

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	393
Land:	Ukraine
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Report on International Religious Freedom 2019 – Ukraine
Udgivet:	10. juni 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	3. juli 2020

UKRAINE 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

In February 2014, Russian military forces invaded Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 adopted on March 27, 2014, and entitled Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, states the Autonomous Republic of Crimea remains internationally recognized as within Ukraine's international borders. The U.S. government does not recognize the purported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and considers that Crimea remains a part of Ukraine.

UKRAINE

Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of religion and provides for the separation of church and state. By law, the objective of domestic religious policy is to foster the creation of a tolerant society and provide for freedom of conscience and worship. On January 6, the Ecumenical Patriarch granted autocephaly to the newly created Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), thereby formally recognizing a canonical Ukrainian Orthodox institution independent of the Russian Orthodox Church for the first time since 1686. On January 30, the government officially registered the OCU under the titles Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) and Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), stating that the names could be used synonymously. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) continued to be also officially registered as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church even though it remained a constituent part of the Moscow Patriarchate, also known as the Russian Orthodox Church, following the creation of the OCU. The government at times struggled to manage tensions between the newly created OCU and UOC-MP, which competed for members and congregations. According to observers, Russia attempted to use its disinformation campaign to fuel further conflict between the two churches. According to human rights groups, the number of documented acts of anti-Semitism was lower when compared with previous years, but investigations and prosecution of anti-Semitic vandalism were generally inconclusive. Some Jewish leaders continued to state their concerns about what they considered impunity for acts of anti-Semitism and the government's long delays in completing investigations. Religious leaders also continued to urge the government to establish a transparent legal process to address property restitution claims. Minority religious groups continued to report discriminatory treatment by local authorities in land allocation for religious buildings. The Ukrainian Greek

Catholic Church (UGCC) said the local government in Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Oblast, was unwilling to finalize the allocation of a plot of land for building a church.

Media sources, religious freedom activists, the OCU, Muslims, Protestant churches, and Jehovah's Witnesses stated that Russian proxy authorities in the Russian-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (regions) continued to exert pressure on minority religious groups. In the so-called Luhansk People's Republic ("LPR"), proxy authorities banned Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" organization, while the "Supreme Court" in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic ("DPR") upheld a similar ban. Russian proxy authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk continued to implement laws requiring all religious organizations except the UOC-MP to undergo "state religious expert evaluations" and reregister with them. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a majority of religious groups recognized under Ukrainian law continued to be unable to reregister because of stringent legal requirements under Russian legislation preventing or discouraging reregistration of many religious communities. Many religious groups continued to refuse to reregister because they did not recognize the Russian-installed authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. All but one mosque remained closed in Donetsk. Russia-led forces continued to use religious buildings of minority religious groups as military facilities. The situation in Russian-occupied Crimea is reported in an appendix following the report on the rest of Ukraine.

After the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the newly created OCU in January, thereby recognizing a Ukrainian Orthodox institution independent of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Kremlin, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the UOC-MP labelled the OCU a "schismatic" group. UOC-MP representatives stated but did not provide evidence that the OCU had carried out "raider attacks" by deceiving and stealing parishioners by using a similar name. There were continued reports of what some media and political observers characterized as radical groups physically assaulting and pressuring UOC-MP supporters and vandalizing UOC-MP property as well as UOC-MP priests locking out parishioners who wished to change to the OCU. In March representatives of the group Right Sector, commonly characterized as a violent radical group, reportedly pushed and possibly hit UOC-MP parishioners during a scuffle between OCU and UOC-MP members near a UOC-MP church in Hnizdychne, Ternopil Oblast. UOC-MP leaders accused the newly formed OCU of seizing churches belonging to the UOC-MP; the OCU responded that parishioners rather than the OCU had initiated the transfers of affiliation. Members of the Jewish community reiterated concern about new construction on a

site at Lviv's Krakivskiy Market located on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery. There were again reports of vandalism of Christian monuments; Holocaust memorials, synagogues, and Jewish cemeteries; and Jehovah's Witnesses' Kingdom Halls. Jehovah's Witnesses reported five violent incidents against members and five cases of vandalism and arson attacks on Kingdom Halls. The All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) and the All-Ukrainian Council of Religious Associations (AUCRA) continued to promote interfaith dialogue and respect for religious diversity.

The Ambassador and other U.S. embassy officials met frequently with officials of the Office of the President, ministry officials, and members of parliament to discuss the protection of religious heritage sites, manifestations of anti-Semitism, and issues within the Orthodox churches. In light of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's granting the OCU autocephaly the Ambassador urged government and religious leaders to practice tolerance, restraint, and mutual understanding to ensure respect for all individuals' religious freedom and preferences. The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to urge religious groups to resolve property disputes peacefully and through dialogue with government officials, in particular the dispute regarding the location of parts of the Krakivskyy Market on the site of the Lviv Old Jewish Cemetery. Embassy officials continued to meet with internally displaced Muslims from Crimea to discuss their continuing inability to practice their religion freely in Crimea. In May the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism met with government, religious, and community leaders to discuss the need for a strong government response to combating anti-Semitism, promote religious freedom, encourage interfaith dialogue, and assure leaders of U.S. support for all individuals to practice freely their faiths.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 44 million (midyear 2019 estimate). According to the annual October national survey conducted by the Razumkov Center, an independent public policy think tank, 64.9 percent of respondents identify as Christian Orthodox, compared with 67.3 percent in 2018; 9.5 percent Greek Catholic (UGCC), compared with 9.4 percent; 1.8 percent Protestant, compared with 2.2; 1.6 percent Roman Catholic, compared with 0.8 percent; 0.1 Jewish, compared with 0.4 percent; and 0.1 percent Muslim, compared with under 0.1 percent in 2018. The survey found another 8 percent identify as "simply a Christian," while 12.8 percent state they do not belong to any religious group, compared with 7.1 percent and 11 percent, respectively, in 2018. Small percentages of Buddhists, Hindus, followers of other religions, and individuals

who chose not to disclose their beliefs constitute the remainder of the respondents. According to the same survey, 64.9 percent identify as Christian Orthodox; 13.2 percent the new OCU; 10.6 percent the UOC-MP; 7.7 percent Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP); 30.3 percent “just an Orthodox believer”; and 3.1 percent undecided.

According to government statistics, followers of the UGCC reside primarily in the western oblasts of Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk. Most Roman Catholic Church (RCC) congregations are in Lviv, Khmelnytsky, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, and Zakarpattia Oblasts in the western part of the country. According to the government’s estimate released in March, most of the then UOC-KP and UAOC (now largely merged into the new OCU) congregations are in the central and western parts of the country, except for Zakarpattia Oblast. Most UOC-MP congregations are also in the central and western parts of the country, excluding Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Ternopil Oblasts.

The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine is the largest Protestant community. Other Christian groups include Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Calvinists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ).

Government agencies and independent think tanks estimate the Muslim population at 500,000, while some Muslim leaders estimate two million. According to government figures, 300,000 of these are Crimean Tatars.

The Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities (VAAD) states there are approximately 300,000 persons of Jewish ancestry in the country. According to VAAD, before the Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, approximately 30,000 Jews lived in the Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts). Jewish groups estimate between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish residents lived in Crimea before Russia’s attempted annexation.

There are also Buddhists, practitioners of Falun Gong, Baha’is, and adherents of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including worship. By law, the government may restrict this right only in the “interests of protecting public order, the health and morality of the population, or protecting the rights and freedoms of other persons.” The constitution provides for the separation of church and state and stipulates, “No religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory.”

By law, the objective of religious policy is to “restore full-fledged dialogue between representatives of various social, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups to foster the creation of a tolerant society and provide for freedom of conscience and worship.” By law, the production and dissemination of Nazi symbols and propaganda of totalitarian regimes is banned and considered a crime.

Religious organizations include congregations, theological schools, monasteries, religious brotherhoods, missions, and administrations of religious associations consisting of religious organizations. To register and obtain legal entity status, an organization must register either with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the government agency responsible for religious affairs, or with regional government authorities, depending upon the nature of the organization. Religious centers, administrations, monasteries, religious brotherhoods, missions, and religious schools register with the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport. Religious congregations register with the regional authorities where they are present. While these religious congregations may form the constituent units of a nationwide religious organization, the nationwide organization does not register on a national basis and may not obtain recognition as a legal entity; rather, the constituent units register individually and obtain legal entity status.

To be eligible for registration, a religious congregation must comprise at least 10 adult members and submit to the registration authorities its statute (charter), certified copies of the resolution that created it and was adopted by founding members, and a document confirming its right to own or use premises.

Registered religious groups wishing to acquire nonprofit status, which many do for logistical reasons, including for banking purposes, must register with tax authorities.

Without legal-entity status, a religious group may not own property, conduct banking activities, or publish materials. In accordance with the stipulation against national registration, only a registered constituent unit of a nationwide religious organization may own property or conduct business activities, either for itself or on

behalf of the nationwide organization. The law grants property tax exemptions to religious organizations and considers them nonprofit organizations.

The law requires commanders of military units to allow their subordinates to participate in religious services but bans the creation of religious organizations in military institutions and military units. The Ministry of Defense defines selection criteria for clerics to become chaplains, the status of chaplains in the chain of command, and their rights and duties in the armed forces, National Guard, and State Border Guard Service. According to a law passed in 2018, UOC-MP priests are prohibited from serving as chaplains on bases or in conflict zones, allegedly due to concerns about their affiliation with Russia through the Moscow Patriarchate.

The law gives prison chaplains access to both pretrial detainees and sentenced inmates. It also protects the confidentiality of confessions heard by prison chaplains, prohibits the use of information received during confession as evidence in legal proceedings, and does not allow the interrogation of clerics, interpreters, or other persons about matters associated with the confidentiality of confession.

According to the constitution, organizers must notify local authorities in advance of any type of planned public gathering, and authorities may challenge the legality of the planned event. According to a 2016 Constitutional Court decision, religious organizations need only inform local authorities of their intention to hold a public gathering and need not apply for permission or notify authorities within a specific period in advance of the event.

The law allows religious groups to establish theological schools to train clergy and other religious workers, as well as seek state accreditation through the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance for their curriculum. The law states theological schools shall function based on their own statutes.

