



2014 Report on International Religious Freedom - Ukraine

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Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of religion and belief and provides for the separation of church and state. According to the law on religion, the objective of domestic religious policy is to foster the creation of a tolerant society and provide for freedom of conscience and worship. Religious leaders urged an end to politically-motivated religious assaults and other violence in the stand-off between the Yanukovych government and anti-regime protesters. Religious and political groups both called for the Yanukovych government to cease threats to end the religious activities of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) after the UGCC had ministered to the protesters, and to end its incitement of anti-Semitic acts as part of a public campaign to discredit the political opposition. Following the changeover to a transitional administration and then under the Poroshenko government, religious leaders called for dialogue and reconciliation between all sectarian and political groups in support of national unity. In April Russian-backed separatists proclaimed the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics ("DPR" and "LPR") in the region known as the "Donbas." The separatists kidnapped, beat, and threatened Protestants, Catholics, and members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and participated in anti-Semitic acts. In other parts of the country, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) complained that local government officials at times provided assistance to UOC-KP members trying to take control over UOC-MP churches. The government set up a working group to mediate disputes between the two religious groups. Jehovah's Witnesses reported detentions, criminal convictions, and harassment by local governments, including for efforts to claim conscientious objector status.

In the first few months of the year, in the wake of the media campaign by the Yanukovych government against the political opposition, there were several reports of assaults on Jewish citizens. After the government changeover, all religious groups pledged to take action to counter attempts to incite religious hatred. Following reports of efforts by UOC-KP members to seize churches that previously had belonged to the UOC-MP, the UOC-KP leadership called upon its members to refrain from violence against the UOC-MP. Throughout the year, Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to violence and harassment by other religious groups, with more than double the number of incidents than had been reported in 2013. There were reports of vandalism of Jewish and Christian religious properties. Since the beginning of the separatist movement in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, separatists were responsible for killings, beatings, and kidnappings of

Protestants, Catholics, and UOC-KP clergy and adherents, as well as public manifestations of anti-Semitism.

The Secretary of State visited Kyiv and praised the active role of religious groups in efforts to bring peace. The U.S. Ambassador, embassy officers, and other U.S. government officials continued to engage with the government, religious groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to raise concerns over religious freedom and anti-Semitism, including the restitution of communal property and the rights of foreign religious workers.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the population at 44.3 million (July 2014 estimate). According to an April 2014 national survey by the Razumkov Center, an independent public policy think tank, 70.2 percent of respondents self-identify as Christian Orthodox, broken down into 22.4 percent identifying with the UOC-KP, 17.4 percent with the UOC-MP, 28.1 percent with neither Orthodox church and self-identifying as "just an Orthodox believer," 0.7 percent with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), and 1.4 percent undecided about any affiliation.

UOC-KP followers are located mostly in the western oblasts (regions) of the country, with some in the central oblasts. The UOC-MP is present in all regions of the country, but has a smaller presence in the Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Ternopil Oblasts. The UAOC has most of its adherents in the western part of the country.

The Razumkov Center survey also estimates 7.8 percent of the population self-identifies as Greek Catholic, 1 percent as Roman Catholic, 1 percent as Protestant, 0.2 percent as Muslim, and 0.1 percent as Jewish. Another 6.3 percent self-identify as "Christian" and 12.5 percent say they do not belong to any religious group. Another 4.7 percent self-identify as nonbelievers, 7.9 percent are undecided whether they are believers or nonbelievers, and 2.5 percent describe themselves as atheists.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) is the largest non-Orthodox church, with an estimated 4 million members. The Roman Catholic Church estimates it has one million members.

Government agencies and independent think tanks estimate the Muslim population at 500,000, although some Muslim leaders put the number at two million. According to government figures, the majority are Crimean Tatars numbering an estimated 300,000. 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 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). There are also Buddhists, practitioners of Falun Gong, and adherents of Krishna Consciousness. According to the most recent government census data from 2001, there are an estimated 103,600 Jews in the country; however, some local Jewish leaders estimate the number of persons of Jewish heritage to be as high as 370,000.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for the freedom of religion and worship, a right that "may be restricted by law 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 that "no religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory." According to the constitution, organizers must notify local authorities in advance of a planned religious gathering, and authorities have the option to challenge the legality of the planned event.

