actions of radicals in Odessa on their parents and on Ukrainian politicians, "if, of course, these villains can be called politicians."

The tragedy that occurred reminded Z. Kogan of the events of the Holocaust, "when during the second world war Jews and non-Jews were herded into barns and buildings and burned alive.

"These horrific examples were drawn upon in arming the thugs of the Evromaidan. It is terrible when this is encouraged today by people like Kolomoiskii (governor of Dnepropetrovsk province—IF-R) and by Jews themselves. It is terrible when rabbis remain silent as if nothing has happened. Patriarch Kirill spoke firmly and movingly, but where are the voices of the others?" the news agency's interlocutor asked.

Last Saturday in the Memorial Synagogue on Poklonnaia Hill in Moscow he conducted a memorial service for those who died in Odessa.

As was reported, on 2 May during massive clashes of supporters and opponents of Maidan and a fire in the Odessa House of Labor Unions, where anti-Maidan demonstrators had taken refuge, 46 persons died and another 88 were hospitalized with wounds of varying degrees of severity. According to eyewitness reports, the building caught fire after Molotov cocktails were thrown into it from the direction of supporters of the right-radical forces.

The Kremlin placed the responsibility for the tragedy in Odessa on the authorities in Kiev, whom the press secretary of the president of Russia, Dmitry Peskov, called "direct participants in these criminal actions," adding that "their hands are stained with blood." (tr. by PDS, posted 5 May 2014)

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## **De facto leader of Ukrainian Orthodox Church addresses both sides**

### ***Acting Metropolitan of Kiev urges breaking "infernal cycle" of violence in Ukraine***

Interfax-Religiia (05.05.2014) - The locum tenens of the Kiev metropolitan see, Metropolitan of Chernovitsy and Bukovina Onufrey, called on the authorities and the opposition in Ukraine to cease the bloodshed.

"Again and again we have called both the new government and the new opposition to devote maximum efforts for putting an end to bloodshed. Again and again we have appealed to you, our native compatriots: stop, cease aggression, do not use weapons against your own brothers and fellow believers!" the metropolitan's appeal says, which was published on the website of the Moscow patriarchate.

As the acting metropolitan emphasized, there is no single political idea that is worth shedding blood for, and "it is impossible to build a just society on violence, aggression, and confrontation."

"Indeed, there exist substantial differences among citizens of Ukraine. One should not close one's eyes to this. However it is necessary to seek mutual understanding and compromise not by force of arms but at the negotiating table. Any violence always engenders only new violence. And every murder leads to new victims. We can break this infernal cycle and not allow the devil to turn our country into the field of fratricidal war," the appeal says.

Metropolitan Onufrey called clergy "to balanced and responsible pastoral conduct" and application of efforts to put an end to the expansion of conflict. (tr. by PDS, posted 5 May 2014)

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## **Tensions within Ukrainian Orthodox Church exposed**

### ***Ukrainian Brotherhood headed by highly placed Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate Archimandrite issues curse on Putin, Yanukovich, all instigators of war***

Portal-credo.ru (05.05.2014) - The steering committee (orgkomitet) of the All-Ukrainian Orthodox brotherhood "For a single Orthodox Church in Ukraine," which is headed by Archimandrite Viktor Bed (rector of the Uzgorod Ukrainian Theological Academy and commissioner of Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate on issues of science and higher education), distributed on 4 May an appeal regarding the latest events in Ukraine, Religiia v Ukraine reports.

"During the resplendent days of the celebration of Christ's Resurrection, our fatherland, the Ukrainian people, and the entire world became witnesses to how the political leadership of the Russian federation headed by the apostate Vladimir Putin . . . effectively launched a widespread undeclared war of intervention," the document says. The consequences of these actions were "confrontation between the peoples of Ukraine and the Russian federation," the shedding of the blood of innocent people, and the threat of a third world war.

The brotherhood's steering committee calls Ukrainians to defend their motherland by all available means, and the leadership of the country to complete as quickly as possible the process of complete European integration of Ukraine and its joining of NATO; and it calls the world community to support these actions by all means .

The appeal concludes with an effective curse upon Vladimir Putin, Viktor Yanukovich, and all persons who participated in the ignition of this current war, whose names (according to the opinion of the document's authors) "will be cursed for eternity and disgraced before the Lord God and all nations of the world."

The reaction of the hierarchy of Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate to such a radical document, that is signed by an official personage, is still unknown. (tr. by PDS, posted 5 May 2014)

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## **Odessa's Muslims Fear Violence as Ukraine Falls Apart**

By Sean Williams

Vice (03.05.2014) - "Ukraine for the Ukrainians" — it's the phrase that scares Youness, a Moroccan student at Odessa's National Medical University.

He's one of an estimated 30,000 Muslims in Ukraine's third largest city, where pro- and anti-Russian standoffs are reaching boiling point.

Odessa is a port city of some 1 million people. Like Crimea, which lies barely 50 miles across the Black Sea, it is a largely Russian-speaking city.

But only a third of its residents are ethnic Russians, meaning that a referendum of the sort that led to Crimea's annexation would not have the same result.

Watch all of VICE News' dispatches, Russian Roulette: The Invasion of Ukraine here.

That hasn't stopped thousands from taking to the streets in protest, either at the neo-Nazis who some feel have hijacked Kiev's interim government, or at Russian attempts to swallow Ukraine.

On Friday, at least 31 people died when a building they were in was set on fire during violent clashes between pro-unity and pro-Russia protesters.

This past week, the city's "Anti-Maidan" movement declared the establishment of the Odessa People's Republic. Roadblocks and barricades have already sprung up on the outskirts of town.

Bashar is a local of Syrian descent, who sells halal meat at Severny Market on one of those outskirts.

He said that teenagers are joining the anti-Maidan protests and roaming about, looking for trouble.

"They're a bunch of kids from 16 to 19 who are wearing helmets and carrying baseball bats. They are eager to play war and take part in fights with pro-Russians," he said. "They're not talking shit about Arabic people leaving. At least not for now. But I think if Russia comes here they certainly will. We don't want nothing like that here. We don't want Russia here. All the nationalists should calm down."

The Right Sector, Ukraine's ultra-nationalist paramilitary group, is also active in Odessa. Local cossacks unearthed an arms depot owned by members of the Right Sector containing Molotov cocktails and other munitions.

Supporters of Kiev have declared "full combat alert" in Odessa, warning of an "attack on the city."

## ***Odessa's Connection to Islam***

Odessa has a deep connection with Islam.

From 1529 until the late 18th century, when it was conquered by Russia's Catherine the Great, the city was a Turkish fortress called Kocibey. Its Muslim population flourished — as did its Jews, who before the Holocaust made up almost 40 percent of the population.

Until the early 20th century, a Tatar mosque and Muslim cemetery sat in the center of Odessa. But under Soviet rule, the mosque was razed and its Mullah shot. In fact, the Al-Salam Mosque isn't a mosque at all: local leaders refused it a minaret fearing reprisals from local Orthodox Christians. Three quarters of Odessans belong to an Orthodox faith.

The Al-Salam Mosque and Arabian Cultural Center, a grand, whitewashed block built by Syrian millionaire Adnan Kivnan, is Odessa's only current monument to Islam. Officials there, speaking under condition of anonymity, admit that they are monitoring the situation in Crimea with great concern.

Like Crimea, Odessa's Muslim population is mostly comprised of ethnic Tatars. About 200,000 of them were deported from the region to Central Asia in 1944 on Stalin's orders, as punishment for alleged Nazi collaboration. Over half died during the journey.

On April 22, Mustafa Dzhemilev, the leader of the Crimean Muslim Tatar community, was banned by Russia from returning to Crimea until 2019.

## ***Is Odessa the Next Crimea?***

There would be huge benefits to Russia should Odessa be federalized. The city was once the Soviet Union's biggest shipping hub, and still handles up to 40 million tons of cargo each year (Europe's largest, Rotterdam, processes ten times that).

It is also home to Ukraine's largest oil and gas terminal, and would join up Russia's new Black Sea coast all the way to Moldova, which some suggest may be next on Vladimir Putin's wish list.

