

Ukraine (82)



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

64

Ukraine

International Religious Freedom Report 2002

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 law on Freedom of Conscience provide for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, some minority and non-traditional religions have experienced difficulties in registration and in buying and leasing property.

During the period covered by this report, there was some improvement in Government respect for religious freedom; administrative difficulties faced by religious communities, primarily at the local level, diminished, and property restitution continued. However, registration and property restitution problems remained in some cases.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there were some exceptions, particularly among leaders of rival branches of the same faith. There were isolated instances of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic sentiments. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (All-Ukrainian Council) contributed to the resolution of some disputes.

The U.S. Government actively supports religious freedom in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has a total area of 233,088 square miles, and its population is 48.4 million. A nationwide survey conducted in 2001 by the research center SOCIS found that over 40 percent of the inhabitants considered themselves to be atheists. Religious practice is strongest in the western part of the country.

More than 90 percent of religiously active citizens are Christian, with the majority being Orthodox. Approximately 10 percent are members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Roman Catholics claim 1 million adherents, or approximately 2 percent of the total population. There are small but significant populations of Jews and Muslims, as well as growing communities of Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Evangelical Christians, adherents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most citizens identify themselves as Orthodox Christians of one of three Churches. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is the largest single religious community, and is the largest of the country's Orthodox Churches. The Church has 9,423 registered communities, most of them located in the central, southern, and eastern parts of the country. It is headed by Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) of Kiev and All Ukraine. As part of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, was the only canonically recognized Orthodox Church during the period covered by this report.

The second largest Orthodox Church is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate. This Church was formed after independence and has been headed since 1995 by Patriarch of Kiev and All Rus'-Ukraine Filaret (Denisenko,) once the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine. It has 3,010 registered parishes, approximately 60 percent of which are in the western part of the country.

The smallest of the three major Orthodox Churches is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. This Church was founded in 1919 in Kiev. Outlawed by Stalin in 1933, the Church has survived mainly among the Ukrainian Diaspora. It was legalized in 1989 and has 1,052 registered communities, most in the western regions. In the interest of the possible future unification of the country's Orthodox Churches, it did not name a Patriarch to succeed the late Patriarch Dmitriy. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church is headed by Metropolitan Mefodiy of Ternopil and Podil.

The second largest group of believers after the Christian Orthodox belongs to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. It was formed in 1596 by the Council of Brest to unify Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers. This Church celebrates a Byzantine liturgy similar to the Orthodox Churches but is in full communion with the Pope. The Soviet regime forced the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to reunite with the Orthodox Church after the Second World War. However, it survived in hiding inside the country and among the Diaspora. Legalized in 1989, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had 3,289 registered communities as of January 1, 2002. Its members constituted a majority of the believers in the West, and approximately 10 percent of the population as a whole, or approximately 4.5 to 5 million persons. The

head of the Church is Lyubomyr Cardinal Huzar, Major Archbishop of Lviv.

The Roman Catholic Church is associated traditionally with historical pockets of citizens of Polish ancestry, located predominantly in the central and western districts. The Roman Catholic Church has 818 registered communities serving approximately 2 percent of the population. The Roman Catholic Church is headed by Marian Cardinal Jaworski, Archbishop of Lviv.

The Jewish community has a long history in the country dating back centuries to a time when much of present-day Ukraine was within the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement, the area of the Empire beyond which Jews were not permitted to live. Many of the Jewish population perished in the Holocaust, and still others were victims of Soviet repression. Published reports cite estimates of the Jewish population ranging from 250,000 to 325,000. Some Jewish leaders claim that the population is as large as 500,000. It is thought that 35 to 40 percent of the Jewish population is active communally; there are 236 registered Jewish communities.

The Jewish population faces demographic difficulties. Emigration to Israel and the West has decreased the size of the Jewish population by approximately 30,000 annually, although the number of emigrants was significantly lower during the period covered by this report. In addition, the average age of Jews in the country is 60; scholars and local Jewish leaders estimate that approximately twelve deaths occur for every birth in the community. In spite of these demographic indicators, Jewish life continues to flourish, with additional communities registered every year due to an increased proportion of Jews practicing their faith (helped by an increase in the number of rabbis entering the country from Israel since Ukraine's independence) and an increased willingness of individuals to identify themselves as Jewish. Most observant Jews are Orthodox. The Chief Rabbi of all Orthodox Jews is Yaakov dov Bleich, a Karliner Stoller Hasidic rabbi. Rabbi Shmuel Kaminevski of the Chabad Lubovitch movement also has had great success in rebuilding the Jewish community in Dnipropetrovsk. Although smaller, the Progressive (Reform) Jewish movement continues to grow, with 46 communities at the end of the period covered by this report. The Chief Rabbi of the Progressive community is Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny. In 2001 a Conservative Jewish congregation was started in Uzhhorod.