According to the law on religion, the objective of domestic 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."

The law on religion requires religious organizations to apply to local government authorities at least 10 days in advance for permission to hold religious services and ceremonies in public spaces; such permission is not required to hold services at religious or burial sites, private residences, homes for the elderly and disabled, medical and penal institutions, or premises of companies. 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."

The law requires religious groups to register with the State Registration Service (governed by the Ministry of Justice) and with the Ministry of Culture, the government's lead agency on religious affairs, or regional government authorities. To be eligible for registration, a religious group must have at least 10 adult members. The law does not specify which of the two registration procedures must be undertaken first.

Registration is required for a religious group to receive status as a legal entity. Without legal entity status, a religious group cannot own property, conduct banking activities, or publish materials. Nationwide religious organizations cannot be registered or recognized as legal entities and therefore cannot own property or conduct other business activities, although their registered constituent units can.

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 that consideration of a restitution claim should be completed within a month.

The law allows religious groups to establish theological schools to train clergy and other religious workers. The law states theological schools shall function on the basis of their own statutes, which are registered by the Ministry of Culture. The law restricts the teaching of religion as part of the public school curriculum; religious organizations are prohibited from activity in public schools. Public schools include ethics of faith courses as an optional part of the curriculum.

The law allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors and bans the creation of religious organizations in military institutions and military units. On July 2, the Cabinet of Ministers issued an order introducing chaplaincy corps in the armed forces, National Guard, and State Border Guard Service. The order requires these entities to select chaplains among clerics nominated by interested religious groups, and provide basic military training to the selected candidates who then are assigned to military units. The law requires commanders of military units to allow their subordinates to participate in religious services.

The law provides for anti-discrimination screening of draft legislation and government regulations, including on the basis of religion. The law specifies that screening will be conducted in accordance with instructions developed by the Cabinet of Ministers.

The Office of the Parliamentary Human Rights Ombudsman, established according to the constitution, releases an annual report to parliament that contains 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. Under the law, foreign religious workers are permitted to "preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities" but they may do so only for the religious organization which invited them to Ukraine and with the approval of the government

body that registered the statutes of the organization. Missionary activity is included under permissible activities. There are no separate visa requirements for foreign clergy.

Government Practices

In the stand-off between the Yanukovych government and anti-regime protesters, religious leaders urged an end to violence and a search for a negotiated settlement. Religious and political groups also urged the Yanukovych government to end pressure on the UGCC over its ministering to the protesters and to cease its use of anti-Semitism in a public campaign to discredit the political opposition. Following the changeover in government, religious leaders called for national unity and reconciliation. Former officials were subject to criminal charges for trying to remove the previous UOC-MP head who had wished to stay out of politics. The UOC-MP complained that some local government officials provided assistance to the UOC-KP in taking over churches from the UOC-MP. The government set up a working group to mediate such disputes. The Jehovah's Witnesses reported detentions, criminal convictions, and harassment by local governments and for efforts to claim conscientious objector status. All religious groups expressed concern over delays in the restitution of property seized during the Communist regime. The Jewish community, in particular, expressed concern over the failure of local government authorities to protect historical religious properties.

On January 3, the Ministry of Culture sent a letter to the UGCC threatening to "halt" the church's activity. The ministry said UGCC priests were providing pastoral care to anti-government protesters and "unlawfully" conducting religious services at Kyiv's Independence Square. On January 13, the UGCC stated that the church would remain faithful to its mission to be with its believers "regardless of any threats."

On January 15, the ministry's representative told members of the parliament's Committee on Culture and Religious Affairs that the letter to the UGCC had been sent at the request of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). The committee urged the ministry to immediately retract the letter and "stop politically motivated manipulation" of the law. The lawmakers also reportedly demanded that the SBU "stop political persecution of the UGCC and its faithful." President Yanukovych sought to distance himself from the letter, proposing to "soften the law, and guarantee that believers can pray where they wish."