"We were expecting the Russians to take Crimea. Soon Ukraine will be cut in half, it's only a matter of time. Crimea, Odessa," Fyodor, a Moldovan bus operator from Odessa, told VICE News.

But Fatma, a Syrian who also sells meat at the market said she would welcome Russian rule.

"Russia is a friend," she said. "They helped my country not to be completely destroyed by the US and NATO."

Mustafa Iliasov, a local Tatar, believes that there would be more religious harmony in a federalized Odessa than under the "racist" Kiev regime.

"In general there are over 60 nationalities living here," Iliasov said. "I don't think that will change much even if Russia gets here. Muslims live in peace in Russia. There are whole regions populated by Muslims and I don't hear anyone complaining about it."

Whichever side they take, Odessans are gearing for conflict and the city's Muslims may be in for a tougher time than most.

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## **Pro-Moscow bishop supports victims of Odessa violence**

### ***Supplies for injured and relatives of dead in night violence collected in churches of Odessa province***

Interfax-Religiia (03.05.2014) - An emergency collection of supplies for the injured and for support of the families of those who died as a result of yesterday's punitive action is being conducted in all churches of Odessa province.

After reporting this, Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmail Agafangel urged all persons "to pray for peace and unanimity, for reconciliation of enemies, and for eradication of pride and anger."

"Sharing the pain of irretrievable loss with all my heart I express profound condolences to families, relatives, and neighbors of those who perished in this horrible tragedy. We are praying for rest for their souls. Memory eternal," the metropolitan's statement says, which was published on the diocese's website.

The ruling bishop of Odessa called everybody, "without distinction of philosophical foundations and political convictions, to restore peace and order in our common home by an effort of will, and not by hatred and vengeance but by love and compassion to heal the horrible wound to the body of our society."

Speaking of the events of last night, he recalled the murder described in the Old Testament by Cain of his brother Abel, which "did not bring joy and comfort to the original murderer, but on the contrary the shed blood led to a curse and his punishment was banishment from the land that previously had nourished him generously." (tr. by PDS, posted 4 May 2014)

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## **Competing patriarchs issue conflicting condemnations**

### ***Patriarch Kirill lays blame for deaths in Southeast Ukraine on those who resort to violence instead of dialogue***

Interfax-Religiia (03.05.2014) - Patriarch of Moscow and all-Rus Kirill laid the responsibility for the tragic events in Donetsk province and Odessa on those who have declared war on their own people.

"The responsibility for what is happening now lies in the first place on those who have resorted to violence instead of dialogue. The use of heavy military equipment in civil confrontation evokes special concern. The reason for the use of force often is adherence to political radicalism and the denial of the civil right of expression of one's convictions," the patriarch's statement says, which was published Saturday on the website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In Patriarch Kirill's opinion, in the circumstances of Ukraine now, it is not possible to declare that just one of the political positions is the only one possible and obligatory for everyone. The patriarch is sure that the attempt to confirm one's point of view by force must be renounced once and for all.

"I call all parties to refrain from the use of arms and to resolve all issues by means of negotiations. In the short-term perspective, Ukraine needs at least a truce, and in the long-term, lasting and uninterrupted peace," the primate of the church notes.

He thinks that Ukraine can be healed and take the path to the creation of a dignified life for its citizens "only by becoming a common home for people of diverse political convictions that differ from one another in many ways," and that "there is no alternative to dialogue."

"It is necessary, so long as there still is such a possibility, to listen to one another and to strive not only to resolve current disputes but also to revive fidelity to Christian spiritual and moral values that formed the nation of Ukraine and enriched it with wisdom and justice," the patriarch writes, believing that it is these values that will help in finding today the path to peace and justice "without which a dignified future of the country is unthinkable."

The patriarch acknowledged that today his heart is "with Ukraine and with every one of its sons and daughters who are experiencing pain, grief, bewilderment, anger, and despair." He is praying for repose for all victims of bloodshed, for saving the lives of the injured, and for rapid recovery of the wounded. (tr. by PDS, posted 4 May 2014).

***Patriarch Filaret: Infringement of territorial integrity of Ukraine is crime to be halted and punished***

RISU (04.05.2014) - The primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev patriarchate, Patriarch Filaret, issued a statement regarding events in the east and south of Ukraine. "Recent tragic events in Ukraine cannot leave anybody indifferent. As the result of armed confrontation, blood has again been shed and people have perished. Undeclared war against our country is continuing," the head of the Kiev patriarchate says.

"It is necessary to emphasize that every citizen has the right to express his political convictions peacefully, without the use of arms. But any infringement upon the constitutional structure, unity, territorial integrity, and inviolability of the borders of Ukraine is not political activity but is a crime that should be halted and punished in accordance with law.

"Lastly I wish to emphasize especially—however clear and dangerous the crimes, they must be halted and punished in accordance with the law. In any circumstances, practice of vigilantism is impermissible, as both God's Law and human law confirm," Patriarch Filaret notes.

"Abundant irrefutable evidence, to which even the international community refers in its conclusions, confirms that behind the outbreak of violence and terrorist actions stand the special services of the Russian federation, and the responsibility for these actions lies on the political leadership of Russia and on its president, personally. In-service special Russian subdivisions and agents among Ukrainian citizens recruited by them and mercenaries from Russia are doing everything in order to inflate the confrontation, cause provocations, and multiply victims.

"Their goal is the destruction of Ukrainian sovereignty and the creation of an occasion for the open, armed intervention of Russia on Ukrainian territory and the occupation of our land.

"News media controlled by Russian authorities continue the campaign of lies that is unprecedented in its scope, which also is an integral part of the undeclared war against

Ukraine. Participants in this campaign should remember that intentional proliferation of falsehood is service to Satan.

"In doing evil, the Russian government is trying to cover up the truth, just as was done during the occupation of Crimea, while this government refused to admit the Russian identity of the occupation troops. But truth is not concealed from God. He sees all and gives to everyone in accordance with his desserts.

"Therefore in the name of the church I again call the leadership of Russia, and its clients and coworkers in Ukraine, to come to their senses, halt and not multiply sins, and not provoke new bloodshed and incur for yourself the further wrath of God.

"Everyone who issues criminal orders for the instigation in Ukraine of civil strife and separatism, for armed seizure of government buildings, for commission of provocations, for bloodshed and murder, and everyone who finances these actions or who enables participation in them and who prevents the halting of such crimes is committing the sin of fratricide, the sin of Cain, for which sooner or later he will answer before God. To such ones pertain the words the Archangel Michael said to Satan: 'May the Lord rebuke you.' (Jude 1.9)

"We need a broad public dialogue, overcoming hostility, and united efforts for building a better Ukraine. But constitutional order, unity, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of the borders of Ukraine are axiomatic, and nobody has the right to doubt this, regardless of political convictions. On these matters, only the will of the entire people of Ukraine can be determinative, and not that of individual parties, groups or residents of certain territories.

"I want to stress: in Ukraine, there is not now nor should there be in future hostility toward Russia as a country, or the Russia people as a nation. Knowledge of languages and diversity of political views also should serve the welfare and unity of the Ukrainian people and not become occasions for enflaming hatred.

"Although it is hard, still the Lord commands us: 'Love your enemies, bless those who persecute you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who offend and oppress you, so that you may be sons of your Heavenly Father' (Mt. 5.44-45). We, as Christians, must not forget that hostility among people is sown by our only real enemy, the devil. Therefore it is necessary to recall: 'Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and world rulers of this dark age, and against the spirits of evil in the heavenly places' (Ep. 6.12).

"This struggle also includes prayer. Therefore again and again we must pray God to cease the multiplication of evil and enmity among peoples: 'Let none that wait on thee be put to shame; let them be shamed who are lawless. . . God, save thy people from all its troubles' (Ps. 24.3,22)

"I call everybody to the words of scripture: 'Repay nobody evil for evil, but consider what is good in the sight of all people. If it is possible and depends upon you, be at peace with all people. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (Rm. 12.17,21). "May the merciful Lord give peace to the souls of all the departed, give health to the wounded, calm troubled hearts, and confirm the righteous on the path of truth and deflect the evil from the path of destruction.

