



Ukraine (92)

2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom:

Ukraine

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UKRAINE

The Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for the separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, some religious groups experienced delays in registering.

Virtually all religious organizations must register with the State, a process that is supposed to take only 1 to 3 months but often takes longer. No religious organization was denied registration permanently, although "traditional" religious organizations exerted pressure on local and regional officials not to register nonnative religious organizations.

The Government's respect for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report. Some "nontraditional" and minority religious organizations reported that registration was easier than in the previous year. President Leonid Kuchma repeatedly and publicly spoke about the need for peaceful coexistence among ethnic and religious groups. The Government also took steps to return to religious groups properties expropriated during the Soviet era.

Relations among religious denominations in the country are generally amicable, although problems remain in certain areas. There are strains among various traditional Christian denominations, between them and some less traditional groups, and between the Orthodox and Progressive branches of the Jewish community. However, disputes are generally resolved through discussion. Many representatives of religious organizations, although they appreciated the monthly roundtable of religious leaders convened by the State Committee for Religious Affairs, believe that sufficient interconfessional dialog takes place without the assistance of the State Committee. There are some indications of popular suspicion of less traditional religions and foreign missionaries; however, such religions continue to find many converts. Anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur periodically. Cumbersome visa requirements for foreign clergy and other religious workers create hardships for religious groups that make extensive use such workers. The draft law on religion submitted to Parliament in April 1999, which broadens the range of buildings formerly owned by religious organizations that would be subject to restitution to include secular buildings, still had not passed as of mid-2000.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government periodically and has pressed its concerns actively when the

occasion has warranted it. The Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend the interests of U.S. citizen missionaries working in the country. The U.S. Government also has been very active in advocating the just restitution of religious property confiscated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Embassy places a high priority on monitoring anti-Semitism and maintaining close relations with local Jewish organizations. The embassy human rights officer continuously monitors the status of religious freedom in the country.

Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice; the Government generally respects these rights in practice with the exception of some minority and nontraditional religions, which experienced difficulties in registering, buying, or leasing property.

The law requires virtually all religious organizations to register with the state. The agency responsible for interacting with religious organizations and executing state policy on religion is the State Committee for Religious Affairs. This committee has its headquarters in Kiev and maintains branch offices in every regional capital, as well as the cities of Kiev and Sevastopol. The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion requires all religious organizations of more than 10 individuals who have reached 18 years of age to register their articles and statutes as either a local or a national organization in order to obtain the status of a "juridical entity." If a group chooses to register as a national organization, it must register with the central office of the State Committee for Religious Affairs, and each of its local groups must register with the local office of the State Committee in the region where they are located. Those groups that choose to register as local organizations must register only with the local office of the State Committee. This status is necessary to own property or carry out many economic activities, such as publishing religious materials or opening bank accounts. According to the law, this registration process should take not more than 1 month (or 3 months in cases in which either the central or local committee decides that an expert opinion is necessary to determine the legitimacy of a group applying for registration). However, this requirement often is not met. The local offices also supervise the compliance of religious organizations with the provisions of the law.

There was no known instance in which a religious organization was denied registration permanently. Some religious organizations reported that, especially at the local or regional levels, officials of the State Committee refused to register their organizations for protracted periods, thus effectively delaying their activities and limiting freedom of association. However, these groups also reported that registration was easier than in the previous year. Delays in registration sometimes were due to bureaucratic delays and inertia on the part of individual bureaucrats. However, traditional religious organizations, especially the

Orthodox Church in central, southern, and eastern regions of the country and the Greek Catholic Church in the west exerted significant political influence at the local and regional levels and pressured local officials not to register nontraditional religious organizations or to allow them to rent or purchase property. Each of the two dominant denominations, within their respective spheres of influence, also reportedly pressured local officials to restrict the activities of the other.

Religious Demography

The primary religions practiced in the country are Orthodox Christianity and Greek Catholicism. They nominally represent approximately 85 per cent of the religiously active population. According to the State Committee, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has 8,590 officially registered parishes. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has 3,350 officially registered parishes. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) has 2,565 officially registered parishes, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church has 1,003. Judaism, Roman Catholicism, some evangelical Christian denominations, and Islam also have a firm presence in the country. Evangelical Christian denominations have grown rapidly since independence.