Government agencies authorized to monitor religious organizations include the Prosecutor General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and all other “central bodies of the executive government.”

Only registered religious groups may seek restitution of communal property confiscated by the Communist regime. Religious groups must apply to regional authorities for property restitution. The law states authorities should complete their consideration of a restitution claim within a month.

The law prohibits religious instruction as part of the mandatory public school curriculum and states public school training “shall be free from interference by political parties, civic, and religious organizations.” Public schools include ethics of faith or similar faith-related courses as optional parts of the curricula. Christian, Islamic, and Jewish-focused curriculum are offered as part of the ethics of faith curriculum in public schools.

The law provides for antidiscrimination screening of draft legislation and government regulations, including for discrimination based on religion. The law requires the legal department of each respective agency responsible for verifying the draft legislation to conduct the screening in accordance with instructions developed by the Cabinet of Ministers, to ensure the draft legislation does not contain discriminatory language and to require changes if it does. Religious groups may participate in screening draft legislation at the invitation of the respective agency.

The law allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors. The law does not exempt the clergy from military mobilization.

The Office of the Parliamentary Human Rights Ombudsman is constitutionally required to release an annual report to parliament with a section on religious freedom.

The law restricts the activities of foreign-based religious groups and defines the permissible activities of noncitizen clergy, preachers, teachers, and other representatives of foreign-based religious organizations. By law, foreign religious workers may “preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities,” but they may do so only for the religious organization that invited them and with the approval of the government body that registered the statute of the organization. Missionary activity is included under permissible activities.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Since 2015, the government has exercised the right of derogation from its obligations under the ICCPR with regard to the portions of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts under the control of Russia-led forces, including the ICCPR provisions pertaining to religious freedom.

Government Practices

After Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew granted autocephaly to the OCU on January 6, thereby recognizing a canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent from the Russian Orthodox Church, then president Petro Poroshenko repeated his pledge that the government would guarantee religious freedom for all citizens.

On January 30, the government officially registered the new OCU. The UOC-MP, officially registered as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and canonically subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate, also known as the Russian Orthodox Church, described the OCU's new status as evidence of a "raider attack" because the two churches had almost identical names. The government rejected the criticism, stating that according to 2018 legislative amendments, the UOC-MP was required to change its official title to reflect its affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate. The Kremlin, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the UOC-MP continued to describe the OCU as a "schismatic" group, despite its recognition by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Greece, and the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. Russia continued to urge other Orthodox churches not to recognize the OCU.

On December 11, the Supreme Court upheld a ruling by the Kyiv District Administrative Court to suspend the government's implementation of December 2018 amendments to the law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations requiring the UOC-MP, formally registered as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), to rename itself to reflect its affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate (Russian Orthodox Church). The ruling prevented the government from enforcing the name-change requirement for 267 UOC-MP religious organizations because of the UOC-MP's ongoing lawsuit against the bill. The organizations were a third party in the lawsuit filed by the UOC-MP Metropolitan Administration. The government stated that the rest of the UOC-MP had to comply with the renaming requirement.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, throughout the year administrative courts defended the right of conscientious objectors to alternative service, revoking decisions by the respective district state administrations. From May through August, district courts in Odesa, Luhansk, Sumy, Kherson, and Kirovohrad Oblasts, restored five Jehovah's Witness members' right to alternative service.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on September 3, the Donetsk District Administrative Court revoked the April 22 decision by the Donetsk Oblast State Administration to refuse Lazar Yasynskyy's application for alternative civilian

service on procedural grounds. On April 22, the Donetsk Oblast State Administration refused Vladyslav Udovik's application for alternative civilian service on procedural grounds. At the end of the year, both cases were under consideration by the Donetsk Appellate Administrative Court.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on February 4, the Kirovohrad District Administrative Court upheld a refusal by the Kropyvnytsky City Call-Up Commission to defer Minister Yaroslav Nohin's alternative civilian service. The court did not find the refusal discriminatory, saying that Nohin's ministry in a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation was not his professional activity, and unlike Orthodox or Catholic priests, he was not eligible for the deferment. On August 5, Nohin filed a cassation appeal with the Supreme Court of Ukraine.

On November 15, the Kalush City and District Court found Ruslan Hrechynskyy guilty of a hate crime for attacking Jehovah's Witness Yuriy Shavranskyyy when he was peacefully offering religious literature in a public area, according to Jehovah's Witnesses. The court approved an amicable agreement between the assailant and the victim, sentencing Hrechynskyy to 100 hours of community service.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on June 30, a man assaulted Ruslan and Kateryna Suprunov near a mobile display of their missionary materials in Vinnytsya. He punched Ruslan Suprunov in the face, causing his lip to bleed, and damaged the display. Police opened an investigation. On June 26, an unidentified attacker hit Jehovah's Witness Valeriy Derkach with a stick near a mobile display of missionary materials in central Kyiv. The man then broke the display. The victim filed a complaint, but police did not open an investigation.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, representatives of military registration enlistment offices in some regions did not respect the right to conscientious objection. At times, regional authorities denied alternative civilian service to Jehovah's Witnesses. Some were detained for days. On June 12, representatives of the military registration and enlistment office in Ternopil detained Yaroslav Bodnarchuk for 31 hours. Despite his written and oral statements requesting alternative civilian service, the officers handcuffed the detainee and beat him. On May 15, representatives of a military registration enlistment office in Kharkiv detained Oleksiy Murzin at a railway station and held him at their regional office for a day and a half. On April 24, representatives of military registration and enlistment office in Ternopil escorted Petro Myshchysyn to their regional office and detained him for three days. The Military Prosecutors' Office instituted six criminal cases, but no suspects were held accountable by year's end.

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses' annual report, a court postponed judicial examination of a criminal case against a man who had allegedly violently assaulted two elderly female Jehovah's Witnesses, Vira Gul and Tamara Barsuk, in March 2016. The prosecutor reportedly refused to include in his indictment evidence that the assault was religiously motivated, which would have allowed the attack to be classified as a hate crime. According to the report, the limitation period expired for Tamara Barsuk, and therefore, the assailant could not be held criminally liable. Gul's case remained pending at year's end.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on February 21, an appellate court in Odesa overturned another refusal by the State Migration Service (SMS) to grant refugee status to Asadzade Totonchi, who had sought refuge because of religious persecution in Iran.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on January 31, the SMS rejected a refugee status application by a Jehovah's Witness who along with his family had fled religious persecution in Russia. Both a court of the first instance and an appellate court in Odesa overturned the refusal. The case was pending SMS review at the end of the year.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on January 29, the investigator closed criminal proceedings against a woman who in July 2016 had attacked two Jehovah's Witnesses, fracturing the jaw of one and bruising the face of the other. The investigator concluded that the four eyewitness statements by Jehovah's Witnesses could not be trusted because they were also Jehovah's Witnesses. On October 2, the investigative judge reversed the investigator's decision and obliged police to renew the investigation. The investigation continued through the end of the year.

On July 3, according to the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Supreme Court reached a final decision in the case against a man who in June 2017 had beaten Jehovah's Witness Yuriy Vorobey, reportedly because he was a member of that group, inflicting multiple injuries to his head and body. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the lower courts, which had sentenced the attacker to 160 hours of community service under charges of "minor bodily injury."

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on March 7, one of the individuals who beat Jehovah's Witness Oleksandr Tretyak with a wooden bat in Vinnytsya in 2013 was found guilty of hooliganism and subsequently released, likely because of time served. Jehovah's Witnesses said the individual should have been prosecuted for a

violent hate crime rather than hooliganism. Another assailant, a police officer who reportedly instigated and participated in the violent assault, faced no charges. The victim received one fourth of the compensation he had requested. Due to the lack of an effective investigation, in 2015 Tretyak filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). In 2017 the ECHR communicated the application to Ukrainian authorities. The investigation reportedly intensified but produced few concrete results by year's end, according to Jehovah's Witnesses.

The government at times struggled with managing tensions between the newly created OCU and UOC-MP, which competed for members and congregations. According to observers, Russia attempted to use a disinformation campaign to fuel further conflict between the two churches. The OHCHR assessed the process of congregations transitioning from the UOC-MP to the OCU as occasionally leading to violence, but indicated an "overall trend of declining tensions between religious communities." The OHCHR, however, expressed concern about the involvement of "nonreligious actors" in the transition process, including local authorities and what the OHCHR characterized as right-wing groups, as well as police inaction during certain incidents. The UOC-MP said the Poroshenko government gave far-right groups a "free hand" to pressure UOC-MP parishioners to leave the UOC-MP and join the OCU, although media reports assessed such claims were overblown because the Moscow Patriarchate and Russian government sought to spread false charges alleging "persecution" of the UOC-MP.

On January 28, then president Poroshenko signed amendments to the laws on the freedom of conscience and religious organizations and on state registration of legal entities, natural persons, and civic organizations to streamline the registration of religious organizations. The newly amended registration law directed regional governments' religious affairs departments to enter religious organizations into the State Register of Legal Entities database in addition to registering their statutes. It required all religious organizations to update and reregister their statutes under the new regulations within a year. The amendments also specified reregistration requirements for organizations that wished to change their affiliation, particularly UOC-MP parishes seeking to join the OCU. The amended law required a quorum, as defined by each congregation and usually comprising two-thirds or three-fourths of a religious organization's members, to decide on its future affiliation. The bill also required a vote by two-thirds of those present to authorize such a decision. The law banned any transfer of an organization's property until the affiliation change was finalized. On March 19, the Constitutional Court rejected a petition by 47 parliament members challenging the law as unconstitutional.

In an October 21 media interview, a Ministry of Culture senior official said that regional religious affairs departments would not be able to meet the nine-month registration deadline for congregations under the amended registration law. She added that the parliament should have given the ministry a transitional period in which to train staff to implement the new procedure. The Ukraine-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Institute of Religious Freedom (IRF) said parliament adopted the amendments to the registration law without having properly consulted with the religious communities involved. The IRF said the requirement for an organization changing affiliation to certify a quorum by submitting a list of participants in the organization's meeting violated its believers' right to keep their religious views confidential. The IRF also said religious organizations without fixed membership rosters would be unable to verify the religious affiliation of all individuals attending such gatherings.