"May God's blessing be with all who in one way or another defend the peace and unity of Ukraine. I am sure that evil and falsehood must be conquered, of which our Christian confession testifies to us: 'Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!' Patriarch Filaret's statement says. (tr. by PDS posted 4 May 2014)

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## **Ukrainian Baptist philosopher faults Russian coreligionists**

***Representative of Ukrainian Protestantism awaits repentance from Russian fellow believers***

By Mikhail Cherenkov

Portal-credo.ru (02.05.2014) - In relations between Russian and Ukrainian Christians, a real catastrophe has occurred. As it turned out, Russian Christians trust government propaganda much more than their Ukrainian brethren, who could be able to tell the truth firsthand without the corrupted telephone and even more corrupted television.

After leaders of Russian protestantism refused to go to Kiev, I spoke unpopular words: dialogue is impossible when Russians take such a categorical position. As soon as information leaked out about the visit by the head of Russian Baptists in Kiev, and then about the Jerusalem meeting of heads of protestant churches, many accused me of negativism: "Really, everything is fine; the brethren are communicating; you shouldn't over-dramatize." But meetings that are not properly prepared, to say nothing of meetings with an indefinite or hidden agenda (as Americans put it), cannot be fruitful. As I understand it, some (perhaps almost all) of the participants even did not know who organized the meetings and what their purpose was. Therefore I am not surprised by the comments of participants about pain, insults, and wasted time.

Dialogue is not possible even when there is a desire to hear and understand one another, even when there is a desire "to be reconciled" and "to pray together" for peace and friendship. Because we are not talking about dialogue in a calm academic or church environment. We are talking about parties to a conflict in which one side is the victim and the other is the aggressor. And without clear understanding of this asymmetry, and without a recognition of ecclesiastical responsibility for the aggression of one's country against a neighbor, it is not possible even to begin a conversation since the initial positions are unclear.

It seems to me that even Job's friends acted better than our brethren: they came, sat down, and were silent, sharing the grief of their friend. From that moment dialogue can begin. With compassion and then with repentance for that evil that was caused to Ukraine, for division, occupation, war, wounds, and death. Compassion, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation: these are the necessary steps toward dialogue. If in the "dialogue" even the word "aggression" is avoided, if everybody wants to boil things down to sham hugs and empty declarations, then nothing remains from such meetings except photographs.

I very much hope that conclusions will be drawn and that there will be clarity regarding the initiators, identity of participants, agendas, motives, and intentions. And I also hope that the next meeting will not be so secret and backstage; I hope for transparency and accountability--to society, journalists, and the church. (tr. by PDS, posted 4 May 2014)

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## **Coincidence links Orthodox church to Odessa bloodshed**

***Fights break out on Odessa's Cathedral square immediately after Akathist hymn performed by Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan***

Portal-credo.ru (02.05.2014) - Metropolitan of Odessa and Izmail Agafangel performed the service of the Akathist Hymn in the evening of 2 May in the Holy Dormition cathedral church of Odessa, the official website of the Odessa diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate reports. As is evident from the photograph posted by the website, three bishops concelebrated with Metropolitan Agafangel.

According to reports of Ukrainian news media, at just about the very same time that the worship service ended, clashes began on Cathedral Square of Odessa between supporters of the single (unitary) Ukrainian government and pro-Russian militants, including persons who came from eastern Ukraine and Transnistria. As the result of the use of firearms, including sniper rifles, four young Ukrainian patriots were killed and several dozen were wounded. These incidents evoked an unambivalent negative reaction of both the city and provincial authorities and the local public.

Approximately ten days ago, Valery Kaurov, who was for many years Metropolitan Agafangel's associate, proclaimed himself president of a sovereign Novorossia [New Russia]. There was no reaction to the bloodshed in Odessa forthcoming from either Metropolitan Agafangel, who is considered the leader of the "pro-Russian group of bishops" in Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate, or the Odessa diocese.

According to reports from the Ukrainian newspaper Segodnia, in the morning of 2 May eyewitnesses saw the distribution of weapons in one of the city churches by a pro-Russian activist. The name and confessional affiliation of the church were not specified then. The Odessa diocese of Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate has already declared that these reports are "false." (tr. by PDS, posted 4 May 2014)

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## **Patriarch Kirill acknowledges false fears of conflicts in Ukraine**

***No seizures of churches of Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine have occurred - Patriarch Kirill***

Portal-credo.ru (01.05.2014) - No seizures of church building of the Russian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate have occurred in Ukraine at the present time. Previously expressed concerns on this matter have not been confirmed, Patriarch Kirill reported on 30 April while opening a session of the Supreme Church Council in the church of Christ the Savior, RIA Novosti reports.

"In several statements regarding Ukraine we expressed fears or concerns with regard to possible seizures of church buildings, in the first place of our church. As is known, there were attempts, but by God's mercy these attempts were not crowned with success. And today we can state that as of now no seizures have occurred. May God grant that it will be so in the future," the head of Russian Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate emphasized.

He added that "the use of force always leads to the incitement of counter-force, and that means to enflaming conflicts." "And if one adds to Ukraine's substantial problems

religious conflicts also, then I think this will be too much for Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian people," the primate of the Moscow patriarchate noted.

At the same time, Patriarch Kirill declared, Russia Orthodox Church / Moscow Patriarchate will "keep track of everything that happens in this sphere" in order to "protect legal rights of those who may be subjected to any kind of pressure." (tr. by PDS, posted 2 May 2014)

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## **Islamist organization legal in Ukraine, illegal in Crimea**

### ***Supporters of Muslim organization flee Crimea en masse***

RISU (28.04.2014) - A substantial number of activists and supporters of the "Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami" organization, which is prohibited in Russia, left Crimea after the occupation of the peninsula. This was reported on Monday by the first deputy chairman of the executive committee of the World Congress of Tatars, Renat Valiullin, UNIAN reports.

"There are rather many mosques in Simferopol and Crimea. In addition there are trends, there are movements, which in their time were rather widespread in Ukraine, such as the activity of the Hizb ut-Tahrir party, which are not banned by law in Ukraine but are recognized among us in Russia as an extremist organization," Valiullin said.

He said that after Russia's occupation of Crimea, a rather large number of adherents of the Islamist organization left the territory of Crimea. He added that he would not want to give specific figures.

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami ["Islamic Party of Liberation"] is an Islamist organization founded in 1953 in East Jerusalem by a judge of a local Sharia court. The announced goal of the organization is "restoration of a just Muslim way of life and Islamist state (caliphate) and the embodiment within it of a Muslim system."

Within the European Union, Hizb ut-Tahrir activity is prohibited in Germany (for antisemitic propaganda) as well as in Denmark and Great Britain.

In Russia, the Supreme Court of the Russian federation in February 2003 ruled the organization to be terrorist and prohibited its activity, which was followed by a number of participants in the movement being held criminally liable. In October 2008 the National Antiterrorist Committee reported that in one year 31 members of groups in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Kurgan and Cheliabinsk provinces had been prosecuted.

The organization is not prohibited in Ukraine. (tr. by PDS, posted 28 April 2014)

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## **"We are cut off"**

Aid to the Church in Need (10.04.2014) - "We're cut off from the rest of the country." This is how a local Catholic leader described the current situation in Crimea in a recent interview with Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

"We only communicate by phone or email," reported Msgr. Jacek Pyl, the Auxiliary Bishop of Odessa-Simferopol. "Even the aid packages are kept back at the border."

Despite its very restricted resources, the Catholic Church, which has just 2,000 adherents, cares for many families in difficulties.

After the referendum which determined Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian banks were closed to make room for the banks of the Federation.

Russian currency has just gone into circulation and in the transitional period the residents had no access to their bank accounts, leaving them unable to draw their salaries or pensions.

"We are trying to respond to this emergency situation by distributing food and medicine, primarily to the large families," said the bishop.

"We also help the Greek-Catholic faithful, who take part in our services because all their priests have left Crimea."