Following two incidents where Jews were assaulted and pro-government media outlets alleged the opposition had been involved in the attacks, on January 20, the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine (VAAD) issued a statement that the government was using anti-Semitism in "campaigns designed to discredit the political opposition and civic protest movement." VAAD stated that government agencies were responsible for the deteriorating situation in the country, and that "politically motivated speculation on the topic of anti-Semitism is unacceptable."

During the protests against the Yanukovych government in January and February, church leaders and members of the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), an independent interfaith board representing more than 90 percent of the country's religious organizations, cautioned against further violence and urged a negotiated settlement to the crisis. On January 24-25 they met with President Yanukovych and parliamentary opposition leaders in an effort to facilitate dialogue between the two sides.

On January 27, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, political council chairman of the opposition Batkivshchyna Party, said the Yanukovych government had orchestrated a campaign based on ethnic, racial, and religiously motivated hatred designed to discredit anti-government protesters. He condemned the "disgusting actions of those who incite that hatred." He added that the protesters were ready to

provide protection to Jews facing "intimidation from paid thugs and from those who hire the ruffians."

On February 25, Oleksandr Turchynov, the newly appointed acting president, as well as speaker of the parliament, met with AUCCRO representatives. He emphasized the importance of the religious community in promoting moral values and consolidation of the nation. The religious leaders expressed support for the new political leadership, called for national unity, and condemned what they said had been the Yanukovych government's attempts to divide the nation.

On May 21, the Prosecutor-General's Office (PGO) announced its decision to open criminal proceedings against ex-President Yanukovych, the former prosecutor-general, the former interior minister and other high-level officials of the Yanukovych government to investigate evidence of illegal pressure on UOC-MP leader Metropolitan Volodymyr. The pressure had reportedly been aimed at removing the metropolitan from leadership of the UOC-MP because of his position supporting non-interference by the church in political life. According to the PGO, after failed attempts to convince the metropolitan to resign, the then interior minister, following the president's order, used police personnel to physically detain Metropolitan Oleksandr, Metropolitan Volodymyr's personal secretary, under the guise of providing him protection. Metropolitan Oleksandr stated that the previous government acted to force Metropolitan Volodymyr to step down.

During a June 25 meeting with UOC-MP and UOC-KP leaders, newly elected President Petro Poroshenko called on Ukraine's religious groups to participate in the implementation of his peace plan in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. This plan encouraged representatives of all faith groups to support hostages held by pro-Russian militants and help establish dialogue aimed at obtaining their release.

Religious leaders and human rights activists continued to urge the government to simplify religious registration procedures and address the retention of a permission-based system for holding peaceful assemblies. They also encouraged the government to adopt the Concept of Church-State Relations, as drafted by religious groups and experts in 2004, to shape cooperation between the government and religious groups and provide the basis for legislation on religion issues.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on September 12, in Sekretarka, Mykolaiv Region, Vyacheslav Zavadskyi, the village head, ordered Jehovah's Witnesses to obtain a permit if they want to "share ... spiritual thoughts with the inhabitants" of the village. Those who failed to do so would be charged with an administrative offense.

Also on September 12, the Administrative Council of the village of Kosivshchyna found Jehovah's Witness Liudmyla Panova guilty of propagating religious beliefs using a mobile literature cart. The council said Panova had violated the Code on Administrative Offenses. Panova appealed the decision.

On October 17, police stopped two Jehovah's Witnesses, Inna Lutskova and Anna Bocharova, in Kharkiv while practicing their public ministry. Bocharova showed the authorities her passport, but the police still arrested them. While they were at the police station, police reportedly interrogated and verbally abused them. A police officer photographed the women with his private mobile phone and made a photocopy of Bocharova's passport before releasing them.

After Russia's occupation of Crimea and Russian-backed separatists seized control of portions of Donbas, including reported seizure of UOC-KP properties, UOC-MP representatives complained that, emboldened by police inaction and support from activists and some local government representatives, the UOC-KP had seized a number of UOC-MP church buildings in other parts of

Ukraine. Some of the incidents occurred after local authorities had transferred parish jurisdictions from the UOC-MP to the UOC-KP, reportedly against the will of many parish members.