The Orthodox Church, which nominally represents between 60 and 70 percent of the population, is divided into three denominations: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate), and the much smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was founded in 1918 as a reaction of many Orthodox believers to what they regarded as the Russification of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and to realize their desire to be self-governing (autocephalous). It was abolished by Stalin in 1933 and survived in the western Diaspora until its rebirth in Ukraine in 1989. There are considerable interconfessional disputes among the three Ukrainian Orthodox denominations; however, these disputes generally have remained peaceful.

In 1997 leaders of major religious denominations and churches signed a government-drafted memorandum on the nonviolent resolution of religious disputes. Nonetheless, some problems remain (see Section II).

The central Government generally discouraged anti-Semitism. In 1999 the authorities opened a criminal case against the editor of the Lviv-based newspaper *Idealist* for fomenting interethnic hatred. In addition, the procuracy warned certain publications against publishing anti-Semitic material. However, Jewish representatives complained that some cases were not prosecuted. Representatives of Jewish groups expressed appreciation for state support of Jewish magazines and newspapers, including *Jewish News*, an insert to the weekly *Parliament* newspaper. A book documenting Ukrainian Judaica that was financed primarily by state funds was presented at the May 2000 Cultural Heritage Commission meeting in Kiev. According to Jewish representatives, President Kuchma and other high-ranking officials visit

the Babi Yar memorial each year on the anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Jews. During the period covered by this report, President Kuchma repeatedly and publicly spoke about the need for the peaceful coexistence of ethnic and religious groups. In January 2000, he attended a jubilee service celebrating the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth at which the heads of all major Christian religions gave speeches. Additionally, on Orthodox Easter, President Kuchma and Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko attended services representing diverse Christian Orthodox denominations, actions which were widely viewed as a sincere effort to foster religious freedom.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic (or Byzantine Rite Catholic, sometimes called "Uniate," a term some Ukrainian Catholics consider derogatory) Church constitutes around 10 percent of the population. It is centered in the west, where the proportion of Greek Catholics is much higher than in the country as a whole. The Greek Catholic Church arose in the 16th century as an attempt to reunify the Catholic and Orthodox Churches under Polish auspices. It is an eastern Byzantine Rite Church that recognizes the authority of the Pope and uses Byzantine church liturgies. Because the Church was introduced to the country in connection with an attempt by local leaders to loosen the influence of Moscow, the Church often is associated with Ukrainian nationalism.

During the period covered by this report, various Jewish representatives estimated the country's Jewish population at between 250,000 and 500,000 persons, of which between 35 and 40 percent are active religiously or communally. The country's Jews have enjoyed increasing opportunities for religious and cultural expression since Ukrainian independence. Although there has been a rebirth of Jewish life, the community continues to be affected by yearly Jewish emigration to Israel of around 25,000 persons, an emigration of 18,000 persons to western countries, and an annual decrease of 16,000 due to negative population growth. Between 1989 and 1997, the Jewish population decreased by 445,000, of whom 223,000 went to Israel. Both Orthodox and Progressive (Reform) Judaism are practiced in the country, although for historical reasons the large majority of religiously active Jews subscribe to Orthodoxy. The number of progressive communities increased from 18 to 24 during the period covered by this report. According to the Kiev Institute of Jewish Studies, in 1999 there were 115 Jewish organizations and religious communities in 62 cities. They publish 30 periodicals and newspapers.

Roman Catholicism is practiced by about 2 percent of the population, for the most part concentrated in the formerly Austro-Hungarian and Polish territories of the west. A papal visit originally planned for the end of 1999 had not taken place as of mid-2000.

Such faiths as Baptists, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), also have experienced rapid growth since the country's independence and currently also constitute approximately 2 percent of the population.

The Islamic faith is concentrated primarily among the Tatar population

of the autonomous republic of Crimea and amounts to 250,000 persons.

Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally permits religious organizations to establish places of worship and to train clergy. The Government continued to take steps to facilitate the allotment of land plots for construction of new houses of worship and to return religious buildings and sites to their former owners. Some groups believe that the pace was adequate while others felt it was too slow.

A 1993 amendment to the 1991 law on freedom of conscience and religion restricts the activities of foreign religious workers in the country. The amendment narrowly defines the permissible activities of foreign members of the clergy, preachers, teachers, and other foreign religious representatives who seek to carry out religious activities in the country. They may preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities "only in those religious organizations which invited them to Ukraine and with official approval of the governmental body that registered the statutes and the articles of the pertinent religious organization." The Mormons previously had reported difficulty in transferring missionaries between cities; however, during the period covered by this report they reported no such difficulties.