Bishop Pyl has remained on the disputed peninsula, but it is not clear how his members will be able to stay there. It appears that the government in Moscow intends to introduce a mandatory visa for Ukrainians who did not originally come from Crimea.

Many of the priests working in the Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol are of Polish nationality and have a long-term residence permit issued by the Ukrainian government.

The detachment of Crimea has also nullified years of negotiations with Kiev about the return of Church property from Soviet times.

"It seemed that the church of Sebastopol, which was turned into a theater under communism, was just about to be returned to the Church, but the efforts of the past no longer count for anything."

Permits granted for construction or renovations are also now worthless, but Bishop Pyl refuses to be discouraged: "We've had to start from scratch so often and we are willing to do it again. The important thing is that no-one places obstacles in our way."

A few weeks ago the bishop distributed a letter to the population calling on the residents of Crimea "not to allow the fraternal relations between the peoples on this peninsula to be destroyed."

An identical appeal was then issued by the Russian-Orthodox Metropolitan Lazarus of Simferopol and Crimea.

"Christians of all denominations have prayed in spiritual union that there be no murderous conflicts among brothers. The fact that there was no bloodshed during the transfer of Crimea to Russia is a sign of the power of our prayer."

The relations with the Islamic community are stable at present, even though media reports are announcing the arrival of militant organizations from Chechnya and the former Yugoslavia.

"The situation is still calm, but the news that reaches us via the media is truly alarming."

Thinking of the region's uncertain future, Bishop Pyl stressed the great need for prayer and recounts how they are only surviving in Crimea thanks to the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love.

"Faith enables us to view what has happened through the prism of God's providence; in hope we look to the future, for we know that God is near at this difficult moment; and the love of God and our fellows helps us to stop hatred burgeoning in our hearts."

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## **Ukrainian branch of FECRIS attacks Mormons**

HRWF (07.04.2014) - The Ukrainian National Center of Religious Safety And Help To Victims Of Destructive Cults "Dialogue", the Ukrainian branch of FECRIS, has published on its website an article of Vadim Rybal'chenko accusing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) of bribing a former President of Ukraine to build a temple in Kiev and of espionage for the United States.

On 17 January, the Ukrainian branch of FECRIS released an article, which claims that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church) uses the guise of humanitarian efforts in Donbas for other controversial purposes. According to the article the Mormons work with an American organization called "International Relief and Development" (IRD) to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable groups of the population as a smokescreen for their geopolitical ambitions to expand their proselytizing activities into the Near and Middle Eastern regions. The article asserts that the lion's share of the money is not spent on humanitarian aid, but on bribing government leaders in order to fortify their foothold in the region. They quote from an interview in 2002 the former head of the Tcherkassy Mormon community named Alexander Tarasyuk, , in allegedly saying that former Church President Gordon Hinckley gave the wife of a former Ukrainian President a check for \$700,000 for the purchase of wheelchairs, which was an obvious bribe because later the authorities allowed the Mormons to build a temple in Kiev.

Mormons and the IRD also donated 189 wheelchairs and gave \$23,000 for renovating the Lutugin Territorial Medical Association in Lugansk, but did so only to fortify their position in the region, he said.

The article also proclaims that Mormons work as spies working for the United States.

Last but not least, the author of the article, says that the Mormons exercise thought control, mind control, fear and guilt tactics, and control personal time by forcing members away from their families. Their leaders train Mormons to attract new members to their sect. The article cites ex-Mormons in stating that their methods of attracting new members are based on deception, Mormon temple ceremonies are occult and blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ. They also claim that Mormons perform ceremonies of polygamy, baptism for the dead and marriage to deceased.

For years, such unfounded accusations have been spread in Orthodox Churches of Russia and post-Soviet states by Alexander Dvorkin, a Russian Orthodox opposed to non-Orthodox religions and vice-president of FECRIS.

### ***Hate speech***

The article published on 17 January concerning the Mormon Church in Ukraine is a classic example of hate speech inciting intolerance towards this religious minority. It is also full of groundless accusations. The author misrepresents religious ceremonies of the Latter-day Saints to create an air of mysticism and occultism surrounding the faith, falsely accusing them of performing marriages to deceased and polygamous ceremonies.

The purpose of this article is obviously to discredit a non-Orthodox organization that did undisputable humanitarian good in the Lugansk region, by baselessly questioning its motives for providing needed humanitarian aid. It acknowledges that over 185 wheelchairs have been donated, and tens of thousands of dollars have been given for renovations of medical facilities in the region, but fabricates the idea that these donations are motivated by some kind of conspiracy, fueled by geo-political motives. The accusations listed in the article are baseless and lack any kind of credibility, basing conclusions on speculation and sources with obvious biases and personal interests in defaming the Mormon Church. It also attempts to play to nationalist hatred by claiming that Mormons are a team of recruited American spies.

The article also fails to acknowledge the role of the Mormon Church in humanitarian response efforts around the world in crisis areas as well as constructing wells to provide clean water in many African nations. According to the LDS Charities website, in 2012 alone, 67,500 people were provided wheelchairs in 57 countries.

More information on the LDS Church's involvement in humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and elsewhere around the world can be found at <http://ldscharities.org/>.

For more information about religious freedom issues in Ukraine in 2014, see our database: [http://www.hrwf.net/images/forbnews/2014/Ukraine\\_2014.pdf](http://www.hrwf.net/images/forbnews/2014/Ukraine_2014.pdf)

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## **Crimea and religious freedom**

By Maksym Vasin

IRF (01.04.2014) - Besides the difficulties with citizenship and relationships with mainland Ukraine, many problems in Crimea may arise in delicate areas such as faith.

According to official statistics, in the beginning of 2013 in Crimea (Ukraine), there were 2074 religious organizations, among which 682 have the right to engage in religious activities without registering as a legal entity. Another 132 registered religious organizations are in Sevastopol city.

However, the right of religious freedom in Crimea is under threat after Russian occupation.

This is not solely due to the lawlessness of the self-proclaimed government, which distinguished itself by kidnapping the priest chaplain Fr. Mykola Kvysh in Sevastopol, followed by a search of his property and an eight-hour interrogation; an inventory of one of the Orthodox temples of the Kyiv Patriarchate; and threats directed against other Ukrainian priests and their families.

It is known that three Greek Catholic and two Orthodox priests of the Kyiv Patriarchate have already left Crimea. All clergy of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and Kyiv Patriarchate were forced to take their families out of the Crimean peninsula. Due to all kinds of difficulties and threats, some pastors of Evangelical Churches and some Roman Catholic clergy have already left the peninsula. Immediately after the Russian occupation, anti-Semitism increased in Simferopol, manifesting as threats against Jews inscribed by vandals on the walls of a synagogue.

In addition to this, Russian legislation will be a problem for the Crimean people.

Compare the basic positions of the laws concerning religious freedom and religious associations in Ukraine and Russia.

### ***Rights concerning religious freedom***

**Ukraine:** All religions, faiths and religious organizations are equal (Article 5 of the Law)

**Russia:** Special role belongs to Orthodoxy. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism are recognized religions (preamble of the Law)

**Ukraine:** Notifying the government of the establishment of a religious community is not obligatory (Article 8)

**Russia:** Religious groups may act without registering. But citizens who form a religious group with the intent to further develop it into a religious organization as a legal entity must notify the local authorities at the very beginning (Article 7)

**Ukraine:** A religious community can be registered by a minimum of ten citizens who have reached the age of 18 (Article 14)

**Russia:** A local religious organization may be founded by a minimum of ten Russian citizens who have reached the age of 18, who reside in the same locality, who are united in a religious group, with confirmation issued by local authorities of its existence in the territory for at least 15 years, or confirmation of joining the structure of a centralized religious organization of the same faith, issued by that organization.

**Ukraine:** Fee for registering a religious organization as a legal entity is not required.

**Russia:** A fee is required for the official registration of religious organization or changes in its charter (Article 11): for the creation of a legal entity, 4000 rubles (~USD 100); for state registration of changes in the charter or liquidation of the legal entity, 800 rubles (~USD 20).