UOC-MP representatives said some local government officials had organized village meetings in which participants unaffiliated with the UOC-MP were allowed to vote, with the goal of making local parishes part of the OCU. UOC-MP representatives said such officials also helped OCU supporters take possession of disputed UOC-MP church buildings before the change of affiliation was officially finalized. OCU representatives said the UOC-MP often described legitimate changes of parish affiliation as unlawful and had filed lawsuits challenging most such reregistrations as part of the UOC-MP's strategy to discourage OCU followers from joining the new Church. According to the government and the OCU, the UOC-MP often falsely described eligible voters at such congregation meetings as "unaffiliated" with the parish, alleging that they rarely or never participated in religious services. The government estimated that 500-600 of more than 12,000 registered UOC-MP congregations switched their affiliation to the OCU during the year.

According to the UOC-MP, some local authorities transferred parish affiliations from the UOC-MP to the OCU against the will of parishioners. Media reports indicated that some UOC-MP priests refused to follow the will of parishioners to change affiliation. Posts on the website of the Right Sector, commonly characterized as a violent radical group, stated that at the request of the OCU, it continued to visit Orthodox churches disputed between the UOC-MP and OCU to "facilitate" changes in affiliation.

UOC-MP sources said that during a June 2 dispute over church ownership in Hrabove Village, Volyn Oblast, OCU supporter Zynoviy Koval beat UOC-MP archpriest Dmytro Kovalchuk, broke his finger, and tore off his pectoral cross.

According to the UOC-MP, police charged Koval with having caused minor injuries, while the UOC-MP accused authorities of downplaying the incident. UOC-MP representatives said Chairman of the Shatsk District State Administration Vasyl Holyadynets had tried to convince the priest to help transfer his congregation to the OCU, but he refused. According to the UOC-MP, 125 parishioners of 200 Hrabove residents had initially signed a statement reaffirming their UOC-MP membership. In response, the local government had reportedly forced a majority of the residents to support the transfer of the village parish to the OCU. The OCU rejected the accusation of forced transfer, stating that most parish members had sought voluntarily to join the OCU. Its representatives described Koval's aggressive behavior as an emotional reaction to the priest's "sneering" at a remark about Russia's war against Ukraine.

Media reported shots were fired in a village in Volyn Oblast, reportedly by a UOC-MP priest, Volodymyr Geleta, in a conflict over a local church changing its affiliation to the OCU. The local parish had previously voted to transfer the local church to the OCU, but the priest and his followers refused to hand over the church. In response, a group of OCU supporters blocked access to the church and a scuffle ensued that police attempted to break up. Priest Volodymyr Geleta's wife stated on a UOC-MP website that she sustained a concussion during the altercation. The priest subsequently fired shots from his house at the church. Police confiscated the rifle from the priest and opened an investigation, which continued at year's end.

According to March 10 UOC-MP video footage, at a gathering in the town of Baranivka, Zhytomyr Oblast, Radical Party activist Oleh Kovalskyy called on his supporters to rid a local UOC-MP church of "Moscow's stooges" and to avoid "talks with the enemy." The Baranivka mayor and district administration head attended the gathering. The video showed Kovalskyy and several dozen followers attacking UOC-MP members who stood at the entrance to the UOC-MP Church of Nativity of the Mother of God, reportedly punching and kicking a UOC-MP nun as she tried to protect an elderly monk. UOC-MP priest Orest Semotyuk was also punched and hospitalized. Head of the Baranivka District State Administration Mykola Velchunsky stated that UOC-MP priest Roman Klym had provoked the clash by trying to prevent OCU supporters from entering the church. The latter denied using force against the UOC-MP congregation. Prior to the incident, most members of the congregation had voted to join the OCU, said representatives of the newly established OCU congregation.

According to the UOC-MP, on January 13, the mayor of the village of Hnizdychne, Ternopil Oblast, convened a meeting of residents, most of whom voted to bring a local UOC-MP parish under OCU jurisdiction. Despite a prior agreement on the shared rotational use of the church building, OCU followers assembled on February 3 for a UOC-MP liturgy. According to UOC-MP video footage, police scuffled with UOC-MP members as they tried to approach the church entrance. Several unidentified OCU supporters wearing military fatigues assaulted UOC-MP parish priest Stefan Balan and some parishioners. Balan was hospitalized with acute chest pain and a broken finger. No group admitted responsibility for the incident; however, media and civil society representatives reported violent radical group involvement in similar attacks in the past. According to the OCU diocesan administration of Ternopil, OCU members and police sought to prevent UOC-MP parishioners from seizing the church; the administration said that UOC-MP followers might have provoked the conflict to produce the video, which portrayed them as victims of violence. Local police said its personnel had sought to prevent further escalation of the incident.

According to separate UOC-MP video footage, on March 3, OCU priest Ivan Lesyk and Right Sector supporters used force against UOC-MP parishioners during another scuffle at the Hnizdychne church; the UOC-MP reported that police did not intervene. In a Facebook post, a local Right Sector branch claimed credit for “assisting” with the transfer of the building to the OCU. Local media reported that two women and several OCU and UOC-MP supporters sustained minor injuries during the scuffle.

On January 28, the Vinnytsya Oblast National Police Department issued a statement citing “dozens of complaints” that residents unaffiliated with local parishes had participated in a vote on changing the jurisdiction of the parish affiliation.

According to UOC-MP video footage, on January 28, Petro Brovko, the mayor of Mohyliv-Podilskyy, Vinnytsya Oblast, led a gathering of residents of Sonyachne, a neighboring village, where he called on them to prevent the local UOC-MP congregation from remaining part of the church of *katsapy* (derogatory reference to Russians). Before the event, its organizers had posted an announcement inviting all village residents to participate in determining the parish’s affiliation. Most attendees voted in favor of Brovko’s proposal to bring the congregation into the OCU. Local UOC-MP members said that many voters were not in fact affiliated with their parish, whose “real members” had decided to remain part of the UOC-MP at a previous meeting.

Following UOC-MP complaints, in October the Vinnytsya Oblast police department opened a criminal case against Viktor Saletskyy, Chief of the Nationalities and Religious Department of the Vinnytsya Oblast State Administration. Police stated that Saletskyy's "arbitrary" decisions led to an unlawful change of affiliation from the UOC-MP to the OCU by congregations in Luka Meleshkivska and Velyka Kisnytsya Villages. Saletskyy denied the charges and said the registration had been conducted according to the law because he was required by law to register any duly documented change of affiliation requested. On October 18, the Vinnytsya Appellate Court overturned the October 10 ruling by the Vinnytsya City Court to suspend Saletskyy from duty. The city court issued the original ruling in response to a police request, citing the need to prevent him from obstructing the investigation. The OCU accused the oblast police leadership of siding with the OUC-MP. Local police representatives rejected the charge.

In his Independence Day speech on August 24, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the country's first president of Jewish origin, appealed to all citizens to stay united regardless of their religion. On July 28, the Day of the Baptism of Kyivan Rus-Ukraine, the president called on religious leaders to promote dialogue.

On September 17, during a meeting with the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), Minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov reiterated what he stated was the ministry's commitment to protect the rights of all citizens regardless of religious affiliation. He promised to do everything possible to prevent religious conflicts and called on religious organizations not to involve outside groups in resolving their disputes. Avakov welcomed the AUCCRO initiative to expand chaplaincies among the ministry's units, including the National Police. During the year, the UOC-MP objected to the legislation prohibiting UOC-MP priests from serving as chaplains on bases or conflict zones, stating that UOC-MP priests should be able to serve as chaplains like priests from any other denomination and adding that the law violated religious rights of UOC-MP-affiliated military personnel.

On September 19, the Kyiv District Administrative Court revoked a June 2018 resolution by the SMS stripping UOC-MP Bishop Gedeon of citizenship on a charge of violating the law by not renouncing his Russian and U.S. citizenship when he applied for a passport. On February 13, law enforcement authorities barred Gedeon from returning to Ukraine, citing national security reasons and the SMS decision. The bishop said he had relinquished his Russian citizenship. He described the ban as politically and religiously motivated retaliation for his

allegation during meetings with the U.S. Congress on February 5 of government pressure placed on the UOC-MP. The ban was in place through year's end.

On July 17, in response to a request from members of the Muslim community, the Cabinet of Ministers amended regulations on identity documents, thereby allowing religious head coverings in passport and other ID photographs.

On September 3 the ECHR ruled against Ukraine in a case in which deputies of the Kryvyi Rih City Council refused to lease to Jehovah's Witness a plot of land for construction of a Kingdom Hall. The ECHR found, "The municipal authorities' conduct was arbitrary and not 'in accordance with the law.'" It ordered the government to pay 7,000 euros (\$7,900) in damages and legal costs to the Witnesses.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on April 22, the Odesa District Administrative Court ordered the local government to issue an occupancy permit for a Kingdom Hall in Oleksandrivka.

On January 19, the Lviv District Administrative Court upheld a Jehovah's Witnesses' appeal against the inaction by the Myropil Town Council, Zhytomyr Oblast, in designating a Jehovah's Witnesses-owned plot of land for building a Kingdom Hall. The Court ordered the council to approve the Jehovah's Witnesses' plan for the construction project.

On December 24, the Ministry of Justice and the Pastoral Council for Religious Support of the Penitentiary System, the latter a nongovernmental interfaith advisory board including representatives from the UGCC, UOC-MP, Protestants, and Muslims, and open to other religious groups, discussed draft regulations on prison chaplaincy and ways to develop pastoral support for personnel of penitentiary institutions. On March 12, the ministry and council's representatives held a conference on reintegration of former prisoners.

On August 5, the Rivne Oblast prosecutor's office charged a local UOC-MP priest, Viktor Zemlyanyy, concerning his alleged role in "inciting religious hatred." The charge, based on a Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) investigation, reportedly stemmed from media accounts of Zemlyanyy's commentaries on parish affiliation disputes between the UOC-MP and the "schismatic" OCU. The priest denied the charges, describing them as evidence of the previous government's pressure on the UOC-MP. On March 28, the Rivne City Court had turned down prosecutor's and

SBU's requests to detain Zemlyanyy to prevent supposed potential obstruction of the investigation.