As of May 2000, invitations no longer are required for Ukrainian visa issuance to citizens of Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States. While this greatly simplifies travel to the country for religious tourists, religious workers still must obtain special religious visas that are issued only by invitation from a Ukrainian organization. Both the Mormon Church and the relatively powerful Greek Catholic Church asserted that such invitations were often difficult to obtain and that the decision by the regional offices of the State Committee for Religious Affairs often appeared arbitrary. However, both the Mormon Church and the Baptist Church reported that they are now able to obtain visas for all their religious workers. According to statistics from the State Committee for Religious Affairs, in 1999 the State Committee (including regional departments) issued 11,650 permits to foreigners for religious activities and refused 40 applications. During the first quarter of 2000, the State Committee reported that it issued 4,089 permits and refused 32. According to the State Committee, the refusals were based on a failure to fill out the forms properly. Of the 32 who were refused, none chose to reapply.

Visiting foreign missionaries still must register with the local government within 3 days of arrival, as must all other foreign visitors to the country. Some missionaries found this an unnecessarily burdensome requirement.

In order to promote interfaith understanding, the State Committee for Religious Affairs formed the Council of Churches in 1996. The Council is a consultative body consisting of the heads of all major religions and denominations, representing over 90 percent of the country's faithful. The State Committee convenes monthly roundtables with the council as

a whole, as well as monthly roundtables with representatives of each of the constituent religions and denominations. However, many representatives of religious organizations believed that this State Committee activity, while generally helpful in facilitating interconfessional dialog, was no longer necessary and was not in accordance with separation of church and state as provided for in the Constitution.

Religious organizations enjoy privileged status over individuals and other nonreligious organizations with regard to property restitution. According to current law, only they are eligible for restitution of property nationalized during the Soviet period. Only churches, synagogues, and religious artifacts immediately necessary for religious services are subject to restitution. Restitution of other forms of property (for example, school buildings and community centers) formerly owned by religious organizations is not regulated by current legislation. Religious buildings and property currently under state ownership may be returned either to exclusive use without charge or to actual ownership by religious organizations.

The decision whether or not to return religious buildings or property is made by the regional administration (or the Kiev or Sevastopol city administrations) in which the building is located. The decision on restitution is to be made by these organs within 1 month of application, and a written notification of the decision is to be provided to the applicant. However, implementation of a 1992 decree on restitution of religious community property seized during the Soviet era remains stalled in many places. In practice it is more common for buildings to be provided for exclusive free use than for an actual transfer of ownership to be permitted. Despite the law's provision that the decision be made within 1 month, the time period involved is usually considerably longer. Numerous Jewish congregations have negotiated successfully with local authorities for worship space.

While some Jewish community representatives were pleased with progress on restitution, others thought that much more should be done. In August 1999, several Jewish community leaders noted the failure of local authorities to enforce existing decrees and legislation, and the group specifically criticized the local governments in Lviv and Zhytomyr for failing to enforce a presidential decree banning construction on former Jewish cemeteries. The decrease in Jewish population has reduced demand for access to religious space, but progress has been made. For example, a synagogue was returned in Poltava Oblast in the fourth quarter of 1999. In the first quarter of 2000, one synagogue in Kerch and another in Slavuta in Khmelnytskyi oblast were returned. However, some Jewish leaders maintained that they continued to face obstacles in reacquiring community properties confiscated during the Soviet period. Jewish communities claimed that all property so far returned to them had only been for free exclusive use, not transferred to Jewish community ownership. However, the State Committee for Religious Affairs maintains that as of May 2000, 55 synagogues had been transferred to Jewish community ownership, and 22 other buildings had been returned for their exclusive use.

The Jewish communities officially claim approximately 3,000 properties of all types, of which only a minor portion have been restituted. However, since current law only permits restitution of synagogues, the proportion of buildings legally subject to restitution that have been returned is higher than the proportion of the total of all buildings claimed that have been restituted. In addition, the pace of restitution of Christian churches has slowed in recent years, since the buildings that remain in state possession tend to be prime properties currently in use as museums, concert halls, or city halls. The Roman Catholic Church has outstanding claims on approximately 40 buildings across the country that have not been returned, some of which already have been privatized partially. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches also reported problems in obtaining formerly owned properties. These difficulties often are due not only to government bureaucracy, but also to competing claims to the buildings in an economy where resources are scarce for construction of public buildings. Nevertheless, even these two dominant churches have been encountering restitution difficulties, since the remaining buildings in state ownership are more prestigious or income generating.