**Ukraine:** Ukrainian legislation does not use the concept of extremism. Instead, liability is incurred for a specific infringement by a specific person.

**Russia:** Extremist activities are grounds for the liquidation of a religious organization and legal prohibition of the activities of religious group or organization (Article 14, paragraph 2).

These few examples demonstrate the desire of the Russian authorities to keep the religious sphere under strict control. This is especially apparent in the Federal Law of Russia 'On Countering Extremist Activities' and related laws, according to which religious organizations, their literature, and even internet resources may be prohibited.

The requirement concerning 15 years of service for religious organization is discriminatory against the current Crimean communities, because those which were registered after 1998 cannot be independent religious communities any longer. From the standpoint of Russian law, they will have to either cease to exist as legal entity or become a part of one of the existing centralized Russian religious associations.

By the way, it was recently reported that the Russian Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists was instructed to absorb all the communities of Christian Baptists in Crimea. Other denominations probably received the same orders.

The situation is vividly illustrated by the Crimean Tatars allowing Christians to use their mosques for prayers and services if they sense a threat to their temples or if the temples are taken away from them in the next wave of 'nationalization.' Moreover, not the Mejlis, but the press secretary of the Kyiv Patriarchate announced this proposal as a possible means of ensuring the rights of believers in Crimea.

On top of everything else, last year President Putin inserted rather contradictory changes to the Criminal Code of Russia and to the Code of Administrative Violations, aimed at countering insult to the religious beliefs and feelings of the citizens. Taking into account the preamble of the Russian law on religious freedom, it is not hard to understand whose feelings will be defended first.

Still, we want to believe that religious freedom and peaceful interfaith relations in Crimea will be preserved in spite of migration, financial, and other difficulties. In my opinion, intensive international monitoring by the OSCE and the Council of Europe of fundamental human rights on the Crimean peninsula can contribute to it.

*Originally posted in Russian at the Maksym Vasin's Blog  
Translated by Karolina Omelchenko, edited by Robin Rohrback*

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## **Statement of Council of Churches regarding normalization of socio-political situation in Ukraine**

IRF (26.03.2014)

### STATEMENT

of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations  
regarding the normalization of the socio-political situation in Ukraine,  
considering internal and external challenges

The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, with the purpose of the quick and peaceful resolution of existing internal and external challenges, for the normalization of the socio-political situation in Ukraine:

1. Emphasizes once again its commitment to the legal and peaceful regulation of the situation in Ukraine and confirms the principles stated in

Statement of Church leaders and Religious Organizations to all faithful and to all people of good will due to the socio-political situation in Ukraine of December 10, 2013;  
([http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1310%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk](http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1310%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk))

Statement of Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations on the occasion of Reunion Day and Freedom Day in Ukraine of January 22, 2014;

([http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1330%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk](http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1330%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk))

Communique of the emergency session of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations of January 22, 2014;

([http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1331%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk](http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1331%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=uk))

Declaration of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations after a meeting with the President and the opposition of January 25, 2014;

([http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1335%3A1&catid=34%3Aua&Itemid=61&lang=uk](http://www.irf.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1335%3A1&catid=34%3Aua&Itemid=61&lang=uk))

Declaration of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations after meeting with the head of the Ukrainian Parliament of February 26, 2014;  
([http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=390:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61))

Declaration of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations on the Occasion of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of March 1, 2014.  
([http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=387:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irf.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=387:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61))

2. The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations appreciates the stabilization of the internal situation in the country and the actions launched by the current government. They appeal to citizens of our nation to defer excess emotionality, and to discharge civil and official obligations in good faith, holding to Ukrainian legislation, and to keep your oath. This is particularly important because of the external danger to the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

3. We appeal to the government and population of Ukraine for urgent regulations concerning the usage of weapons. Legal sanctions for infringement of these standards must be applied to each transgressor, regardless of the merits and motivation of obtaining illegal weapons. The matter concerns the clear threat to the highest values: human life and the health and national safety of our Homeland. For those who hear the call and are ready to defend their native land, in accordance with their religious and social convictions, with weapons in their hands, there are legal means of realizing of such noble callings.

We are sure that further actions of the government and citizens, based on all aforementioned principles and on maintaining the fundamental rights of person and citizen, will contribute to national solidarity, to consolidation of constitutional order, to overcoming the crisis of international relations with the Russian Federation, and to the conservation of the territorial integrity of our Native Land – Ukraine.

Presiding Member of the Ukrainian Council of Church and Religious Organizations,

**+ Onufriy,**

The Metropolitan of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna  
of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate),  
Locum Tenens of the Kyivan Metropolitan cathedra

Kyiv, March 24, 2014

*Translated by Karolina Omelchenko, edited by Robin Rohrback*

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## **Propaganda contest between Kiev and Moscow**

***Atmosphere of ethnic and confessional intolerance reigns in Ukraine (Russian Foreign Ministry)***

Religiia v Ukraine (25.03.2014) - Despite yesterday's statement from the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued today its commentary on the situation in Ukraine, which says that attacks on



clergy confirm the atmosphere of ethnic and confessional intolerance that reigns at the present time in Ukraine, Religiiia v Ukraine reports, citing Newsru.

"Russia notes with regret the increasing threats against clergy in Ukraine. This time a certain national socialist workers party of Ukraine sent a letter with threats against a representative of the Cherkassy diocese of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAPT), Hegumen Alexander Shirokov," the MID of RF said in a commentary.

"Ukrainian radicals demanded from the authoritative priest that he cease 'all pro-Moscow hostile agitation,'" the foreign policy office of Russia notes.

In the event that the priest does not heed the threats of the radicals, then, as the statement by the "National Socialist Workers Party of Ukraine" quoted by MID says, basic methods of a physical and repressive nature will be used on him and his family. Speaking about these threats, MID has posted on its website a copy of the letter of the "party" on whose letterhead a nazi symbol is represented.

It should be noted that the above mentioned commentary of MID is in a rare form since the Russian ministry has, it seems, for the first time in its history, spoken out for a priest of the non-canonical Ukrainian jurisdiction that is in competition with the UPTs of the Moscow patriarchate. At the same time, the party mentioned in MID's commentary does not exist on the Internet.

Previously, the Russian foreign ministry often has resorted to statements that are characterized by Ukrainian journalists as a part of Russian news propaganda. In particular, recently MID declared that in Vinnitsa, on the Kishinev-Moscow railway, unidentified persons in UPA uniforms robbed a Russian citizen. MID of Ukraine denied this report. Personnel of the Ukrainian MVD questioned the victim, who was not able to identify who committed the robbery. She also did not remember people in UPA uniforms, as MID of Russia had reported.

Today the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine stated that MID of Russia had confirmed the report. "We have confirmed the report that no party under the name of National Socialist Workers Party of Ukraine exists in Ukraine and we have not found any mention of it on the Internet," the director of the Department of Information Policy of MID of Ukraine, Evgeny Perebiinis, said.

MID of Ukraine also contacted the press service of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and clarified that Hegumen Alexander Shirokov really does work with the church in Cherkassy province, although he is not on its staff. According to the MID's report, he is a monk, "and, as you know, monks cannot have a family," as was mentioned in the commentary of Russian MID. In addition, according to a Ukrainian diplomat, the church mentioned holds to positions of support of the government. "This document that was published on the website of MID of Russia does not withstand any criticism; it is a crude provocation and a continuation of the disinformation that unfortunately has recently resounded on the part of MID of Russia," E. Perebiinis concluded, as quoted in Ukrainskaia Pravda. (tr. by PDS, posted 26 March 2014)

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## **The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious organizations defines three tasks for government and citizens of Ukraine for normalization of situation in country**

RISU (24.03.2014) - The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious organizations published on 24 March and "Appeal on normalization of the socio-political situation in Ukraine, in light of domestic and external challenges," IRS reports.