Islam also has been practiced on the territory of contemporary Ukraine for centuries. Sheik Tamin Akhmed Mohammed Mutach, head of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Ukraine and representative on the All-Ukrainian Council estimated that there were as many as 2 million members of the Muslim community nationwide. Sheik Tamin notes there are approximately 50,000 Muslims—mostly foreign—living in Kiev alone. Most of the country's Muslims are Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars were deported forcibly from Crimea in 1944, but began returning in 1989. Approximately 260,000, or 12 percent, of Crimea's population are Crimean Tatars. The leader of the Muslims of Crimea is Mufti Emirali Ablayev.

Protestant Churches have grown in the years since independence. Evangelical Baptists are perhaps the largest group, claiming over 140,000 members in approximately 2,160 communities. Other growing communities include Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Evangelical Christians.

The growth in the numbers of communities representing nontraditional religious movements is evidence of the religious freedom in the country. According to the Ukrainian State Committee for Religious Affairs (SCRA), 31 Krishna Consciousness communities, 34 Buddhist communities, and 12 Baha'i communities have been formed since independence.

Foreign religious workers are active in many faiths and denominations. They play a particularly active role in Protestant and Mormon communities where missionary activity has been central to community growth. The Jewish community also depends on foreign religious workers; many Rabbis are not Ukrainian citizens.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 law on Freedom of Conscience provide for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, some minority and nontraditional religions have experienced difficulties in registration and in buying and leasing property.

The law requires virtually all religious organizations to register with the State. The SCRA is responsible for liaison with religious organizations and for execution of state policy on religion. The Committee's headquarters are in Kiev; it maintains representatives in all regional capitals, as well as in the autonomous cities of Kiev and Sevastapol. Each religious organization with more than 10 adult members must register its articles and statutes either as a local or national organization in order to obtain the status of a "juridical entity," a status necessary to conduct many economic activities including publishing, banking, and property transactions. Registration also is necessary to be considered for restitution of religious property. National organizations must register with the SCRA, and then each local affiliate must register with the local office of the State Committee in the region where they are located. By law the registration process should take 1 month, or 3 months if the State Committee requests an expert opinion on the legitimacy of a group applying for registration. According to the SCRA, the average registration period is 3 months. In some cases, which require additional expert evaluation, it may take 6 months to register a religious organization. Denial of registration may be appealed in court. In addition to

registration, local offices of the State Committee supervise compliance of religious organizations with the provisions of the law.

The SCRA often consults with the All-Ukrainian Council, whose membership represents the faiths of over 90 percent of the religiously active population. The All-Ukrainian Council meets once every two or three months, and has a rotating chairmanship. Representative members also use the Council as a means of discussing potential problems between religious faiths. For example, the Evangelical Christian-Baptists used the Council as a means to discuss concerns they had with some literature printed by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate.

The law restricts the activities of "nonnative," foreign-based, religious organizations ("native religions" are defined as Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Jewish), and narrowly defines the permissible activities of members of the clergy, preachers, teachers, and other foreign citizen representatives of foreign-based religious organizations. They may preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities "only in those religious organizations which invited them to Ukraine and with official approval of the governmental body that registered the statutes and the articles of the pertinent religious organization." However, in practice there were no reports that the Government used the law to limit the activity of nonnative religious organizations. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that nonnative religions experienced difficulties in obtaining visas for foreign religious workers, registering, or carrying out their activities. The Government generally did not discriminate against individual believers of nonnative religions.

On June 11, 2002, the Government submitted draft amendments to the Law on Religions to the Rada (Parliament). They had been formulated with input from the All-Ukrainian Council and included changes in registration procedures and expansion of types of property eligible for restitution. The amendments were not voted on during the period covered by this report. They elicited strong and varying reactions from religious communities. One religious leader noted that the draft amendments would help simplify the restitution process. Others expressed reservations over a proposed increase—from 10 to 25—in the number of members required for a religious community to be registered. Still others were concerned that the new amendments might strengthen the SCRA and its role in registration and restitution issues. These religious leaders claim that the State Committee already blurs the constitutionally-required division of church and state.