On February 18, police briefly detained Metropolitan Mytrofan, head of the UOC-MP Horlivka and Slovyansk Diocese in Donetsk Oblast, and questioned him about his possible links to the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" ("DPR"). Police released him after questioning. The metropolitan described the incident as a government attempt to put pressure on him.

Law enforcement authorities reported no progress in the investigation of allegations that the Kyiv Islamic Cultural Center of the Umma Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine possessed materials promoting "violence, racial, interethnic, or religious hatred." The SBU and the Kyiv City procuracy searched the center in May 2018. During a press conference on May 31, an Umma lawyer described the search as an attempt to undermine Umma's reputation and called the charges baseless.

On July 25, the Supreme Court upheld an appeal by representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ filed against the Kyiv City Council for the council's refusal to reinstate a lease on land to build a house of worship. The city government subsequently respected the Supreme Court's decision, reinstating full rights to the land. According to Church representatives, the Church planned to build a church on the land.

Small religious groups stated local governments continued to discriminate with regard to allocating land for religious buildings in Chernivtsi, Mykolayiv, Odesa, and Ternopil Oblasts, and the city of Kyiv. Roman Catholics, UGCC members, Jews, and Muslims continued to report cases of discrimination. UGCC representatives said local authorities in Bila Tserkva, Sumy, and Odesa were still unwilling to allocate land for UGCC churches. UOC-MP representatives said local authorities in the Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts continued to refuse to allocate land for UOC-MP churches.

Roman Catholic Church leaders stated they continued to ask authorities to return former Church properties in the western part of the country and elsewhere. Roman Catholics stated the government continued to refuse to support the restitution of Odesa's Roman Catholic seminary building, which the Soviet regime had confiscated.

The independent National Minority Rights Monitoring Group (NMRMG) reported no cases of suspected anti-Semitic violence from January through December, with the last recorded anti-Semitic violence against individuals occurring in 2016. During the year, the NMRMG recorded 14 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism, compared with 12 incidents during the same period in 2018. NMRMG said the decline in violence and anti-Semitic vandalism was due to improved police work and prosecution of those committing anti-Semitic acts.

Graffiti swastikas continued to appear in Kyiv, Lviv, Poltava, and other cities. According to press reports, on September 15, individuals vandalized a memorial to more than 55,000 Jews murdered in Bohdanivka in Mykolaiv Oblast. Jewish organizations expressed concern about the continued presence of Krakivskyy Market and new construction atop a historic Jewish cemetery in Lviv. There were several anti-Semitic incidents targeting the Babyn Yar memorial reported during the year.

Some Jewish leaders continued to state their concerns about what they considered impunity for acts of anti-Semitism and the government's long delays in completing investigations of these crimes.

On September 25, the Supreme Court revoked a 2018 ruling by the Volyn Oblast Appellate Court against a petition by the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ) to remove a private industrial facility from the grounds of a Jewish cemetery near Toykut Village, Volyn Oblast. The Supreme Court ordered the Kovel City and District Court in Volyn Oblast to reexamine the case.

According to the UCSJ, on August 7, the Lviv Appellate Administrative Court rejected an appeal by the Chortkiv City Council against the court's decision requiring the council to approve the location and boundaries of the city's ancient Jewish cemetery. The Soviet government had previously paved a backyard of a local residential building with tombstones from the cemetery. The Chortkiv City news website reported residents continued to urge the municipal government to facilitate the return of the tombstones to the cemetery.

In November a court called for the reinstatement of Vasyl Marushchynets, who had been the country's consul in Hamburg, Germany. He had posted comments on social media blaming Jews for World War II and posted photographs with a cake baked to resemble Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*. Then foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin and other senior government officials condemned the comments; however, the Kyiv court ruled the firing was illegal and ordered Marushchynets

reinstated, along with back pay. On December 17, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs filed a cassation appeal against the ruling. The ministry also published a statement describing Marushchynets' actions and public statements "incompatible with the high rank of a civil servant and Ukrainian diplomat."

Kyiv's Muslim community said the local government, which allocates land for cemeteries, had still not acted on the community's request for additional free land in Kyiv for Islamic burials, which was their legal right. Muslim community leaders said they were running out of land for burials of their members.

All major religious organizations continued to appeal to the government to establish a transparent legal process to address property restitution claims. Most organizations said they experienced continued problems and delays in the restitution process to reclaim property seized by the Communist regime. They said the consideration of claims often took longer than the month prescribed by law. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim groups stated a number of factors continued to complicate the restitution process, including intercommunity competition for particular properties, current use of some properties by state institutions, the designation of some properties as historic landmarks, local governments disputing jurisdictional boundaries, and previous transfers of some properties to private ownership. Religious groups continued to report local officials taking sides in property restitution disputes, such as the case of the Lviv city government continuing to deny Roman Catholic Church requests for restitution of several properties turned over to the UGCC, as well as the Odesa local government's inaction in response to RCC requests for property restitution of church buildings held by the Odesa City Council.

Muslim community leaders expressed concern over the continued lack of resolution of restitution claims involving historic mosques in Mykolayiv.

The government continued to take no action in response to previous requests from religious communities to impose a moratorium on the privatization of religious buildings confiscated by the Soviet government, according to civil society activists and religious organizations.

The Jewish community expressed concern over the continued failure of national and local government authorities to protect historic religious properties, particularly historic synagogues in Lviv, Brody, Sokal, Stryi, Zhokva, Berezhany, Husiatyn, Pidhaytsi, and Dubno. Jewish heritage activists and local residents protested the construction of an office building at the site of a synagogue destroyed

at Syanska Street in Lviv during the Nazi occupation. In November, the Lviv city government told the developer to halt construction and announced its intention to purchase the plot of land.

Jewish community leaders also reported illegal construction over the old Jewish cemetery in Uman, where businessmen purchased old houses bordering the cemetery to demolish them and build hotels for Jewish pilgrims. Developers reportedly made deals with local government officials to obtain building permits. Local officials stated it was impossible to ban digging on privately-owned land and that Uman has been a densely populated residential area since Soviet times.

Jewish community leaders said they continued to experience difficulties with the Ternopil municipal and district governments with regard to property restitution. The Ternopil District Council continued to reject requests from the local Jewish community to return a prayer house confiscated during the Soviet regime.

Some Jewish community representatives continued to criticize decisions by some parliamentarians and government authorities to commemorate and honor 20th century Ukrainian figures and organizations who are also associated with anti-Semitism and the killings of thousands of Jews during World War II.

On December 9, the Kyiv Sixth Appellate Court upheld an appeal by the Kyiv City Council, Svoboda Party, and the state-run Institute of National Memory of a June order of the Kyiv District Administrative Court to reverse the renaming of two city streets in honor of Stefan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, a commander of the Nazi-controlled Nachtigall Battalion.

On September 2, Prosecutor General Ruslan Ryaboshapka dismissed Deputy Prosecutor General Anatoliy Matios, who in 2018 suggested, “Jews seek to drown Ukraine in blood.” It was unclear whether Matios’ anti-Semitic statements were reason for his dismissal; the new government did not state why he was dismissed.

On May 14, Ukrainian Jewish Committee Director Eduard Dolinsky filed a formal complaint to authorities regarding anti-Semitic remarks Skole mayor and Right Sector member Volodymyr Moskal reportedly made in 2017 that “the government of Moskovites and Yids” is running Ukraine and Jews seek to dominate the world, treat all other nations as “subhumans” and destroy them. The local procuracy and police opened an investigation. There was no progress reported in the investigation by year’s end.

Abuses by Foreign Forces and Nonstate Actors

During the year the conflict in eastern Ukraine continued, with parts of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts under the control of Russia-installed proxy authorities in the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)" and "Luhansk People's Republic (LPR)." According to Protestant and Jehovah's Witness groups, during the year their members continued to flee these areas to escape oppressive conditions and seek religious freedom in government-controlled territory.

Sources reported Russian proxy authorities in the "DPR" and "LPR" continued to detain and imprison members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as other religious leaders. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the "LPR" and "DPR" continued to uphold a ban on Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" organization.

According to the SBU, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) coordinated arson attacks on UOC-MP church buildings using agents based in eastern Ukraine. The SBU said individuals paid and directed by the so-called "DPR Ministry of State Security" tried to burn UOC-MP churches in government-controlled areas, including in Zaporizhzhya City (January 6 and 11), Kryvyi Rih (February 15), and again in Zaporizhzhya City (at a chapel near the UOC-MP Church of St. John the Divine) on February 16. The organizers, reportedly based in the "DPR", paid the arsonists for each attack and instructed them to paint Nazi graffiti on the walls of UOC-MP buildings.

During the year, the "LPR" rejected all registration applications from Protestant communities. "LPR" proxy authorities also denied the reregistration applications of Baptist, Pentecostal, and Seventh-day Adventists groups, citing negative results of the "evaluation." These religious groups had applied to reregister and undergo "reevaluation" in accordance with an "LPR" law on freedom of conscience and religious associations, which required all but UOC-MP groups to register by October 15, 2018. Religious leaders said the denials represented a complete ban on their religious activities, since without reregistration, religious groups were not even able to hold services in believers' homes. According to the "LPR" proxy authorities, to be eligible for registration a "local religious organization" must have at least 30 adult members, while a "centralized religious organization" must be composed of at least five such local organizations. These requirements effectively disqualified some smaller religious associations. The law also requires Christian Orthodox congregations to register as part of a "diocese recognized by the Orthodox Churches around the world within the canonical territory of the Moscow

Patriarchate,” thereby forcing several remaining OCU parishes to conduct any activities underground.

According to Forum 18, an international religious freedom NGO, “LPR” authorities threatened Baptist Union pastors to stop meeting for worship or risk punishment. “State Security” officers of the “LPR” threatened Baptist pastor Volodymyr Rytikov with charges of extremism for continuing to lead worship services without “official” permission. “Prosecutors” also continued their investigation of OCU priest Anatoliy Nazarenko on extremism charges through year’s end.

According to Forum 18, towards the end of the year, local “LPR” authorities cut off water, electricity, and gas supplies to unregistered places of worship.