However, all religions have enjoyed equal opportunity to regain control over former community property. Problems in obtaining restitution result from inadequate legislation, bureaucratic inertia, and the difficulty of locating alternative quarters for current occupants. In 1996 a Kiev arbitration court decided in favor of transferring the title of the former Kiev Central Synagogue, which in Soviet times was used as a puppet theater, to a Chabad Hasidic congregation. The decision set an important precedent for the judiciary's role in religious property restitution. By December 1997, the puppet theater had vacated the building, and in the spring of 1998 the building reopened once again as a synagogue. In March 2000, the synagogue held a rededication ceremony after extensive renovation. The ceremony was attended by Ukrainian and foreign representatives of many religious groups.

A number of religious properties were returned to Christian churches during the period covered by this report. Of the 42 houses of worship returned in the fourth quarter of 1999, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church received 20 buildings. These included four churches of the Assumption Monastery in Donetsk and a church of national architectural importance in Berzhany, Ternopil Oblast. In the first quarter of 2000 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church received 17 buildings. In May 2000, the Kiev Patriarchate received the newly rebuilt, historic St. Michael's Cathedral in Central Kiev. The cathedral, which had been destroyed by Stalin in 1936, was rebuilt with significant local government funding. During the period covered by this report, authorities transferred 16 former cathedrals to the Greek Catholic Church and 5 to Roman Catholic parishes. A Lutheran Church also was returned in Ternopil oblast. However, Christian representatives complained that property generally was returned for exclusive or shared use, rather than for actual ownership.

A May 1998 government resolution committed local regional

administrations to pursue the step-by-step restitution of unused or misused places of worship to religious organizations. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, a list of such buildings had been compiled, and deadlines and conditions for their return had been set. In July 1998, the Cabinet issued an ordinance prohibiting construction and privatization on previous and current Jewish cemeteries. At a May 2000 meeting in Kiev of the Bilateral Cultural Heritage Commission, Deputy Minister of Culture Leonid Novahatko and U.S. Commissioner Stolberg agreed to cooperate on completing the necessary legislation. However, some construction was reported at the cemetery in Lviv, which was destroyed by the Nazis in World War II and is now the site of the city's central market. The cemetery in Berdychiv was returned to the Jewish community early in 1998, and restoration has begun.

In February 1999, President Kuchma instructed the Cabinet and other executive bodies to settle all outstanding church property restitution cases within the current year. This instruction was issued not long after a meeting between the President and representatives of the country's religious communities. However, as of mid-2000, there remained church property restitution cases to be settled. In February 1999, President Kuchma instructed the State Property Fund to take measures to ban the transfer of property formerly owned by religious communities to private (that is, non-Church) owners and to require local authorities to provide land to be used for new churches and cemeteries. Kuchma also ordered the State Customs Committee to streamline procedures for sending humanitarian aid to religious organizations.

A revision of the law on religion was submitted to Parliament by the Government in April 1999. It would broaden the range of buildings formerly owned by religious organizations that would be subject to restitution to include secular buildings once owned by religious organizations. While in several ways an improvement over the existing law (including clarification of the separation of church and state and provision for conscientious objection), it would maintain registration requirements for religious organizations. As of mid-2000, it remained unclear when this draft would be considered by Parliament.

The Kiev Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church complained of harassment by local authorities in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern region of the country.

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church complained of governmental pressure to join either the Kiev or Moscow Patriarchate after the April 2000 death of Patriarch Dmitri. It also reported governmental pressure to choose a Ukrainian successor to Patriarch Dmitri rather than Metropolitan Konstantin, a U.S. citizen.

In early June 2000, there were reports of harassment from a group of four American teachers with religious affiliations hired to teach at a public school in Sevastopol. The teachers initially were hired to teach morality and ethics, but after a change in school administration, their contracts were revised to limit their activities to teaching English. The teachers indicated that they complied with this request. However,

Ukrainian colleagues and fellow parishioners subsequently were approached by local authorities and asked to report on the activities of the teachers, in what appeared to be an effort to implicate them in work and visa status irregularities. One report suggested that this monitoring may have been prompted by complaints from the Orthodox Church.