There is no state religion, although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church tend to predominate in the east and west of the country, respectively. Some religious leaders allege that local government officials in the east and west favor the predominant confessions, although each of the major religions and many of the smaller ones maintain a presence in all parts of the country. The Government has spoken out in favor of unity of the country's Orthodox Churches; it has tried to treat all Orthodox Churches equally.

Officially, religion must be kept out of the public school curriculum; however, the Government has attempted to introduce training in "basic Christian ethics" into schools. While Jewish leaders supported the teaching of ethics and civics in school, they insisted on a non-sectarian approach to this training. A working group was formed in the All-Ukrainian Council to discuss the issue; however, a resolution has yet to be reached. Schools run by religious communities can and do include religious education as an extracurricular activity.

The country officially celebrates numerous religious holidays, including Christmas Day, Easter Monday and Holy Trinity Day, all celebrated according to the Julian Calendar shared by Orthodox and Greek Catholics.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally permits religious organizations to establish places of worship and to train clergy. The Government continued to facilitate the building of houses of worship by allocation of land plots for new construction and through restitution of religious buildings to their rightful owners. Members of numerous communities described difficulties in dealing with Kiev's municipal administration in obtaining land and building permits—problems not limited to religious groups. Restitution continued at a slower pace than in past years. Some religious leaders were pleased with the pace, while others felt it was too slow.

A 1993 amendment to the 1991 law on Religion and Freedom of Conscience limits the activities of foreign religious workers. Religious worker visas require invitations from registered Ukrainian religious organizations and the approval of the State Committee on Religious Affairs. In 2001, 13,578 foreign religious workers were admitted to the country. In the first 5 months of the period covered by this report, the SCRA in Kiev issued 2,145 visas. The number of foreign religious workers admitted by religious affairs departments of oblast administrations were not available at the end of the period covered by this report. Most missionaries work in Protestant communities. In past years, fewer than one half of 1 percent of applications for religious visas were refused, according to the State Committee, usually because applicants improperly filled out forms. While no refusal data were available for the year covered by this report, no religious communities reported that they experienced problems obtaining religious worker visas during this time.

Under existing law, religious organizations maintain privileged status as the only organizations permitted to seek restitution of property confiscated by the Soviet regime. During the period covered by this report, only buildings and objects immediately necessary for religious worship were subject to restitution.

Communities must apply to regional authorities. While the consideration of a claim should last 1 month, it frequently takes much longer. According to the SCRA, 8,589 buildings and over 10,000 religious objects have been returned to religious communities since independence. A total of 44 of these buildings were returned during the period covered by this report. Properties were returned to all three Orthodox Churches, as well as Jewish, Muslim, Ukrainian Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic communities during this period. Draft amendments to the Law on Religion and Freedom of Conscience seek to expand the types of property eligible for restitution to include religious schools and administrative buildings.

Outstanding claims for restitution remain among all the major religious communities. Many properties for which restitution is sought are occupied, often by state institutions, or are historical landmarks. The slowing pace of restitution is, among other things, a reflection of economic conditions that make relocation of residents of seized religious property prohibitively expensive. In accordance with a presidential decree signed March 21, 2002, an interagency group was created with the primary goal of eliminating the consequences of totalitarian rule by returning property to religious communities.

Many religious groups suggest that they are slighted in matters of property restitution by the local governments in regions traditionally dominated by other religious groups. Representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church alleged government preference for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate in the east. Roman Catholic representatives allege governmental discrimination in favor of the three Orthodox churches. Moscow Patriarchate representatives claim intense pressure on their congregants in Lviv, Chernihiv, and Ivano-Frankivsk. The Kiev Patriarchate cited local authorities' failure to return cathedrals in Kharkiv or Zhytomyr, and noted difficulty in registering new communities in regions traditionally dominated by the Moscow Patriarchate, including Odesa, Chernihiv, and Poltava. The Kiev Patriarchate also claims that local authorities in Crimea are attempting to take away a building it uses for both religious and administrative services. Greek-Catholic representatives have reported that the Moscow Patriarchate repeatedly blocked their attempts to gain a plot of land for the purposes of building a church in Kharkiv. Roman Catholic representatives expressed frustration at unrealized restitution claims in Simferopol, Sevastopol, Bila Tserkva, Uman, Zhytomyr, and Kiev. They noted that local authorities have backtracked on a decision to grant the Roman Catholic Church a plot of land to build a church in Chernihiv.