On June 6, at the request of local UOC-KP followers, the Ternopil Oblast State Administration reregistered UOC-MP's St. Michael's parish in Novostav Village, Ternopil Oblast, as a UOC-KP congregation, thereby transferring to the UOC-KP the right to use a local state-owned church building. The UOC-MP said parishioners who remained loyal to the UOC-MP would no longer be able to hold religious services at the church because the oblast administration's decision had resulted in deregistration of their congregation.

During an October 9 meeting with the AUCCRO, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk vowed to prevent attempts to fuel religious hatred. He warned that those guilty of seizing church buildings and attacking clerics would be brought to justice. On October 13, he instructed the central and local governments to take "immediate measures" to prevent worsening of relations between religious groups, including seizure of church buildings.

The Ministry of Culture set up a working group to settle interreligious conflicts. On November 26, the ministry hosted the group's first meeting during which the UOC-KP and the UOC-MP agreed to work together to settle their disputes. The two churches continued their discussion at the next meeting organized by the ministry on December 18.

All major religious organizations continued to urge the government to establish a transparent legal process to address restitution claims. Most organizations reported problems and delays in the restitution process to reclaim property seized by the Communist regime, with the consideration of a claim frequently taking longer than the month prescribed by law. Complications for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim properties included intercommunity competition for particular properties, current use by state institutions, designation of some properties as historic landmarks, local government jurisdictional issues, and previous transfer to private ownership. At times, local officials took sides in disputes pertaining to property restitution. The Roman Catholic Church continued to urge the government to return a former church building to its parish in Sevastopol. Jewish community leaders reported continued property restitution difficulties with the Ternopil and Kyiv municipal governments. Muslim community leaders expressed concern about unresolved restitution claims involving historic religious buildings in Mykolayiv.

The AUCCRO called on parliament to impose a moratorium on the privatization of previously confiscated religious buildings.

On November 25, the High Economic Court of Ukraine upheld an appeal by the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ) against the 2007 Lviv City Council decision to rent the site of the Golden Rose (Ture Zahav) Synagogue and surrounding historical structures to a developer for construction of a hotel.

The UCSJ protested the construction of a private industrial facility on the grounds of an old Jewish cemetery near Toykut Village, Volyn Oblast, and appealed to the local authorities to ensure respect for the sanctity of the cemetery. The UCSJ expressed concern that the local government did nothing to halt the construction when human bones were unearthed at the site.

In certain regions of the country, smaller religious groups continued to report unequal treatment by local authorities. In the central and southern regions, Roman Catholics, UOC-KP members, UGCC members, and Muslims reported similar experiences. According to UGCC representatives, local authorities in Odesa remained unwilling to allocate land for UGCC churches. UOC-MP representatives reported a continued refusal by local governments in the Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions to allocate land for UOC-MP churches. Prior to Russia's seizure of Crimea, the UOC-KP complained about the unwillingness of municipal governments in Crimea to allocate land for

church construction. Prior to the separatist seizure of Donetsk, the UOC-KP made a similar complaint about the Donetsk regional government. According to the Baptist Union, the local government in Ivano-Frankivsk delayed allocation of land for construction of a church, an issue that remained unresolved.

The AUCCRO urged the government to grant state accreditation to the religious schools that provide theological education. The AUCCRO asked the government to allow religious groups to own and operate private educational institutions where, in addition to the secular curriculum, students would be taught according to the religious values of the founding religious organization.

For Crimean Tatars, religious and ethnic identities remained closely intertwined, making it difficult to categorize mistreatment as religious or ethnic intolerance. Before the Russian occupation of Crimea, members of the Mejlis, the central executive body of the Crimean Tatars, and Crimea-based human rights groups continued to criticize the government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea for permitting schools to use textbooks that contained allegedly inflammatory and historically inaccurate material about Crimean Tatar Muslims.

In August the military called up three Jehovah's Witnesses for military service following military mobilization. Jehovah's Witnesses reported that Vitaliy Victorovych Shalaiko from Novomoskovsk, Dnipropetrovsk Region, Oleksiy Ivanovych Dudnyk from Lozova, Khakiv Region, and Andriy Yuriiovych Nagornyi from Berdychiv, Zhytomyr Region, were denied the right to conscientious objection and accused of evading the military call-up, a crime punishable by five years in prison. Jehovah's Witnesses stated that each had reported to the military office on the day specified and had filed applications for alternative civilian service. On November 14, the Novomoskovsk District Court acquitted Shalaiko. As of the end of the year, pretrial investigations continued in the other two cases.