The “DPR’s” freedom of worship and religious associations’ law bans all religious organizations that did not meet a March 1 registration deadline and requires previously registered religious groups to reregister. The law gives the “DPR” “Ministry of Culture” powers to monitor the registration of religious associations in the region and to abolish such groups on various grounds. Any newly created religious association not seeking legal entity status must submit written notification to DPR authorities, detailing its function, location, administration, and the names and home addresses of its members. The “DPR” authorities have 10 days either to put the group on the register of religious groups or cancel its legal status. The “DPR” authorities have a month to examine the application documents of a religious association seeking legal status. In either case, the “DPR” authorities may conduct a “state religious expert evaluation” of the documents, which could take up to six months, or deny a registration request on several grounds, including lacking required information or having been previously banned. All religious organizations and religious groups must notify annually authorities of their continued viability. The law allows the UOC-MP to undergo a simplified “legalization” procedure without reregistration and “state religious expert evaluation.”

In a June 4 interview with Radio Donbas Realii, Protestant minister Serhiy Kosyak said the “LPR Ministry of State Security” used the 2018 reregistration requirements to identify Protestant congregation members and church addresses in order to put pressure on members. According to Kosyak, masked individuals wearing combat fatigues often disrupted religious services, saying their raids were needed to inspect registration documents. He said the “LPR” authorities subjected Protestants to systematic interrogations. As a result, many Protestant groups were

forced to go underground. If identified, members of such congregations could face fabricated charges of “extremism.” Kosyak said that in March “LPR” representatives reportedly searched individuals attending a prayer gathering in an unidentified location hosted by 82-year-old Protestant pastor Anatoliy Lysenko and accused him of organizing an unsanctioned meeting. According to Kosyak, the “LPR” representatives planted and “found” a book entitled *Hitler’s Cross*, as well as several Jehovah’s Witnesses’ brochures banned in a Russian-controlled part of Luhansk. They warned Lysenko that in the future, they would treat similar religious services as criminal rather than administrative offenses.

According to religious organizations and civil society activists, “DPR” proxy authorities harassed Protestant congregations attempting to host public religious events even if such groups possessed a “DPR” registration. “DPR” proxy authorities charged that the United States could be funding such events, and they publicly labeled congregations “American agents.” Protestant leaders and religious experts attributed such activities by the Russian-led “DPR” and “LPR” to attempts to undermine a strong prewar presence of Protestants in the region.

According to the Novosti Donbassa news website, on January 17, “DPR” authorities opened a bureau of vital records in a building confiscated from the Baptist Church New Life in 2018. The news report said the “DPR” had seized the building, which housed a Christian family center run by Pastor Oleksandr Mosiychuk, after they discovered his congregation received charitable support from the United States and he refused to turn over the funds to the “DPR.” In a November 9 Facebook post, Kosyak said that over the past week “DPR” authorities had closed the Protestant church Word of Life in Makiyivka and another Protestant church in Khartsyzk.

According to media reports, on February 25, the OCU issued an appeal, warning the international community that the “DPR” proxy authorities might “expropriate” all its (OCU’s) property and deport OCU priests from the “DPR” based on the unlawful demand that the congregations “register according to the laws of the republic.” Most OCU (formerly UOC-Kyiv Patriarchate) priests had to flee the “DPR” and “LPR” areas. According to the OCU, those remaining were possibly performing pastoral duties underground.

OCU representatives reported that on April 4, “LPR” authorities searched the OCU’s Holy Trinity Cathedral and diocesan administration office in Luhansk and the homes of two OCU priests. The searches were reportedly a part of an “antiterrorist” operation. The priests were interrogated and prohibited from

leaving the city pending an investigation. “LPR” representatives seized computers, items displaying religious and Ukrainian symbols, books, and official correspondence.

According to Muslim community and Ukrainian media reports, in late June the “DPR Ministry of State Security” raided Al-Amal Mosque in Donetsk, seizing prayer books and other religious materials. The proxy authorities interrogated the mosque’s imam and congregation members. Subsequently, the “DPR” proxy authorities closed the mosque based on what the Muslim community and some Ukrainian media reports called fabricated extremism charges. The mosque remained closed through year’s end.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, the group had limited access to information on the situation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the “DPR” and “LPR” during the year. Jehovah’s Witnesses said that since 2014, “LPR” and “DPR” proxy authorities had seized 14 Kingdom Halls in Russian-controlled parts of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts. The Jehovah’s Witnesses did not know if any of these 14 Kingdom Halls or any additional halls were confiscated during the year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

A Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends Survey on minority groups in Europe, released in October, found 83 percent of Ukrainians held favorable views of Jews and 11 percent unfavorable, with favorability increasing by 15 percent from the previous survey conducted in 2009. According to an October Razumkov Center poll, 17.4 percent of respondents expressed their positive attitude toward Judaism, compared with 13 percent in 2018 and 14.8 percent in 2016. In the poll, 47.6 percent said they were indifferent toward Judaism, 22.3 percent undecided, and 2 percent said they had never heard of that religion. Almost 11 percent voiced negative attitudes, compared with 13.5 percent in 2018 and 12.6 percent in 2016.

In November the Anti-Defamation League released the results of a survey on anti-Semitic views of the country’s residents. The survey cited stereotypical statements about Jews and asked respondents whether they believed such statements were “probably true” or “probably false.” The proportion agreeing that various statements were “probably true” was: 47 percent that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Ukraine; 72 percent that Jews have too much power in the business world; and 44 percent that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust.

On August 25, the Kyiv Pechersk District Court extended the detention of two suspects who police said had injured a Jewish boy in Uman in 2017 in a “terrorist act orchestrated by Russia’s intelligence service” to incite interethnic and religious confrontation. Police stated that in previous years the same individuals had painted anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of synagogues in Lviv and Odesa and had desecrated a synagogue in Uman near the grave of Rabbi Nachman, founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement.

In October a graffiti image of Hitler was found near the grave of Rabbi Nachman. On October 11, local police reported the detention of a suspect in the crime.

Jehovah’s Witnesses reported there were five violent incidents against their members during the year, compared with three in 2018 and 18 in 2017. Examples included an assault on a Jehovah’s Witness in July, who was struck twice in the face and stabbed while offering religious literature in a public area; an assault in June in which the male of a Jehovah’s Witness couple distributing religious literature was struck in the face; and four attacks on eight Jehovah’s Witnesses preaching publicly. Investigations were opened, but the assailants were not been prosecuted by year’s end.

Jehovah’s Witnesses reported three cases of physical assaults during the year, compared with 18 in 2017. They said one individual had physically and verbally assaulted them on at least 15 previous occasions. On May 27, the same individual beat and threw stones at Jehovah’s Witnesses in Korchivtsi Village, Chernivtsi Oblast, injuring one of them and damaging the victims’ car. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, police ignored their complaints and “mildly reprimanded” the attacker. On June 13, police began to investigate the May 27 assault as a hate crime after the Jehovah’s Witnesses took the case to court. The investigation continued at year’s end.

Jehovah’s Witnesses reported that on June 7, an individual attacked several Jehovah’s Witnesses with a wooden stick in Zhytomyr. He reportedly threw their missionary materials to the ground and punched one of the Jehovah’s Witnesses several times. During the 20-minute assault, the attacker demanded that the Jehovah’s Witnesses make the sign of the cross. Police categorized the assault as personal animosity between the attacker and his victims and forwarded the case to court.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on May 14, an unidentified man in Mykolayiv demanded that a Jehovah's Witness stop his public ministry and broke a beer bottle on the victim's head. The attacker fled before police arrived at the scene.

On October 28, the Korolyov District Court in Zhytomyr handed down prison sentences ranging from seven to 11 years to four individuals who attacked Chabad Rabbi Mendel Deitsch at the city's train station in 2016. Deitsch subsequently died from his injuries.

On September 16, the private Israeli media outlet Mako posted a video appearing to show an allegedly Jewish man setting fire to a large outdoor crucifix located in Uman, Cherkasy Oblast, as Hasidic pilgrims came to a local river to perform a religious ritual. Media reported that the alleged arson provoked a subsequent altercation between some local residents and pilgrims; there were no reports of injuries. Uman Jewish community leaders condemned the attack. Law enforcement authorities opened an investigation that continued through year's end.

According to the news website 18000, in March the Uman City and District Court handed down a two-year suspended sentence, with no prison time served, to two Jewish pilgrims who on January 19 damaged a crucifix in the city. According to the NMRMG, on January 20 approximately two dozen individuals participated in an anti-Semitic gathering organized by the National Corps party and self-identified right-wing organization, National Militia. Local National Militia leader Yevhen Ustynovych described the January 19 vandalism as evidence the city was facing a "very difficult situation with Yids," adding that their presence in Uman was like a "gangrene" in need of amputation. Later that night a group of six persons threw a Molotov cocktail into a street in the vicinity of Rabbi Nachman's burial site, a pilgrimage center, reportedly causing no damage.

OCU Honorary Patriarch Filaret, asked the head of the UGCC, Major Archbishop Svyatoslav Shevchuk, to cancel his plan for a national pilgrimage to an April 7 liturgy at St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv. Filaret stated it would cause "opposition from Orthodox Ukrainians" and he wanted to avoid "tension" in the relationship with the UGCC. On March 7, following a meeting with OCU Primate, Metropolitan Epiphaniy, the UGCC leader, said that the UGCC was canceling the April 7 liturgy at the cathedral because it had to undergo restoration. According to the UGCC, the two leaders reaffirmed their Churches' "firm desire to promote mutual understanding and cooperation."

According to Right Sector, it and the National Militia “maintained law and order” at a gathering in the village of Guli, in Vinnytsky Oblast, purportedly at the request of local residents, at which local residents voted to transfer their UOC-MP parish to the OCU. The Right Sector and National Militia insisted that no UOC-MP-affiliated “outsiders” participated in the voting. In a January 6 interview with Channel Five, a private television station affiliated with former President Poroshenko, OCU Metropolitan Epiphaniy called on OCU members to refrain from violence and to treat UOC-MP believers with “love and respect.” He said the OCU would accept into its jurisdiction only UOC-MP congregations that changed affiliation voluntarily.