Representatives of the Muslim community noted that they have been unable to register a community in Kharkiv for the past 10 years, while Muslims are often subject to document checks by local police. They have raised this issue with the Presidential Administration and the SCRA. Representatives of the Islamic community leaders expressed frustration with the Ministry of Education, which has yet to register a single Islamic school. These leaders suggested they are continuing to work with the SCRA to register their schools.

Representatives of the Progressive Jewish Communities claimed that local authorities and Chabad Lubovitch officials made statements against their community in the local press while the group was organizing Progressive Jewish communities in Dnipropetrovsk and Krivy Rih, a city in Dnipropetrovsk oblast. The Progressive Jewish Community claims that the Dnipropetrovsk Chabad Community opposes the registration of any Jewish community but Chabad in the region and that under pressure from Chabad Lubovitch, the Progressive Jewish community was denied registration in Dnipropetrovsk. The Progressive Jewish Community also reported that the Community's application for registration in Kryvy Rih, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, has been under examination since 2001. Dnipropetrovsk was home to the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson. However, Chabad Lubovitch officials claim that they actually assisted the Progressive Jewish Community's attempts to establish two communities in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, and subsequently have supported these communities financially.

Representatives of Evangelical Christian communities expressed concern over instances of discrimination against their adherents. However, such incidents appeared to be isolated. In two cases, they asserted that believers were forced to leave jobs in the military or in military production because their Evangelical churches had contact with missionaries from abroad. An evangelical pastor also noted that local authorities in some cities had denied permits for religious processions and that in a village in the Odesa region an Evangelical church opposed by a local Orthodox community had been refused permission to hold regular Church services. Evangelical churches, like many other religious communities, experienced difficulties in obtaining land plots.

Representatives of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church cited instances of difficulties in providing religious services to soldiers and of the need to obtain approval for prison ministry activities from prison chaplains of the Moscow Patriarchate. There was no alteration in these procedures during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On March 21, 2002, President Kuchma signed a decree intended to overcome many of the prejudicial effects on religion of the Soviet regime, particularly to facilitate the restoration of property to religious communities. The decree called for the creation of a special commission to prepare proposals to achieve this end and present them by September 1, 2002. No measures had been taken to implement this decree as of the end of the period covered by this report, and it was not clear how the Government expects to achieve the decree's goals.

Another positive development involved a resolution passed on March 11, 2002, by the Government Committee on Social, Scientific, and Humanitarian Development stating that theology is now included on the list of academic disciplines. The resolution marks the first step in combining juridical registration and state accreditation for religious institutions. The next steps would include the development of a national standard for theology, accompanied by a syllabus, before institutional accreditation. According to the SCRA, at the beginning of 2002, there were 147 educational theological institutes, with 11,554 full-time students and approximately 7,000 correspondent students. On June 29, 2002, an inauguration ceremony was held to convert the Lviv Theological Academy into the Ukrainian Christian University.

Other significant events covered by the period of this report included the Orthodox Church's celebration of the 950th anniversary of Monastery of the Caves, and the Jewish community's commemoration of several Holocaust atrocities. Kiev commemorated the 60th year of the Babyn Yar tragedy with a number of ceremonies, concerts, and exhibitions attended by high-level government officials. In Dnipropetrovsk, residents attended the unveiling of a cornerstone commemorating Holocaust victims. In the Lviv oblast town of Staryi Sambir, the Jewish community opened a memorial park for a restored Jewish cemetery.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

Relations among religious groups remain for the most part amicable; however there were strains, particularly among the leadership of contending religious groups. The March 2002 parliamentary elections, in which some priests of various Orthodox communities were accused of endorsing particular political parties or candidates in their sermons, added to the already tense inter-Orthodox relations, while tensions persisted over the continued presence of crosses at several Jewish burial grounds. While acts of anti-Semitism were uncommon, an attack on the Great Synagogue of Kiev in April 2002 by inebriated youths following a soccer match was a source of concern to the Jewish community. However, there were no other attacks on the synagogue during the period covered by this report, and most observers believe that the April incident was not premeditated.