According to the government, it did not reject any visa applications by foreign religious workers.

Abuses by Rebels, Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations

Following the proclamation in April of the DPR and LPR, Russian-backed separatists kidnapped, beat, and threatened Protestants, Catholics, and members of the UOC-KP and participated in anti-Semitic acts.

On May 14, the DPR adopted its "constitution" declaring the "Christian Orthodox faith ... practiced by the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)" as the "primary and dominant" faith in the DPR.

On July 3, DPR gunmen describing themselves as the Russian Orthodox Army kidnapped UGCC priest Tykhon Kulbaka. His captors reportedly subjected him to repeated mock executions and took away his medication, threatening him with a "slow death" unless he joined the Russian Orthodox Church. He also sustained physical injuries before his release July 14.

On May 16, DPR gunmen detained Oleksiy Davydovych, Bishop of the God's Church of Ukraine. He was released after a seven-hour detention.

On May 23, DPR gunmen destroyed an interdenominational prayer tent in central Donetsk, threatening to shoot those who continued to pray at the site. One of the organizers of the prayer tent initiative, Serhiy Kosyak, pastor of the Assembly of God Protestant Congregation, was beaten as he tried to negotiate a solution with DPR representatives.

On May 27, DPR representatives detained Roman Catholic priest Pawel Witek in Donetsk, suspecting he could be a "sniper." Until his release the next day, they kept him in a basement blindfolded with his arms and hands tied.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, between June and November armed groups seized 10 Kingdom Halls in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, saying the municipalities had ordered them to seize the buildings, although these orders were never produced in front of the owners. Following the loss of the Kingdom Halls, Jehovah's Witnesses in the region conducted their worship in private homes.

On June 16, armed DPR representatives seized the building of the Protestant Word of Life Church in Horlivka. On June 19 armed gunmen captured the Word of Life church in Torez, Donetsk Oblast, threatening its members with the destruction of Protestant "sects." On June 21, militants seized the Word of Life church in Shakhtarsk, Donetsk Oblast. They detained the church's pastor Mykola Kulinichenko and threatened to shoot him if he continued pastoral work.

On July 15, DPR separatists detained Roman Catholic priest Viktor Vonsovych, rector of the parish of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus Christ in Horlivka, Donetsk Oblast. Before his release on July 25, the militants threatened to kill him if he returned to the city.

On September 27, DPR gunmen dispersed participants in a religious service at the house of prayer of the Seventh-day Adventists in Horlivka, saying that "there is no place for sects on the Orthodox soil." The attackers detained its pastor, Serhiy Lytovchenko. He was released October 16.

On July 8, leaders of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine issued a statement saying that "targeted attacks by armed DPR and LPR militants" against evangelical believers involved abduction, beating, torture, murder threats, and damage to houses of worship, seizure of religious buildings, and damage to health and private property of the clergy.

On July 9, DPR gunmen seized the campus of the Donetsk Christian University, which had been run by the Baptists Union, threatening to "court martial" those who protested against the takeover.

On May 15, masked men with Russian flags posted anti-Semitic leaflets near the Donetsk synagogue, purportedly on behalf of "People's Governor of the DPR" Denis Pushilin. The leaflets contained an alleged DPR order to all local Jews over the age of 16 to register with the "acting commissioner for nationalities" and pay a \$50 registration fee in dollars. The leaflets justified the registration on the grounds that leaders of Ukraine's Jewish community supported the new Ukrainian government and were "hostile toward the Orthodox Donetsk Republic." The DPR denied responsibility for the leaflets and no registration took place. Local observers thought a rival pro-Russian group may have been responsible for the leaflets.

On August 13, DPR representatives seized the building of Ukrainian Evangelical Word of Life Christian Church in Donetsk.

On September 8, LPR representatives seized a Baptist church in Antratsyt, Luhansk Oblast.