The Jewish community continued to express concern about the continuing operation of the Krakivskyiy Market on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery in Lviv. The UCSJ urged the government to halt permanently the construction of a multistory building on the cemetery grounds that was initially ordered suspended in 2017. The UCSJ and civic activists continued to express concern over the possible continuation of construction of a high-rise building at the site of the World War II Jewish ghetto in Lviv. In 2016, a court suspended the project after human remains were reportedly found and removed from the soil at the construction site. As of year’s end, the remains had not been returned to the site.

On November 25 unidentified individuals painted swastikas on a monument to Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem in central Kyiv. Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko published a tweet condemning the vandalism and calling for a prompt investigation. The AUCCRO issued a statement describing the incident as an “attempt to undermine interethnic and interreligious peace.”

According to the NMRMG, on May 21, unidentified individuals painted anti-Semitic graffiti on a Holocaust memorial in Poltava, in the central part of the country. Members of the Jewish community condemned the actions and called for the government to find and hold the perpetrators accountable for defacing the memorial.

On July 21, police detained a person suspected of smashing a synagogue door pane in Kryvi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Police reported that the attacker was mentally ill and subsequently released.

On October 4, the National Police and SBU reported the detention of a suspect accused of painting swastikas and anti-Semitic slurs on a Holocaust memorial in Holovanivsk, Kirovohrad Oblast, on September 15. The suspect was charged with

incitement of ethnic and religious hatred and desecration of a burial site. The legal proceedings continued through year's end.

In February the UOC-MP reported vandals cut the electricity, disabling an alarm and security camera, and threw a bottle bomb into St. Elijah the Martyr Church in the village of Zelenyi Yar, Mykolayiv Oblast, smashing its windows in the process. The church sustained damage, but no one was injured.

According to the UOC-MP, on October 30, unidentified persons vandalized the sanctuary of the St. Alexander Nevsky Church in Nevske Village, Luhansk Oblast. Law enforcement agencies opened an investigation, which continued through year's end.

UOC-MP sources said that on September 16, the two individuals who in 2018 attempted to set fire to the UOC-MP Saints Volodymyr and Olga Church in Kyiv sent a letter of apology to its congregation. The congregation accepted the apology, reported UOC-MP members.

According to the Pershyj.com news website, in February unidentified vandals destroyed a cross at a cemetery of an OCU monastery in Zhydychn, in Volyn Oblast. It was the third such incident at the site, starting in 2018.

The Jehovah's Witnesses reported five cases of vandalism and arson attacks on Kingdom Halls during the year, compared with 25 cases in 2018 and 30 in 2017. The incidents included unidentified assailants' breaking a window in a Kingdom Hall in February in Zaporizhya, painting graffiti in June on a Kingdom Hall in Kyiv, and painting obscene words and images in October on a Hall in Lozova. In four of the cases, police did not initiate criminal proceedings. In the Lozova incident, the investigative judge obliged police to begin an investigation.

The NMRMG reported 14 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism during the year, compared with 12 in 2018 and 24 in 2017. On November 28, Josef Zissels, a Jewish community leader and co-president of VAAD, indicated in a press conference the need to properly investigate and punish xenophobic crimes and open cases under hate crime laws.

On July 1, the Lviv Appellate Administrative Court upheld an appeal by the local Jewish community against a 2018 city council decision declaring the old Jewish cemetery in Kolomyia, Ivano Frankivsk Oblast, a memorial park. In 2017, self-described nationalist activists placed a cross on top of an alleged unmarked grave

of Ukrainians killed by Stalin's regime in the Jewish cemetery. According to the representatives of the Jewish community, the new legal status of the area would make it impossible to seek relocation of the cross. According to video footage of the hearing, when the presiding judge read the ruling, nationalist activists in the courtroom shouted that he was siding with "Yids."

According to the Jewish community and police reports, unidentified individuals vandalized Holocaust memorials and Jewish religious monuments in various locations, including in the Kyiv, Lviv, and Mykolayiv Oblasts. Police investigations of these acts continued at year's end. According to police, there was no progress on some of these or similar cases from 2018.

On February 19, the SBU announced the detention of Yevhen Morenets, known as "White Balaclava," an organizer of a November 2018 anti-Semitic gathering in Kyiv. He was reportedly linked to Mykola Dulsky, leader of the radical pro-Russian group Nazhdak. According to the SBU, Dulsky remained in hiding in Russia.

AUCRA, comprising a number of mainly smaller religious groups and churches, met on April 11 to initiate a national celebration of the Day of the Freedom of Conscience and Worship to emphasize the importance of religious freedom and honor those who suffered for their religious beliefs at the hands of the Soviet regime.

The SBU reported that several individuals accused of painting anti-Semitic graffiti on a Jewish community center in Sumy in December 2017 remained under investigation. Russian intelligence agencies reportedly ordered the group to commit anti-Semitic vandalism.

In March the ECHR opened legal proceedings in response to a complaint filed by the UOC-MP in Ptycha, Rivne Oblast, regarding the community's inability to use its church, which, according to the UOC-MP, was "seized" by OCU followers supported by local authorities. The OCU denied the claim and said that most congregation members supported the change of affiliation.

On May 5-7, the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine sponsored the first-ever Kyiv Jewish Forum to highlight the global fight against anti-Semitism on the 20th anniversary of the organization.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador, embassy officials, and other U.S. government officials continued to meet with officials of the Office of the President, Ministries of Culture, Interior, Justice, and Foreign Affairs, members of parliament, political parties, and local officials to engage on issues of religious freedom. They continued to discuss the importance of fair and transparent treatment of religious groups during the establishment of the new OCU, preservation of religious heritage sites, support for religious minorities, and combating increasing manifestations of anti-Semitism. In meetings with government officials at both the national and local levels, the Ambassador called for unequivocal condemnation and swift prosecution of anti-Semitic acts. The Ambassador also urged government officials to increase their efforts to ensure the preservation of historic religious sites.

The Ambassador called for the government to protect the right of all religious groups to govern their religion according to their beliefs and practice their faiths freely. The Ambassador met with religious activists and former prisoners of war to discuss religious freedom abuses in the “DPR,” “LPR,” and occupied Crimea.

In May the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism participated in the Kyiv Jewish Forum and met with government leaders, including then foreign minister Klimkin, his Special Advisor for Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism Anna Vyshniakova, and Minister of Internal Affairs Avakov, to discuss the importance of a strong government response to combat anti-Semitism, including improving monitoring and law enforcement efforts as well as the importance of joining the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

The Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism also met with religious and Jewish community leaders to discuss and encourage efforts to combat anti-Semitism and promote religious freedom. He visited Babyn Yar and learned about Holocaust memorial and community efforts to build a Holocaust memorial and improve Holocaust education.

Embassy officials continued their meetings with internally displaced Muslims from Crimea to discuss their abuse by occupation authorities, including regular searches and detentions, a continuing inability to practice their religion freely or express dissent, a lack of restitution of their religious properties, and other continuing problems they faced with the Crimean occupation authorities.

Embassy officials met with religious leaders to discuss religious freedom abuses in the “DPR” and “LPR,” including banning of certain religious groups, registration requirements, and a lack of restitution of their religious properties.

The Ambassador and other embassy officials participated in Hanukkah, Christmas, other religious holiday events, and Holocaust commemorations, during which they emphasized the importance of religious dialogue and equality and encouraged efforts to combat anti-Semitism and preserve cultural heritage.

The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to urge the peaceful resolution of property and jurisdiction disputes in meetings with leaders of prominent Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious groups in Kyiv and Lviv. In particular, the embassy continued to encourage religious groups involved in the dispute related to the location of parts of Lviv's Krakivskiy Market on the former site of the city's Old Jewish Cemetery to resolve the dispute through constructive dialogue. Embassy officials also discussed other issues affecting religious communities, such as registration procedures for religious groups, desecration of monuments, and the government's procedures for religious property restitution.

The embassy issued public statements condemning religiously motivated acts of violence and calling for tolerance and restraint to ensure a peaceful transition period around autocephaly. On January 10, the Secretary of State issued a statement welcoming the announcement of autocephaly for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and underscoring U.S. support for religious freedom. On March 4, amplifying a statement by the Secretary of State, the embassy tweeted, "We remain deeply concerned about Archbishop Klyment's detention in Crimea yesterday. Despite his subsequent release, this kind of harassment is unacceptable. We expect Russia to respect freedom of religion and stop detaining innocent Ukrainians in Crimea." On March 6, the embassy announced on social media "Under Secretary Hale also visited St. Sophia Cathedral. The U.S. government supports all Ukrainians' ability to worship as they choose. Tolerance and restraint are key principles for people with different religious affiliations to be able to live together and prosper." The embassy also used social media to reiterate U.S. government support for religious freedom, including the rights of religious minorities. During a March 14 meeting with Rabbi Mordechai Shlomo Bald, the Ambassador reiterated U.S. strong support for religious freedom, tolerance, and respect. On October 23, the Secretary of State met with OCU Metropolitan Epiphaniy and affirmed U.S. support for Ukrainians' right to worship in accordance with their faith, free from external interference.

CRIMEA

Executive Summary

In February 2014, armed forces of the Russian Federation seized and occupied Crimea. In March 2014, Russia announced Crimea had become part of the Russian Federation. A UN General Assembly resolution declared continued international recognition of Crimea as part of Ukraine. The U.S. government recognizes Crimea is part of Ukraine; it does not and will not recognize the purported annexation of Crimea. Occupation authorities continue to impose the laws of the Russian Federation in the territory of Crimea.

On July 12, Human Right Watch reported religious activists in Crimea were among victims of torture by FSB agents. The Russian government reported there were 891 religious communities registered in Crimea, including Sevastopol, compared with 831 in 2018, a number that dropped by over 1,000 since the occupation began in 2014, the last year for which Ukrainian government figures were available. Religious activists, human rights groups, and media reports said Russian authorities in occupied Crimea continued to persecute and intimidate minority religious congregations, Jehovah's Witnesses, OCU members, and Muslim Crimean Tatars. Occupation authorities continued to subject Muslim Crimean Tatars to imprisonment and detention, especially if authorities purportedly suspected the individuals of involvement in the Muslim political organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Russia but is legal in Ukraine. According to Forum 18, administrative court hearings imposed by Russia on Crimeans for "missionary activity" were comparable with the previous year. There were 24 prosecutions for such activity, compared with 23 in 2018, 17 of which ended in convictions with a monetary fine. Greek Catholic leaders said they continued to have difficulty staffing their parishes because of the policies of occupation authorities. The UGCC said it continued to have to operate under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Church. The OCU reported continued seizures of its churches. Crimean Tatars reported police continued to be slow to investigate attacks on Islamic religious properties or refused to investigate them at all. Religious and human rights groups continued to report Russian media efforts to create suspicion and fear among certain religious groups, especially targeting Crimean Tatar Muslims, whom media repeatedly accused of links to Islamist groups designated by Russia as terrorist groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. Russian media also portrayed Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremists."