On June 1, 2000, a private prayer meeting hosted by the teachers in their home was broken up by Ukrainians who refused to identify themselves but insisted on checking the passports and visa status of the persons present. The teachers reported that government officials were verbally abusive and that they interrogated the Ukrainians present about the teachers' activities. Subsequently, local authorities searched the school and found religious materials stored by the teachers. Deportation proceedings against the four followed; they were found to have engaged in illegal religious activity incompatible with their visa status. Officials from the State Committee for Religious Affairs indicated that the local officials claimed to have received complaints that the teachers were proselytizing in a public school, in violation of the separation of church and state.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Keston news service reported that members of the Karaite community in Simferopol began to use their historical religious and cultural center during the period covered by this report. The center, Tchufut Kale ("impregnable fortress" in Turkish), is the site of two Karaite kenassas (prayer houses). However, according to this report, which has not been independently verified, representatives of the community have complained that they have to pay to worship there. Tchufut Kale currently is designated a conservation area and is under the control of the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. When the Karaites go there to pray, they have to buy tickets to enter or sometimes have to pray outside until the conservation authorities grant them permission to enter. The Karaite community also pointed out that the buildings and grounds have not been cared for properly by the conservation authorities. Since the community's registration in 1991, it has been trying to reclaim its property seized during the Soviet era, including the two kenassas at Tchufut Kale, through correspondence with the chairman of the committee for religious affairs in the council of ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. There are only about 800 Karaites in Crimea.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

Overall, respect for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report. Although problems remained regarding the Government's protection of religious freedom for "nontraditional" religious organizations (defined as all organizations other than Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Jewish), which faced some difficulty in carrying out their activities, they reported less difficulty in obtaining visas and registering during the period covered by the report. Some measures to improve property restitution have been undertaken. The Government took steps to return to religious groups properties expropriated during the Soviet era.

As of May 2000, invitations no longer are required for Ukrainian visa issuance to citizens of Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States for tourist and business travel. Although this greatly simplified travel to Ukraine for religious tourists, religious workers still require invitations from an organization registered in Ukraine.

The Baptist Church reported that it no longer encountered any restrictions on baptizing persons in the Dnipro. A successful Easter service in Kiev drew more than 5,000 persons.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

Relations among the religions and religious denominations in the country are generally amicable, although problems remain in certain areas.

The ongoing dispute among competing Orthodox Christian administrative bodies claiming to be "the Ukrainian Orthodox Church" remained deadlocked. The disagreements primarily center on the inheritance of property that belonged to the Unified Russian Orthodox Church before independence, the proper language to use in the liturgy (Ukrainian, Russian, or Church Slavonic), and recognition by foreign religious organizations. The Moscow Patriarchate thus far has claimed successfully to be the only legitimate representative of Ukrainian Orthodoxy to foreign religious organizations such as the Vatican, the Constantinople Patriarchate, and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Kiev Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church complains of harassment by local authorities in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern region of the country, while the Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church complains that local governments turn a blind eye to the appropriation of their churches by Ukrainian nationalists in the Ukrainian-speaking western region.

The Government has been unable to stop disagreements between Orthodox believers and Greek Catholics in the western part of the country, where the two communities have contentious relations and engage in bitter disputes over church buildings and property in some 300 localities. The number of localities with disputes between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches has decreased over the last few years. The Greek Catholic Church cooperates with the Roman Catholic Church and with various Jewish groups on humanitarian aid projects.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church assisted Lutheran missionaries with invitations and necessary documentation to work in the country. It also provided invitations to and facilitated visits and meetings for U.S. Jewish leaders. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church assisted the Jewish community in Ukraine and Jewish organizations in the United States in obtaining Torah scrolls in government museums and archives restored to Jewish communities in the country. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church cooperated with the Lviv Jewish community on the distribution of two shipments of medical humanitarian aid from the U.S. Government. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches also work together with Caritas, the international Catholic charity.

Church leaders generally resolve interconfessional disputes through discussion. Many leaders believed that the State Committee for Religious Affairs, although helpful, should be eliminated, since they believe that it represents forced rather than natural cooperation.