Worship services could no longer be held in December at the OUC-MP Convent of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God near the Donetsk airport, reportedly because DPR soldiers were using the convent's bell tower.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In the first few months of the year, in the wake of a media campaign by the Yanukovych government against the political opposition, there were several reports of assaults on Jewish citizens. Throughout the year, Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to violence; they reported more

than double the number of incidents of physical abuse of the previous year. Following the government changeover, there were reports of efforts by UOC-KP members to seize churches that previously had belonged to the UOC-MP. There were reports of anti-Semitic acts of vandalism, including the desecration of Holocaust memorials, as well as vandalism of Christian churches.

According to VAAD, four incidents of anti-Semitic violence were reported between January and September, compared to three such cases in 2013 and four in 2012. VAAD said approximately one-half of all anti-Semitic incidents in 2014 were provocations committed in order to fuel a "powerful propaganda campaign" conducted by the Yanukovych government.

On January 11, a group of four unidentified individuals assaulted Jewish religious school teacher Hillel Wertheimer after following him home from synagogue services in Kyiv. Wertheimer suffered minor injuries.

On January 17, three unidentified men beat Jewish religious school student Dov-Ber Glikman shortly after he left the same Kyiv synagogue. The victim sustained lacerated hip wounds; the attackers were never found.

From January to November there were reportedly 54 religiously motivated incidents of physical assault against Jehovah's Witnesses, an increase from 24 cases in 2013. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, only one perpetrator has been prosecuted.

On April 3, in Komysheivka, Odesa Region, Orthodox priest O.P. Greku reportedly hit Jehovah's Witness M. Kalynch with his car and attacked Y. Sekmar with an engine belt. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, this was the fifth incident involving Greku that went unpunished.

On July 17, in Dnipropetrovsk, an unidentified man attacked two Jehovah's Witnesses women, Kateryna Riabova and Natalia Moshenets, causing Moshenets to suffer spinal injuries. An investigation was started on September 12 and continued at the end of the year.

On August 5, in Mykolaiv, D.H. Kharkoz verbally abused two Jehovah's Witnesses, Kmytro Kurnyi and Oleksandr Vydaiko, and allegedly shot one of them in the back with an air gun. Jehovah's Witnesses reported that a surgeon was unable to remove the bullet and that Kharkoz was released by authorities without questioning.

According to the UOC-MP, on October 12, UOC-KP supporters injured a UOC-MP priest while trying to seize the Holy Trinity Church in Povcha Village, Rivne Oblast. They subsequently seized the church building on October 21, after members of the local UOC-MP parish rejected UOC-KP demands to worship in the church on a rotational basis.

On August 14, approximately two dozen young men disrupted a church service at the UOC-MP parish in Chervona Motovylyivka Village, Kyiv Oblast. They reportedly verbally abused parish priest Volodymyr Navozenko, accusing him of holding pro-Russian views and saying his affiliation with the UOC-MP was evidence of his support for Donbas separatists. The men splashed tomato juice on the priest, saying that it symbolized the blood of people killed by separatists in eastern Ukraine. The attackers gave the priest a week to depart Ukraine and told his parishioners to join the nearby church of the UOC-KP.

On September 11, the Head of the UOC-MP External Church Relations Department, Metropolitan Mytrofan, condemned "attempts by unscrupulous politicians and other forces" to portray the UOC-MP as a force "hostile" to Ukraine. He added that such accusations were made despite the church's efforts to promote interdenominational peace and its multiple statements in support of Ukraine's unity and against separatism.

On September 10, UOC-KP followers, supported by self-described representatives of the nationalist Pravy Sector Party, seized the UOC-MP Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Uhryniv Village, Volyn Oblast. On September 14, the same individuals disrupted a religious service held by members of the UOC-MP in front of the church. UOC-KP supporters in the two villages insisted that local church buildings no longer belonged to the UOC-MP, citing a reported decision by most residents of those villages to join the UOC-KP.

The UOC-MP said on September 20, UOC-KP supporters, accompanied by the chairman of the Rivne District State Administration, had disrupted a religious service and seized the UOC-MP Church of the Image of the Savior Not Made by Hands in Khodosy Village, Rivne Oblast.