On November 6, the website Crimea-news reported that unidentified individuals destroyed crosses at a cemetery in Feodosia. According to Crimean Tatar activist Zair Smedlyaev, in November unidentified individuals destroyed a tombstone at a Muslim cemetery in Petrivka Village, in Krasnogvardiysk District.

The U.S. government continued to condemn the intimidation of Christian and Muslim religious groups by Russian occupation authorities in Crimea and to call international attention to the religious abuses committed by Russian forces through public statements by the Secretary and other senior officials, as well as messaging on social media. U.S. government officials remained unable to visit the peninsula following its occupation by the Russian Federation. Embassy officials, however, continued to meet in other parts of Ukraine with Crimean Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders to discuss their concerns over actions taken against their congregations by the occupation authorities, and to demonstrate continued U.S. support for their right to practice their religious beliefs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The Crimean Peninsula consists of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and the city of Sevastopol. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2014 estimates (the most recent), the total population of the peninsula is 2,353,000. There are no recent independent surveys with data on the religious affiliation of the population, but media outlets estimate the number of Crimean Tatars, who are overwhelmingly Muslim, at 300,000, or 13 percent of the population.

According to the information provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture in 2014 (the most recent year available), the UOC-MP remains the largest Christian denomination. Smaller Christian denominations include the OCU, the Roman Catholic Church, UAOC, UGCC, and Jehovah's Witnesses, along with Protestant groups, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Lutherans. Adherents of the UOC-MP, Protestants, and Muslims are the largest religious groups in Sevastopol.

There are several Jewish congregations, mostly in Sevastopol and Simferopol. Jewish groups estimate between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish residents lived in Crimea before the Russian occupation began; no updates have been available since the occupation began in 2014. According to the 2001 census, the most recent, there are 1196 Karaites in Ukraine; 671 of them lived in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

Pursuant to international recognition of the continued inclusion of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within Ukraine's international borders, Crimea continues to be officially subject to the constitution and laws of Ukraine. In the aftermath of Russia's occupation, however, occupation authorities continue their de facto implementation of the laws of the Russian Federation in the territory.

Government Practices

In December the UN General Assembly issued a resolution condemning the Russian occupation authorities for “ongoing pressure exerted upon religious minority communities, including through frequent police raids, undue registration requirements that have affected legal status and property rights and threats against and persecution of those belonging to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Protestant Church, mosques and Muslim religious schools, Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses, and condemning also the baseless prosecution of dozens of peaceful Muslims for allegedly belonging to Islamic organizations” The United Nations also condemned the “baseless prosecution of dozens of peaceful Muslims for allegedly belonging to Islamic organizations.” Such prosecutions were primarily of Muslims occupation authorities said were members of the Islamic group Hizb-ut-Tahrir, banned in Russia, but legal in Ukraine.

According to the Ukrainian human rights organization Crimean Human Rights Group (CHRG) with offices in Kyiv, 86 individuals were unlawfully incarcerated or imprisoned due to politically or religiously motivated persecution in Crimea as of September 7. Thirty-four of them had received prison sentences.

Human rights groups said occupation authorities continued to restrict the rights of Crimean Tatars, who are predominantly Muslim, following the 2016 designation of the Mejlis, recognized under Ukrainian law as the democratically elected representative council of the Crimean Tatars, as an “extremist organization.” Detentions and forced psychiatric examinations of Crimean Tatar Muslim prisoners continued throughout the year. charged the detainees with participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir. *Krym Realii* news website quoted human rights attorney Edem Smedlyayev, stating that the three detainees had been placed in a psychiatric hospital for forced examinations due to their refusal to plead guilty to terrorism charges. *Krym Realii* is an independent news service focusing on human rights issues in Crimea.

According to the NGO Krymska Solidarnist, on April 15, armed FSB representatives detained Imam Rustem Abilev on charges of extremism during a raid of his mosque and home in Shturmove Village near Sevastopol. On June 7, occupation authorities changed his pretrial detention to house arrest. On October 10 the Balaklava District Court ordered him to pay a fine of 100,000 Russian rubles (\$1,600).

On December 5, a Russian military court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced Enver Seytosmanov, another prisoner in the 2015 Sevastopol Hizb ut-Tahrir case, to 17 years in a maximum security penal colony for managing a “terrorist” organization. Seytsomanov said authorities applied physical and psychological pressure to force him into giving false testimony. His lawyer said the occupation authorities toughened the charge against Seytosmanov, stating he was an organizer rather than a participant in a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell.

According to *Krym Realii*, on October 2, the North Caucasus Military Court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced Tatar blogger Nariman Memedeminov to two-and-a-half-years in prison. Human rights activists linked the verdict to his reporting on the human rights situation in Crimea. Occupation authorities detained Memedeminov on terrorist charges in 2018, citing his involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Crimean Muslim Tatar prisoners arrested in the 2016 Bakhchisarai Hizb ut-Tahrir case – Ernes Ametov, Marlen Asanov, Seyran Saliyev, Memet Belialov, Timur Ibragimov, Server Zakiryayev, Server Mustafayev, and Edem Smailov – continued pretrial detention in Krasnodar and Rostov-on-Don until August. According to Krymska Solidarnist, on August 26 the North Caucasus District Military Court extended until February 13, 2020 the detention of Ametov, Asanov, Saliyev, Belyalov, Ibragimov, Zekiryayev, Mustafayev, and Smailov for their suspected involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bakhchisarai.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on July 11 the Russian Supreme Court altered the sentences of other defendants in the Bakhchisarai Hizb ut-Tahrir case, reducing Enver Mamutov’s maximum-security prison term from 17 years to 16 years and nine months; Remzi Memetov, Zevri Abseitov, and Rustem Abiltarov each receiving reduced sentences of eight years and nine months; and Ruslan Abiltarov, Remzi Memetov, and Zevri Abseitov each receiving reduced nine-year prison sentences. *Krym Realii* reported that the prisoners began serving their sentences in Russia’s Stavropol Krai in Russia. Their lawyer, Rustem Kyamilev, said the Kochubeyevskoye Prison administration’s decision to place Abseitov in an

isolation cell upon his arrival was unlawful and arbitrary, although Kyamile attributed the move to the fact Abseitov had been “convicted of a serious crime.”

According to *Krym Realii*, on November 12, the Southern District Military court sentenced defendants Muslim Aliyev to 19 years, Inver Bekirov to 18 years, Emir Usein Kuku and Vadim Siruk to 12 years, Refat Alimov to eight years, and Arsen Dzhapparov to seven years in a maximum security prison for their supposed involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir in Yalta. The suspects were arrested in a series of armed raids in February 2016 by Russian occupation authorities.

Krym Realii reported that on June 18, the North Caucasus District Military Court convicted five detainees arrested in October 2016 in Simferopol for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. The court found them guilty of organizing or participating in the activities of a terrorist organization and sentenced them to high security prison terms of 17 years for Teymur Abdullaev, 14 years for Rustem Ismailov, and 13 years for Uzeir Abdullaev. Aider Saledinov and Emil Dzhemadenov each received 12-year sentences.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on March 27 armed representatives of the FSB, National Guard, and police searched 30 Crimean Tatar homes in Simferopol, Volodymyrivka, Strohanivka, Kamyanka, Bile, Akropolis, and Alkavan, detaining 23 individuals for their alleged links to Hizb ut-Tahrir. During the searches, law enforcement representatives reportedly planted and “found” Hizb ut-Tahrir materials. The detainees’ lawyers were not allowed to be present during the searches. Krymska Solidarnist reported that on March 27 and 28, courts in Simferopol ordered the arrest of the following detainees: Imam Bilyal Adilov, Erfan Osmanov, Seyran Murtaza, Server Gazyev, Mejit Abdurakhmanov, Tofik Abdulgazyev, Rustem Seitkhalilov, Akim Bekirov, Farkhat Bazarov, Seitveli Seitabdiyev, Shaban Umerov, Riza Izetov, Jemil Gafarov, Alim Karimov, Yashar Muyedinov, Izet Abdulayev, Asan Yanikov, Enver Ametov, Raim Aivazov, and Ruslan Suleimanov.

On March 28, Russian authorities detained and beat Krymska Solidarnist activists Remzi Bekirov, Osman Arifmemetov, and Vladlen Abdulkadyrov in Rostov-on-Don following searches at their homes in Crimea for suspected involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Kyivsky District Court in Simferopol had ordered their arrest on charges related to “terrorism.” Law enforcement officers reportedly beat Abdulkadyrov while he was in detention.

According to a July 12 Human Rights Watch report, on April 16, FSB agents detained Raim Aivazov on the Russian-imposed “border” with Ukraine and “forced him to incriminate himself and others under torture.” According to Aivazov’s independent lawyer, Maria Eismont, who visited the detainee before his second pretrial custody hearing in May, Aivazov told her that three FSB agents had forced him into a car at the crossing check point and drove to a nearby forest. They then kicked him and forced him to his knees. One put a gun to Aivazov’s head as the others fired shots next to him, threatening to kill him and dump his body in a pond. The agents told him the only way he could save his life was by “cooperating” with them. They took him to the FSB office in Simferopol, where “officials” wrote up a detention report stating he was detained at 1:30 p.m. on April 17 in the office of an FSB investigator. The report made no mention of Aivazov having been seized at the crossing point. The investigator provided a state-appointed lawyer who advised Aivazov it was in his “best interest” to sign documents the investigator presented him. Aivazov signed a confession stating he was a member of a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell, along with the recently arrested men.”