As noted above, Orthodoxy is divided into three major Churches, only one of which, The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is recognized as canonical by the Orthodox world. The debate regarding possible unification of some or all of these Orthodox Churches and/or granting them canonical status as an autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church has lost momentum. Leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, and Ukrainian Autocephalous Church began negotiations on unification in the hope that, when unified, they would be recognized as Ukraine's Orthodox Church by Orthodoxy's "First Among Equals," Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. While an agreement has been reached to allow priests of these two churches to celebrate liturgies together, unification negotiations are stalled. For his part Patriarch Bartholomew has supported efforts aimed at Orthodox unity, meeting with or sending delegations to each of the three main Orthodox Churches to discuss the issue. Patriarch Bartholomew has not expressed an opinion as to who should lead a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Pope John Paul II's June 2001 visit to the country was the source of much discussion and debate in religious and government circles. The Government actively promoted the Pope's visit as a sign of tolerance. Public events were attended by tens of thousands in Kiev, and hundreds of thousands in Lviv. Most religious and political leaders and, based on public opinion polls, over 90 percent of the public supported the Pope's visit.

However, the Pope's visit was criticized by the Russian Orthodox Church, and its affiliate in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate. The Moscow Patriarchate organized small, peaceful protests prior to the visit, but held no demonstrations during the visit itself. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, have used the occasion of the visit to emphasize disputes with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church over church property in the western part of the country. These disputes, in part a legacy of the Soviet Union's forcible reunification of the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches after World War II, remain a source of tension in interfaith relations.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate also accused the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church of attempting to expand in regions where the Moscow Patriarchate is traditionally strong. Kharkiv city and regional administrations finally agreed to grant a plot of land to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to build a church in November 2001, despite protests from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, whose leaders also opposed the decision by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to move its head offices from Lviv to Kiev.

Disputes between the Kiev and Moscow Patriarchates continued. They included confrontations in Poltava, Crimea, and Vinnytsia Oblast. In Poltava the Kiev Patriarchate claims that Moscow Patriarchate priests seized a Kiev Patriarchate church, assaulted a Kiev Patriarchate priest, blockaded the church entrance, and conducted a liturgy. The Moscow Patriarchate claims, however, that the church in Poltava decided to leave the Kiev Patriarchate to join the Moscow Patriarchate. In Crimea, the Kiev Patriarchate

claims that local authorities—in conjunction with the Moscow Patriarchate—are attempting to take away a building used for religious and administrative purposes. Moscow Patriarchate supporters physically prevented Patriarch Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate from consecrating a church in the town of Kalynivka, Vinnytsia Oblast.

The March 2002 parliamentary elections led to further inter-Orthodox friction, notably between the Kiev and Moscow Patriarchates. In general, support for an independent local Orthodox Church (based on the Kiev Patriarchate and Autocephalous Churches) is strongest among Western Ukrainians and center-right political parties. Eastern Ukrainians and leftist parties tend to support continued union with the Russian Orthodox Church. During the election campaign, Churches accused the others of instructing their congregants to vote for specific political parties and candidates. The Kiev Patriarchate also claims that local government authorities told Kiev Patriarchate priests that they would have their churches taken away from them unless they told their congregants to vote for specific candidates.

Such friction culminated when the Prosecutor General's Office apparently found an "irregularity" in the Kiev Patriarchate's registration, and petitioned the SCRA to deregister the Kiev Patriarchate immediately prior to the elections. The State Committee on Religious Affairs declined the request. The Moscow Patriarchate long has claimed that the Kiev Patriarchate was registered illegally, and therefore has no right to restitution claims. The Kiev Patriarchate argued that the Prosecutor General—who was running for Parliament on the Communist Party list—was trying to enlist support from the Moscow Patriarchate by deregistering the Kiev Patriarchate.

The election campaign also affected the Muslim community. Muslim community leaders noted that anti-Islamic leaflets were disseminated during the election campaign, hoping to capitalize on anti-Muslim sentiment. Muslim community leaders also noted that during a Muslim celebration at a mosque in Kiev several days prior to Election Day on March 31, 2002, local police checked the documentation of congregants and ultimately detained 29 individuals. According to Muslim community leaders, one Muslim was beaten. The Muslim community protested with the SCRA and the Presidential Administration. According to Muslim community leaders, the policemen involved in the detainment are facing prosecution.

Conflicts continue in Kiev and Sambir, Lviv oblast, as a result of the presence of crosses on Jewish cemeteries. In Kiev one cross remains on the territory of an old Jewish cemetery near the site of a Nazi massacre at Babyn Yar. Jewish leaders assert that the cross was erected without a building permit and ask that it be removed. In Sambir the Ukrainian Jewish community began construction of a memorial park at the site of an old Jewish cemetery and Holocaust massacre site with the assistance of an American benefactor. Ukrainian nationalists, with the apparent assistance of local officials, erected crosses on the site to mark the Christian victims of Nazi terror there. While memorial organizers supported the recognition of all groups who suffered on the Sambir site, they opposed the use of Christian religious symbols on the territory of the Jewish cemetery. At the same time, local Ukrainian nationalists remain opposed to the use of Jewish symbols or Hebrew in the memorial. Jewish and Greek Catholic leaders had attempted to find a just and peaceful solution to the conflict. However, resolution of this issue also was delayed by local elections in March 2002; local government leaders were reluctant to address the conflict during the election campaign.