In three points, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations laid out its suggestions relative to the rapid and peaceful resolution of existing domestic and external challenges for normalization of the socio-political situation in Ukraine:

1. Exclusively peaceful and legal rectification of the situation in Ukraine.
2. Citizens must forget about emotions, conscientiously fulfill their official and civic responsibilities, and strictly observe the existing Ukrainian laws, and officials of all types must, in addition, fulfill the moral duties of their oaths.
3. Urgently to rectify the use and possession of weapons, in accordance with the laws of our state. For those who feel the call and are ready to defend the motherland with arms, in accordance with their religious and social convictions, at the present moment there are all legal means for fulfilling this noble calling. (tr. by PDS, posted 26 March 2014)

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## **Moscow patriarchate asserts authority over Ukrainian churches**

### ***Vladimir Legoida opposes equal dialogue with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate and emphasizes that Crimean dioceses remain in Ukrainian church***

Portal-credo.ru (24.03.2014) - The chairman of the synodal Information Department of the Moscow patriarchate (SInfOMP), Vladimir Legoida, gave an interview to the newspaper Komsomolskaia Pravda (published 24 March) in which he described what was said about the situation in Ukraine at the session of the Holy Synod of Russian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate held 19 March in Moscow.

Legoida maintained that the unanimity of the participants in the meeting of heads of official Orthodox churches in Constantinople at the beginning of March disappointed representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Kiev Patriarchate, which earlier had appealed to the patriarch of Constantinople and to other local churches. Legoida said their hopes had been based on the idea that the present political situation in Ukraine supposedly permitted a resolution of the question of canonical recognition, "ignoring the truth of church life." "For our brothers who are in schism, it has long been time to recognize that the path to unity lies through a return to the bosom of the mother church. No other way out, or more precisely, way in, exists," the head of SInfOMP is sure.

Speaking about dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church / Kiev Patriarchate in Crimea, Vladimir Legoida noted that their status was not discussed at the synod's session. "The Crimean dioceses were and remain within the purview of the Russian Orthodox Church, which includes the self-administered Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a part. Members of the synod emphasized that "the Russian Orthodox Church, that embraces the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, in pursuing its pastoral duty is ready to do everything it can for restoring brotherly, good neighborly, and mutually respectful relations between Russia and Ukraine," the newspaper's interlocutor declared.

"All right thinking people in the world recognize that regions of Ukraine differ among themselves in mentality, language, and political preferences. It is extremely difficult to unite Ukrainian society on any other basis than a spiritual and moral one. This is why the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate is that super-governmental force, that core of the Ukrainian people, that can reunite people who were standing on different sides of the barricades," Legoida noted.

Legoida thinks that current moods were evoked to a great extent by the attempt of the communist regime to deprive Orthodox peoples of their spiritual history. "If we see, if we realize our common Christian past, then in the present we will find grounds for genuine brotherhood." (tr. by PDS, posted 26 March 2014)

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## **Crimean Tatars worry about their future**

### ***Tatars warn of danger of jihad against Russia in Crimea***

RISU (12.03.2014) - One of the leaders of Crimean Tatars, Mustafa Dzhemilev, told Financial Times that in the event of the annexation of Crimea, Russia is risking receiving a repeat of the bloody Chechen conflicts. Several Tatar extremists have already threatened jihad against the Russian troops occupying the peninsula.

"We have Islamists, Wahhabis, Salafites . . . groups who have fought [on the side of the opposition] in Syria," the former leader of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars and member of the Supreme Soviet, Dzhemilev, stated. "They say: 'An enemy has invaded our land, and we are prepared.'"

Annexation of Crimea will intensify ethnic and religious differences in Crimea itself, increasing the risk of inter-communal discord and even armed conflict. It is among Crimean Tatars that the most powerful opposition of Russia is observed, who number about 280,000 persons and constitute about 12 percent of the residents of the autonomous republic, the article says.

There also exists a danger of the internationalization of the crisis. Foreign jihadists may come to Crimea to fight against Russia as in the early 2000s they came to Chechnya. Links between Crimean Tatars and the international network of Islamists have already been established. Local Muslims have fought in the ranks of the Syrian opposition against the troops of Bashar Assad in Syria. One of them carried out a suicide bombing last year in Aleppo.

The anxiety of the Tatar minority is explained by the tragic history of relations with Russia. In 1944 Josef Stalin ordered exiling of all Tatars from Crimea, claiming that they had cooperated with Nazis. Seventy-nine-year-old Liniyar Belialova also was deported along with her family, and she returned to her motherland only during perestroika. Now she fears a second deportation. "Putin needs only the land; the people on it are nothing to him," she says. "If need be, he simply will evict us."

Dzhemilev says that the new government of Crimea is trying to persuade Tatars that they have no need to fear Russia. They have proposed for them the office of vice-premier, three ministries, and official recognition of their public organizations. They also promise to help with the financing of the return of deported Tatars and have even agreed to the restoration of original Tatar names of several populated areas. However leaders of the community hesitate to sign an agreement with politicians whom they consider to be puppets of Moscow. "This agreement is not even worth the paper it is written on," Dzhemilev says. "Everything can change tomorrow."

Meanwhile other prominent members of the community are calling for calm. "We ask our fathers and sons to not get excited and to remain patient," says Safure Kadzhametova, a member of the Crimean parliament. "But their patience is running out." (tr. by PDS, posted 12 March 2014)

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## **Pro-Moscow Ukrainian church not supportive of Kiev government**

### ***Current Ukrainian government built on blood—Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate press service***

Interfax-Religiia (11.03.2014) - The head of the press service of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate, Vasili Anisimov, criticized the current Ukrainian authorities.

"The current government and the political restructuring of Ukraine that is associated with it are built on blood. Unfortunately this is not a metaphor. We have always prided ourselves with the fact that we were just about the only post-soviet country where there was no bloodshed," V. Anisimov stated on Tuesday in an Interview with Interfax-Religiia.

He said now both supporters and opponents of the Maidan cannot acknowledge and accept that the change of government and early elections "were worth such victims."

"And thus the government surrendered to the opposition. Even without that, the electoral campaign would have begun this year. In addition, the country is ruined, destabilized, on the brink of social and economic collapse and even war, without any results," the news agency's interlocutor asserted.

He thinks that a government should have been created with influential representatives of all regions from Uzhgorod to Crimea, and from all political parties, "in order to bind everybody with the responsibility for the fate of the country."

V. Anisimov noted that President Viktor Yanukovich did not make up his mind on a decisive storming of Independence Square "and he lost everything and condemned himself to reproach." He thinks that V. Yanukovich is to blame for the fact that the country is "in its current tragic situation."

In assessing the prospects for Crimea, he stated that "both Crimeans and Russians are our brothers both in faith and in blood, and in life," and the government is obligated to find such solutions of the conflict "that would be simultaneously both for Ukraine and for Crimea and for Russia." V. Anisimov is sure that just such a solution will be found. (tr. by PDS, posted 11 March 2014)

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## **Moscow church in western Ukraine vandalized**

### ***Orthodox Church desecrated in Zhitomir Province***

UNIAN (10.03.2014) - The ruling bishop of Zhitomir diocese, Archbishop of Zhitomir and Novograd-Volynskii Nikodim, reported that in the night 7-8 March an act of vandalism was committed in the diocese against the church of St. John the Divine in the village of Solnechnoe, Zhitomir district of Zhitomir diocese of UPTsMP.

"The graffiti on the walls of the cemetery church speak of the stoniness of hearts of blasphemers. How can people lift their hand against the holy church of God? We recall those times when churches were destroyed and how that ended," Archbishop Nikodim's report says.

In place of the old church in a rural cemetery, parishioners labored in 2013 to build a new church. This church was built in the course of seven years at the expense of ordinary believing Christians, in order to make a sacrifice for those generations that lived during the atheistic soviet times. Originally in a trailer and later in a small wooden church and now, in the new one, for 16 years prayers for the repose of their souls have been raised.