There are some indications of popular suspicion of "nonnative" religions and foreign missionaries. There have been occasional statements by Ukrainian Orthodox Church officials (both Moscow and Kiev Patriarchates) denouncing the spread of such religions and sharply criticizing their missionary activities. Popular suspicion has not led to significant public criticism or actions against such religions, which continue to find many converts. However, missionaries reported some instances of societal discrimination against members of their churches, such as salary cuts, layoffs, and public criticism for betraying "native religions."

Anti-Semitism exists on an individual and societal basis. Some ultranationalist groups and newspapers continued to publish and distribute anti-Semitic tracts regularly. Anti-Semitic publications also are imported from Russia and distributed without the necessary state license. In early 1999, the Shimon Dubnov Ukrainian Academy of Jewish History and Culture filed suit against the nationalist newspaper Vechirny Kiev for publishing anti-Semitic diatribes about the Academy's collection of scholarly articles, "Judeophobia against Ukraine," which was published in 1998. As of mid-2000, this case still was pending.

Anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur but, according to local Jewish organizations, have declined in number over recent years and were concentrated in western regions of the country.

During the period covered by this report, there were no arrests made in the 1997 firebombing of the Kharkiv Israeli cultural center, nor have there been any prosecutions for the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in 1997.

Tension continued within the Jewish community, focused primarily on which Jewish organization should be recognized as representing the Jewish community in international Jewish forums.

The smaller Progressive Jewish community reported that it was subject to pressure and discrimination from the dominant Orthodox Jewish organizations.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government periodically. The U.S. Government has pressed its concerns actively when the occasion has warranted it. Since most problems related to religious freedom in the country lie in the relationship between foreign missionaries of nontraditional religions and local authorities, and most of the foreign missionaries--approximately 55 percent--working in the country today are U.S. citizens, the Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend their interests. Responding to complaints by American missionaries that Ukrainian embassies and consulates were not issuing religious worker visas, the Embassy's consular section raised the importance of honoring visa reciprocity in several 1999-2000 meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These meetings did not result in tangible improvements in the Government's visa practices toward prospective religious workers; however, the Embassy continues to stress the issue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the consular section repeatedly recommended doing away with the Soviet requirement of an invitation to receive Ukrainian visas. As of May 2000, invitations no longer were required for certain visa categories.

The U.S. Government also has been active in advocating the just restitution of religious property confiscated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Embassy's political counselor raised the issue in a February meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador stressed the importance of a transparent and nondiscriminatory process for property restitution at the May 2000 meeting of the joint U.S.-Ukraine Cultural Heritage Commission in Kiev. U.S. Commissioner Stolberg and Deputy Minister of Culture Novohatko agreed to cooperate on drafting legislation that would prohibit construction and privatization on previous and current cemeteries of all religious denominations.

An embassy officer is tasked with monitoring the status of property restitution. This officer has discussed the issue on several occasions with the State Committee for Religious Affairs, with the Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with representatives of religious organizations. In October 1999, National Security Council Director for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian Affairs Tedstrom met with representatives of religious organizations in Kiev to discuss religious freedom and property restitution.

The Embassy places a high priority on monitoring anti-Semitism and maintaining close relations with local Jewish organizations. In August 1999, the Embassy hosted a meeting of Jewish community leaders with Senator Arlen Specter. Two embassy officers and a representative of the

State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom attended the October 1999 induction ceremony of Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny as the progressive rabbi of the country. The political counselor and two political officers attended the March 2000 rededication of the Kiev grand synagogue. The Embassy's human rights officer also holds regular meetings with a variety of Jewish community representatives around the country.

The Embassy closely followed the case of the four American teachers in Sevastopol. The Embassy raised the case with the Foreign Ministry, the State Committee for Religious Affairs, and prosecutorial officials. The Foreign Ministry was helpful and at one point sought to block the deportation decision. The Embassy requested that the Foreign Ministry and the State Committee for Religious Affairs review the handling of this matter to avoid similar problems in the future and to consider lifting the 1-year restriction on the return of the teachers.

The Embassy's human rights officer continuously monitors the status of religious freedom in the country. The officers serving in that position during the period covered by this report regularly met with the State Committee for Religious Affairs and with representatives from all the primary religious groups in the country, not only in Kiev, but in several regional centers as well. They also regularly met with representatives of human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) who deal with issues of religious freedom.

A representative from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited Ukraine in October, meeting with representatives of religious organizations, government officials, and embassy staff to promote religious freedom.

In Washington, the Department's Office of International Religious Freedom met with Jewish leaders from Ukraine as well as with Christian clergy.

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