The Jewish community continued to encounter difficulties, particularly at the local level, in preserving Jewish cemeteries. Impasses over new construction of cemeteries, including one in Sambir and the Krakivsky cemetery in Lviv, continued despite calls from the national Government for resolution. Apartment building construction on a Jewish cemetery in Volodymyr-Volynsky, Volyn oblast, continued despite a court ruling that the building lies within cemetery boundaries and a letter from the Ministry of Culture and Arts asking for a halt in construction until the court case is resolved.

While acts of anti-Semitism are infrequent, the Great Synagogue of Kiev was attacked in April 2002, following a soccer match. Windows were broken and a Yeshiva instructor was struck to the ground. The authorities described the attack as an act of hooliganism; some Jewish community leaders asserted that the perpetrators shouted anti-Semitic slurs and that the attack was organized by anti-Semitic individuals who took advantage of rowdy soccer fans and incited them to attack the synagogue. A synagogue in Khmelnytsky was attacked in late May 2002; synagogue windows were broken by bricks in the attack. In June 2002, a Holocaust memorial in Zhytomyr was vandalized. One Jewish community leader stated that these attacks were not indicative of an overall anti-Semitic societal attitude; he did not see a rise in anti-Semitic acts from prior years.

In Odesa, Member of Parliament and former Mayor Eduard Hurvits was subjected to anti-Semitic slurs during his campaign to win reelection.

While anti-Semitic articles rarely appear in the national press, such articles appear frequently in small publications and newsletters, such as "Idealist," printed in Lviv oblast. With a circulation of 3,000, "Idealist" printed articles supporting legislation to expel the Jewish community from the country. The journal "Personnel," whose executive board includes several Rada deputies, also published anti-Semitic articles. The Jewish community was considering taking legal action against the publication, and received support from public officials in criticizing articles in the journal. Mainstream newspapers and media outlets vociferously criticized the attack on the Kiev synagogue.

Section IV. U.S. Government Action

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Ukrainian Government in the context

of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights, on a regular basis, pressing U.S. Government concerns actively when the situation is warranted. Since a majority of foreign religious workers are American, the Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend their rights to due process under Ukrainian law. The U.S. Embassy received no reports of religious-worker visa problems during the period covered by this report. The U.S. Embassy raised with the SCRA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the cases of representatives of the Evangelical Mission "Rivers of Living Water, International" who had been denied religious worker visas in the past. The SCRA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided assistance and clarification to the Embassy as it assisted the U.S. citizens in ascertaining and asserting their rights.

The U.S. Ambassador, as well as other Embassy officers, demonstrated the U.S. Government's concern for religious freedom by maintaining an ongoing dialog with government and religious leaders on this topic, as well as by their presence at significant events in the country's religious life. U.S. Embassy officers attended significant Holocaust memorials, including the Babyn Yar commemoration in Kiev, a commemoration in Dnipropetrovsk, and the opening of a memorial park in Staryi Sambir, Lviv Oblast.

The U.S. Embassy charged officers with reporting on religious issues, the restitution of church property, interfaith dialog and disputes, anti-Semitism, and human rights. In the course of this reporting, Embassy officers maintained close contact not only with clerics, but also with lay leaders in religious communities and representatives of faith-based social service organizations, such as Caritas and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, both of which are active in the country. In addition, the Embassy facilitated similar meetings with such groups for U.S. Members of Congress and other visiting U.S. officials.

The Embassy closely monitored the Sambir and Volodymyr-Volynskiy cemetery cases, raising them with the State Committee on Religious Affairs. The Embassy also raised the Volodymyr-Volynskiy cemetery case with the Volyn State Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Presidential Administration. In addition, the U.S. Embassy has raised these cemetery cases, as well as the restitution situation in general, with government officials in connection to possible graduation from Jackson-Vanik Amendment restrictions. The Public Affairs Section sponsored through its American Specialist program a speaker to promote Holocaust education and awareness.

Representatives of the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom, Office of Holocaust Assets and Ukraine Desk met during the year with various Jewish and Christian leaders from the country.

Released on October 7, 2002

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/139888pf.htm)