Krym Realii reported that on November 11, the Kyivsky District Court in Simferopol extended until February 15, 2020 the arrest of Tatar Muslims Bilyal Adilov, Tofik Abdulgazyev, Rustem Seitkhalilov, Farkhod Bazarov, Shaban Umerov, Riza Izetov, Jemil Gafarov, and Raim Aivazov on charges of “extremism.” On November 12, the Kyivsky District Court extended until February 15, 2020 the detention of Tatar Muslims Remzi Bekirov, Enver Ametov, Osman Arifmemetov, Seitveli Seitabdiyev, Riza Izetov, Alim Karimov, and Erfan Osmanov.

In December the Crimean Human Rights Group estimated the total number of Crimean residents imprisoned for their participation in “extremist” Muslim groups had reached 65.

An OHCHR report covering November 2018 to February 2019 found that, consistent with previous OHCHR findings, the pattern of criminalization of affiliation to or sympathy towards religious Muslim groups, banned in the Russian Federation, continued to disproportionately affect Crimean Tatars. According to an OHCHR quarterly report issued in September, since the beginning of the Russian occupation, at least 33 Crimean residents were arrested for alleged ties with radical Muslim groups. OHCHR reported four of them were convicted in the absence of “any credible evidence that the defendants called for the use of force, violated public order, or engaged in any unlawful activity in Crimea.”

According to CHRG, on December 24, Inna Semenets, magistrate of the Evpatoriya Judicial District, fined the Karaite Jewish religious community for failing to place an identifying sign on the building of a religious organization.

In December Crimean magistrates reviewed at least five cases pertaining to “illegal missionary activity.” During the year, 30 of these cases were reviewed, and the magistrates imposed an administrative penalty, fines of 5,000 to 30,000 Russian rubles (\$80-\$480), and a warning in at least 18 cases. According to Forum 18, the cases involved Protestants, Muslims, adherents of the Society of Krishna Consciousness, Falun Gong, as well as groups with unspecified affiliations.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, local authorities continued to ban Jehovah’s Witnesses in Crimea under the 2017 ruling by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. Forum 18 reported that on September 6, the Dzhankoy District Court began the trial of Jehovah’s Witness Sergei Filatov on extremism-related charges. The FSB had arrested Filatov, a former head of the Jehovah’s Witnesses community, in Dzhankoy in 2018.

According to Forum 18, on March 15, the FSB opened a criminal case against Jehovah’s Witnesses Artem Gerasimov and Taras Kuzio in Yalta, accusing them of conducting religious services in defiance of the occupation authorities’ ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses’ “extremist” activity. Occupation authorities made both of them sign a pledge not to leave the area. Five days later, the FSB raided eight Jehovah’s Witness family homes in and around the city. According to Forum 18, on June 4, the FSB opened a criminal case against Jehovah’s Witness Viktor Stashevsky in Sevastopol. The FSB required him to sign a pledge not to leave the city. That same day, FSB officers raided at least nine local homes. Another raid occurred on July 7.

According to Forum 18, administrative court hearings under Russian law imposed on Crimea for “missionary activity” were “at the same rate” compared with the previous year. There were 24 prosecutions for such activity, compared with 23 in 2018, 17 of which ended in convictions with some type of monetary fine. Many of those prosecuted had been sharing their faith on the street or holding worship at unapproved venues. According to Forum 18, 17 Russian citizens were fined approximately 5 days’ average local wages. Six Ukrainian citizens were given higher fines of up to nearly two months’ average local wages. Forum 18 stated these six cases, in addition to the case of another Ukrainian who was prosecuted, appear to be the first use in Crimea of a Russian Administrative Code on

“foreigners conducting missionary activity” that is “specifically aimed at non-Russians.”

Forum 18 reported that occupation authorities brought 11 cases against individuals and religious communities for failing to use the full legal name of a registered religious community. Four of those cases involved fines of 30,000 Russian rubles (\$480) (one month's average local wage), and two defendants received a warning. The other five cases involved no punishment.

According to Krymska Solidarnist and Forum 18, local authorities continued the ban on the Tablighi Jamaat Muslim missionary movement in Crimea under a 2009 ruling by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. The movement is legal in Ukraine. On January 22, the Supreme Court of Crimea found Crimean Tatars Renat Suleymanov guilty of organizing an “extremist” group, and Talyat Andurakhmanov, Seiran Mustafayev and Arsen Kubedinov, whom the FSB had detained in 2017, guilty of membership in “extremist” groups because of their affiliation with Tablighi Jamaat. The court sentenced Suleymanov to four years in prison. Andurakhmanov, Mustafayev, and Kubedinov each received two-and-a-half-year suspended sentences. Forum 18 reported that the FSB initiated the case “based on secret recordings of meetings in mosques, testimony from unidentified witnesses, and books seized from the men's homes.” On May 18, occupation authorities transferred Suleymanov to a prison in Russia.

Krymska Solidarnist reported that on October 11, masked law enforcement officials in an armored vehicle arrived at a mosque in Kurtsy Village, stating they had to inspect “electricity meters and mosque documents.” Following Friday prayers, the officials questioned members of the congregation. The Simferopol-based organization Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea and Sevastopol, which started collaborating with occupation authorities in 2014, justified the visit, stating that “in violation of the law,” the congregation had not officially registered and was not led by an imam appointed by the directorate. According to the directorate, the mosque had not provided information on the contents of its sermons, as required by law.

The Ministry of Justice of Russia said 891 religious organizations were registered in Crimea, including 105 in Sevastopol, as of year's end, compared with 831 and 69, respectively, in 2018. These included the two largest religious organizations – the Christian Orthodox UOC-MP and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea (SAMC) – as well as various Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholic communities, among other religious groups.

According to data collected by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture in 2014 (the most recent year available), there were 2,083 religious organizations (a term including parishes, congregations, theological schools, monasteries, and other constituent parts of a church or religious group) in the ARC and 137 in Sevastopol. The numbers included organizations both with and without legal entity status. Muslim religious organizations constituted the largest number of religious organizations in the ARC, most of which were affiliated with the SAMC, Ukraine's largest Muslim group.

According to a 2018 OHCHR report, religious communities indicated more than 1,000 religious communities recognized under Ukrainian law had not reregistered. According to the OHCHR, stringent legal requirements under Russian legislation continued to prevent or discourage reregistration of many religious communities.

Human rights groups reported occupation authorities continued to require imams at Crimean Tatar mosques to inform them each time they transferred from one mosque to another.

The Roman Catholic Church reported it continued to operate in the territory as a pastoral district directly under the authority of the Vatican. Polish and Ukrainian Roman Catholic Church priests were permitted to stay in the territory for only 90 days at a time and required to leave Crimea for 90 days before returning.

UGCC representatives said it could still only operate as a part of the pastoral district of the Roman Catholic Church.

According to the OCU, Russian occupation authorities continued pressure on the OCU Crimean diocese in an effort to force it to leave Crimea. Only six of the 15 churches, identifying as OCU but required to register as independent following the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Patriarchate, were functioning at the end of the year, compared with five in 2018 and eight in 2017. The CHRG reported that on June 28, Crimea's "Arbitration Court" terminated a pre-annexation lease agreement between the local government and OCU for Saints Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral, the only OCU church building in Simferopol and the location of the OCU diocesan administration. The "court" ordered the congregation to return the premises to Crimea's "Ministry of Property and Land Relations." Before issuing the ruling, occupation authorities had removed a section of the church roof, citing the need to repair it; as a result, rainwater flooded part of the premises. According to the NGO Krym-SOS, on April 12, the Crimean

branch of Russia's Justice Ministry turned down OCU Archbishop Klyment's request to register his Simferopol-based St. Volodymyr of Kyiv and Olga parish as an independent Orthodox congregation. In October according to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, the UN Human Rights Committee invoked the UN Charter to halt the eviction of the congregation. Congregation members reported they had been effectively evicted, with no access to the church building due to a series of bureaucratic administrative rulings.

On March 3, police in Simferopol briefly detained Archbishop Klyment as he was boarding a bus to visit Ukrainian political prisoner Pavlo Hryb, who was held in Rostov-on-Don. The Russian government released Hryb during a prisoner swap in September. The archbishop said the incident was part of the occupation authorities' continuing efforts to deny him access to Hryb.

On September 5, Ukraine's Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons denounced the occupation authorities' plans to lay a pipeline through an ancient Muslim cemetery in Kirovske District. Workers unearthed human remains at the site during preparatory excavations for the project. After receiving complaints from the Muslim community, authorities suspended the excavations to allow reburial of the remains.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On November 6, the website Crimea-news.com reported that unidentified individuals had destroyed crosses at a cemetery in Feodosia.

According to Crimean Tatar activist Zair Smedlyaev, in November unidentified individuals destroyed a tombstone at a Muslim cemetery in Petrivka Village, in Krasnohvardiysk District.

Krym Realii news website, in May unidentified individuals destroyed newly installed slabs etched with the names of 64 fallen Soviet Army soldiers, including 57 Crimean Tatars, at a World War II memorial in Orlovka Village, in Sevastopol.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. government continued its efforts to focus international attention on the religious freedom-related abuses committed by Russian forces and occupation authorities in Crimea, especially on actions taken by those forces and authorities against Christians and Muslims. U.S. government and embassy officials

condemned the continuing intimidation of minority religious congregations, including Christians and Muslim Crimean Tatars. On March 4, the embassy wrote, “We remain deeply concerned about Archbishop Klyment’s detention in Crimea yesterday. Despite his subsequent release, this kind of harassment is unacceptable. We expect Russia to respect freedom of religion and stop detaining innocent Ukrainians in Crimea.” On July 25, the embassy wrote, “We are concerned by media reports of looting of the Volodymyr and Olha Cathedral in Simferopol, Ukraine. Residents of Crimea deserve to be able to worship freely, without intimidation, if they so choose. We call upon Russia to end its occupation of Crimea.”

Although embassy and other U.S. government officials remained unable to visit Crimea following the Russian occupation, embassy officials continued to meet in other parts of Ukraine with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders from Crimea. The leaders discussed their concerns over actions taken against congregations by the occupation authorities and reassured the religious leaders of continued U.S. support for the right of all to practice their religious beliefs. Embassy officials told religious leaders the United States would continue to support religious freedom in Crimea and press the occupation authorities to return confiscated property and release prisoners incarcerated for their religious or political beliefs.