"Who benefits from inciting more inter-religious conflict, aside from the social and political problems? The church prays for repose of souls of the dead, healing for the wounded, and peace in the state," the archbishop notes. (tr. by PDS, posted 10 March 2014)

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## **Russian invasion endangers non-Christians in Crimea**

### ***Muslims themselves ensure security of mosques***

Religiia v Ukraine (07.03.2014) - Muslim worship facilities throughout Crimea are under the protection of local Muslim communities. On their personal initiative, Muslims have formed volunteer groups and are providing round-the-clock attendance on the territory of houses of worship, Religiia v Ukraine reports, citing the Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Crimea.

In the provinces such preventive measures are being taken as precautions in concert with local bodies of administration, rural and village soviets.

In this way, Muslims, together with representatives of other confessions, fearing attacks, looting, or damage to mosques, churches, cemeteries, and other worship facilities, have organized volunteer groups that do not have any weapons for monitoring the situation and preventing any kind of provocations and acts of vandalism.

We recall that after the entry of Russian troops into Crimea, the situation on the peninsula escalated. In particular, the chief rabbi of Ukraine declared that the basic danger for Jews was posed by possible Russian provocations. (tr. by PDS, posted 7 March 2014)

### ***Chief Rabbi of Ukraine declares that Jews' chief danger is not nationalists but Russian provocations***

RISU (05.03.2014) - Yakov Dov Blaikh, chief rabbi of Ukraine, declared during a press conference in New York that the main danger for Ukrainian Jews is not posed by

imaginary "Ukrainian nationalists," but by real Russian provocations. This was reported by the Voice of America website. The rabbi intends to meet US Secretary of State John Kerry and to suggest to him conducting the G7 summit in Kiev, so that USA can thereby demonstrate its solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

"We expect that there will be provocations. We expect that the Russians will want to justify their invasion of Ukraine. They have already stated in news media that 'Banderas' are attacking synagogues. There has been nothing of the sort. There may be provocations; somebody may dress like Ukrainian nationalists and begin beating Jews. I am not afraid of this comparison—this is how Nazis acted during the Austrian Anschluss," Blaikh told American journalists.

The rabbi said that contrary to urgent statement of Russian news media, practically no antisemitic incidents have been observed in Ukraine. He recalled that in Crimea it was only after the entry of Russian troops that the first act of antisemitic vandalism occurred. We recall that swastikas and the "Death to Zhids" inscriptions were found 28 February on the doors and façade of the Ner-Talid synagogue in Simferopol. This was reported by UNIAN-Religii. (tr. by PDS, posted 7 March 2014)

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## **Ukrainian Muslims and Maidan**

By Mykhailo Yakubovych

**Ph.D. in History, Expert on Middle East**

RISU (03.03.2014) - "Ukraine seethed, seethed for a long time..." these are the words of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko from his poem "Haydamaky," and they reflect the terrifying reality of what the Ukrainian people face today. The Ukraine in which "peace and order" reigned, the Ukraine which experienced a relatively quiet collapse of the USSR, no longer exists. We see how the country is different – the Ukrainian SSR, from which modern Ukraine inherited a state, is giving way to a completely new state. The deep wound, however, that the bloody events of the past two months has inflicted on the Ukrainian people, makes us think again and again about why this happened here, in an enlightened, spiritual, cultural, and seemingly European state. The false and cynical picture a "believing" elite, shown during religious holidays on official channels, was replaced with horrendous terror, a justification for the killing of peaceful protestors, and other criminal acts for which the dictator and his accomplices will certainly be held responsible for – if not before the people, before God. Today the situation has intensified because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the possibility of a bloodier scenario – the civilized world shudders from its possible consequences.

What position did Muslim organizations in Ukraine have in this difficult situation? The faithful of all religions were faced with this question at the very beginning of the tragic events, after the dispersal of the "student Maidan" on the night of November 30. It must be noted that among modern Muslims there is no consensus on the issue of participating in the political life of countries where they are a minority. There is a belief that such participation is unacceptable in principle, and "performance" (Arabic *hurudzh*) against the government is a sin. Other religious authorities, particularly after the events of the Arab Spring, allow and even encourage Muslims to participate in the life of "non-Islamic" countries. Many Muslim leaders have questioned the definition of peaceful demonstrations as "performance" against a legitimate authority, especially if the power is secular, not religious, quoting the hadith "the most excellent jihad is the uttering of truth in the presence of an unjust ruler" (Tirmidhi Hadith). The religious authorities of the Ummah today hold various opinions, with different arguments, weight, and perception.

Ukrainian Muslims as an integral part of Ukrainian society took part in the events taking place today in the country from the very beginning. Many Muslim organizations in Ukraine (primarily, the Association Alraid and the Crimean Tatar Mejlis) have long and active links with coreligionists in the EU, so the European Muslims' experience in solving their problems is close and clear. In particular, the Association Alraid is a member of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, has repeatedly been a co-organizer and member of various activities carried out by Muslims in Poland, Lithuania, and other EU countries. Therefore, the idea of European integration of Ukraine, which was the original propeller of the protest movement, found support among a significant part of Ukrainian Muslims. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, in particular, repeatedly made statements regarding the need to restore the cultural, religious, and economic rights of deportees in accordance with the principles of European law.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, which includes Mufti Emirali Ablaev, head of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea, and Mufti Ahmad Tamim, head of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine, also supported the European integration course of Ukraine. On September 30, 2013, the council called the European choice as historically justified, and called on people not to oppose the new foreign policy course of Ukraine because of the traditional relations with Russia. At a time when the country's leaders openly declared their commitment to signing the Association Agreement with the European Union, the gesture could be regarded as a kind of legalization of the government's action in the eyes of the faithful.

In the wake of the ill-fated night of November 30 to December 1, when a student demonstration in support of European integration was disbanded by security forces, many religious organizations were quick to condemn the violence as well as the provocation near the Presidential Administration (however, today this clash many regard as a spontaneous rebellion, and not an attempt to provoke). Ukrainian Muslim communities expressed in public statements their deep outrage at such acute injustice. On December 2 the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine "Ummah" published an appeal, which condemned the use of force against demonstrators. On December 3 the leader of the largest and most influential Ukrainian Muslim organization, Mufti of Muslims of Crimea Emirali Ablaev, issued a statement, in which he expressed support for European integration of Ukraine and urged the government, the opposition, and all participants of mass protests across the country not to deviate from democratic principles, not to succumb to provocations, to prevent bloodshed, and "in a fair way to resolve the situation in favor of the interests of the Ukrainian people."

Mufti Emirali Ablaev confirmed his position at a Crimean rally dedicated to the International Day of Human Rights, held on December 10. In addition, the mufti mentioned the events from mid-October when several mosques were intentionally set on fire (the guilty parties, as in most such cases, were not brought to justice): "We must restore our rights, which have been infringed upon. But we must remember that humanity is the main quality that unites all human beings, regardless of their nationality, religion, race." The actions of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea are consistent with the position of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, who from the beginning were on the side of the protesters. During the same meeting, the head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Refat Chubarov informed the public that immediately after the meeting some of its members would go to the EuroMaidan in Kyiv. According to him, until the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars – May 18, 2014 – the mejlis will organize meetings and seek specific government action. The SDMC supported the appeals of several religious organizations, who called for dialogue and the need for certain concessions from the government. Over the past two months the SDMC has issued a number of appeals in which they call on the current government and opposition to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, led by Refat Chubarov, supported the Maidan activists.

The Crimean Muslims' activity, however, was not limited to statements. MP Mustafa Dzhemilev (who spoke from the podium on the night of February 18 to 19, when the Internal Ministry troops and Berkut began the so-called "anti-terrorist operation"), Deputy Mufti Aider Ismail, Mejlis Refat Chubarov, and many other representatives of the Crimean Tatar community repeatedly visited the Maidan. Crimean Tatar activists took part in every national assembly that was held on Independence Square. Dozens, and sometimes hundreds of Crimean Tatars visited the Maidan in Kyiv every day and took part in all civil actions. The protests were supported also by many "new Muslims," including ethnic Russians and Ukrainians who using social networks and other means informed their fellow citizens of the Muslims' position.

After Yanukovych and his entourage escaped Ukraine and the further deterioration of the situation in Crimea, the Crimean Tatar Mejlis was the first to organize a picket near the Crimean Parliament demanding an end to the separatist activities. It should be noted that all activities that were coordinated by the Mejlis were peaceful civilian protests. Attempts by some media outlets to discredit the Crimean Tatars (calling them "armed militants," "Wahhabis from Syria," "extremists," etc.) had not even the slightest evidence to back the claims. After the buildings of the Crimean Council of Ministers and the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea were forcefully seized, Refat Chubarov urged the Crimean Tatars to go home and the Mufti of Muslims of Crimea "not to give in to the provocations by unknown people." Meanwhile, the head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people did not recognize the "elected under the barrel of a machinegun" government legitimate. Currently, the sustained and confident position of the Crimean Tatars is a major concern for all those trying to foment ethnic strife in the Crimea. Even organizations like Hizb al-Tahrir, which act independently of the Mejlis and Muftiat are not interfering in the process. And it must not be forgotten how much the Crimean Muslims were affected by the tragedy of the massacre of peaceful protesters on Instytutska Street. Mufti Emirali Ablaev said to bury the heroes right on Independence Square in Kyiv – this gesture is symbolic and shows the Ukrainian Muslims' solidarity with the Christians: In Islamic tradition, fallen martyrs are buried in the places of their heroism. According to recent news, the Crimean Tatars have been organizing peaceful protests to bar entry of Russian troops to the Ukrainian military installations.

The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine "Ummah" has also voiced its position. During the three months of protests, "Ummah" has condemned violence, called for dialogue, reconciliation, and mediation of international organizations. Mufti Saeed Ismagilov lectured on the history of Islam and Muslims in Ukraine at Maidan's Open University and live on HromadskeTV, where he called for peace and a stop to the bloodshed.

The Alraid association has actively covered the events in Ukraine. Information resources of the Ukrainian Muslims close to Alraid (Ukrpress) as well as the association's Arabic website, were some of the most reliable sources on developments in Ukraine for media outlets in the Arab world. Representatives of the Association Alraid (in particular, the famous Islamic scholar from Crimea Seyran Arifov) repeatedly gave detailed commentary to Arabic TV channels expressing balanced and objective assessments of what is happening.

Other Islamic organizations in Ukraine, in particular, SDM of Ukraine and the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea, avoided giving direct comments about the civil protests. After the bloody events on Instytutska Street, the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine expressed its deep sorrow for all the victims and wounded protesters from the violence in Kyiv, "calling on all to unite to preserve the integrity of our country and prevent its division." On February 28, the head of the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea Ridvana Veliev released an appeal, in which he "called on all Muslims to unite and called for peace and stability." There were, however, some curiosities: SDM of Ukraine



denied information about membership in their organization of Oleksandr Kryvonosiv, who spoke several times on Independence Square in Kyiv. Member of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations Mufti Ahmad Tamim attended a meeting with Acting President of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchynov. However, the council's statement condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine from March 2, which was signed by a number of Christian and Jewish organizations, was missing a signature from the SDM of Ukraine (and the SDM of Crimea).

Many statements have been released in recent days by Muslims and other countries. The protests in Ukraine have received a positive response from the Muslims of Egypt, Morocco, and many other countries where there are problems of authoritarianism and human rights restrictions. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in one of their official appeals directly supported the EuroMaidan initiative; during the commencement of Russian aggression statements were issued from Turkey and other countries. Leaders of Russian Muslims mostly issued general statements: for example, in a statement from February 28 the Mufti of Tatarstan called for peace and denounced attempts to "build democracy in the tyranny of the crowd," which can be interpreted ambiguously. At the time, independent Islamic organizations published statements supporting democratic change in Ukraine.

Judging from this, the situation in the country will remain tense for a long time, in the first place, because of the aggressive actions of its northern neighbor. But even in this difficult time, the Ukrainian people are aware that Muslims are a part of society that is truly contributing to the building of a free and democratic state. Hopefully, after the peaceful resolution of the situation, the representation of Muslims in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations will expand, and the Crimean Tatars will receive more rights and opportunities. Muslims of Ukraine should use all of their rights for their own development and for the good, which they can bring to the whole society. This appears to follow the path of the Prophet (PBUH), about which the Almighty in the Holy Quran said: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Qur'an, 21:107).

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## **The Churches and Euromaidan**

HRWF (04.02.2014) - In a fraught situation, such as the streets of Kiev have been witnessing, it is always difficult to distinguish who is saying what and which factions are operating. Opposition is rarely united in such circumstances – and it is more than possible that some of the most visible protesters are *agents-provocateurs* paid to go on the streets to provide an excuse for a more intensive government crack-down. The motivations of pro-governmental demonstrations were not always commendable. Some in Ukraine have complained that they expected payment for demonstrating and have been furious because no money was forthcoming. The media have broadly highlighted the role of Ukrainian political and social actors as well as foreign powers in the Euromaidan protests. However, the position of the various churches has been totally disregarded.

Dr Michael Bourdeaux recently published an article in the Church Times at the end of January and sent it to *Human Rights Without Frontiers*. It is my pleasure to re-publish it in our newsletter as I had publicized in French most of his news in the 1970s and 1980s.

Willy Fautré

**Church Response in Ukraine**

Dr Michael Bourdeaux

*Church Times* (28.02.2014) - When Orthodox priests take to the streets, as in Ukraine, or officiate at funerals, they always make good photographs. Their robes are colourful, their faces bearded. There have been many such photos in the papers this week, but much less about what they have been saying.

Ukraine has no less than three separate branches of the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest under the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate; the second, the Kiev Patriarchate, in opposition to it, and a much smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, abolished, like the Kiev Patriarchate, under Stalin, but revitalized in the last twenty years.

Divisions run right through Ukrainian society. At their most obvious, the Russian-speaking east is more sympathetic to the Kremlin, while the Ukrainian-speaking west was the trigger for Ukrainian independence in the first place. The divisions run right down the middle of Kiev, centrally situated and seat of the government. Officially the capital is Ukrainian speaking, but not everyone knows the language.

At a meeting predominantly of clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate in Odessa (southern Ukraine on the Black Sea coast, a Russian-speaking area) last Saturday, 25 January, the call was for moderation, but also national unity: "We especially encourage local elites – political, cultural, intellectual, social - do not rock the boat in which you sit. Do not think that the current conflicts are careless political games... Be aware that we are one family and that we live in the same home – Ukraine."

Last Sunday (26 January) Patriarch Filaret, head of the Kiev Patriarchate, gave an impassioned interview in Ukrainian to TV Channel 5 in which he repeatedly called for peace, moderation on all sides and dialogue, backed up by prayer. The interview included excerpts from an open-air prayer service to illustrate his point. Both churches are against any form of violence.

In contrast to the pro-Russian government, Western Ukraine is strongly nationalistic. Its large Greek Catholic Church (Eastern Rite, under the authority of Rome) is currently under pressure from the government. Yet here, too, the highly respected Bishop Borys Gudziak has echoed the sentiments of the Orthodox Churches, stating that different faiths are working together, holding regular joint prayers, and priests are providing pastoral care on Independence Square.

Protestants have always been strongly present in Ukraine. On 17 January a meeting in Kiev brought together leaders of Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran and other churches. Here there were moderate voices, too, but also some more outspoken ones. Dr. Sergiy Tymochenko reported back from the front line and said: "The barricades on Independence Square touched my heart. I saw the birth of new nation there. People were ready to fight for their freedom and give their lives for the sake of others." All were united, though, in calling for Protestants to become actively involved in exercising civic responsibility.

(\*) In 1984, Michael Bourdeaux, founder of Keston College in England, received the Templeton Prize for spearheading a laborious, often lonely struggle to examine and explain the systematic destruction of religion in Iron Curtain nations during the Cold War. From his time as an exchange student to Moscow in 1960, he worked to defend the rights of faiths in these countries to worship as they chose. His Keston News Service during the Cold War was a unique source of information about religious persecution in the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc regimes collapsed, Bourdeaux's

efforts for universal religious freedom were embraced by authorities, evidencing the strength of his beliefs.

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