On September 28, a group of UOC-KP supporters seized a UOC-MP church in Turka, Lviv Oblast. On October 5, members of UOC-MP parish of Sts. Borys and Glib in Pereyaslav Khmelnytsky, Kyiv Oblast, thwarted an attempt to seize the parish church by a group of UOC-KP followers, including masked men reportedly armed with sticks.

UOC-KP representatives repeatedly rejected accusations about their involvement in the seizure of the UOC-MP churches, saying the parishioners using those church buildings had themselves initiated their transfer to UOC-KP jurisdiction.

On October 10, the UOC-KP issued a statement calling on UOC-KP supporters "not to participate in preparations for and violent acts against UOC-MP clerics and churches." The UOC-KP condemned violence against the UOC-MP, adding that "movement of UOC-MP priests and congregations to the UOC-KP can take place only on a voluntary basis, and of parishioners' own will."

VAAD recorded no anti-Semitic articles in major print media outlets from January to September 2014 and throughout 2013, compared with 14 in 2012 and 18 in 2011.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses there were 56 incidents of vandalism, five of which were arson, against Kingdom Halls from January to October.

VAAD identified 15 incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism between January and September, as opposed to seven in 2013 and nine in 2012.

On January 6, vandals painted a satanic symbol on a Holocaust memorial in Mykolayiv.

On February 23, unidentified attackers threw several Molotov cocktails at the Zaporizhya synagogue and damaged its walls. The interior was not damaged. Police opened an investigation and local antigovernment protesters came to the synagogue to condemn the attack and express their support for the Jewish community.

On March 15, unidentified vandals threw paint at the Holocaust memorial in Novomoskovsk, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.

On April 8, unidentified vandals painted swastikas on a Holocaust memorial in Odesa. On April 9, Odesa police received a report about Nazi symbols and pro-Pravy Sector graffiti on Jewish tombstones and a fence at the city's Tairovske cemetery. Pravy Sector denied involvement in the two incidents, and described them as Moscow-initiated provocations." Pravy Sector representatives approached the Jewish community leadership to condemn the vandalism. Representatives of the Odesa Jewish community said there was no evidence linking local Pravy Sector activists to the desecration.

On January 16, a religious statue near a UGCC church in Ternopil was attacked by unidentified persons. The police opened an investigation, but made no arrests.

On April 29, unidentified attackers in Lviv set the St. Volodymyr Church of the UGCC on fire.

On June 11, vandals painted a swastika on a Greek Catholic chapel in Pryluky, Chernihiv Oblast.

On September 30, vandals destroyed a cross installed by local Christian groups in central Mariupol. A new cross installed at the site after the incident was destroyed on October 20.

The Jewish community's concerns about the continued existence of the Krakivskiy Market in Lviv, located on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery, remained unresolved. In October Jewish community representatives reported construction of a pharmacy kiosk on the cemetery's land, which it said was illegal according to the Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage. The Lviv city government found no evidence of the construction and warned the management of a nearby hospital against any construction at the protected heritage site.

Abuses by Rebels, Foreign Forces, or Terrorist Organizations

Since the beginning of the separatist movement in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, there were numerous reports of abuses of religious freedom in the region, including killings, beatings, and kidnapping of Protestants, Catholics, and members of the UOC-KP. Anti-Semitic statements were made at public gatherings and in the media.

On May 9, pro-Russian separatists killed UOC-MP priest Pavlo Zhuchenko in Kostyantynivka, Donetsk Oblast. According to a local journalist, Zhuchenko was shot while attempting to talk to individuals manning a separatist checkpoint.

On June 8, pro-Russian militants seized the evangelical Church of the Transfiguration of the Lord and detained Volodymyr Velychko and Victor Bradarsky, deacons of the church, and two sons of the church's pastor Oleksandr Pavenko, Ruvim and Albert, in Slovyansk, Donetsk Oblast. According to the Ministry of Interior, the detainees were beaten and shot to death. The ministry also said that after the killing the militants burned the victims' bodies in a car in an attempt to blame the Ukrainian forces for shelling the civilians. In July the victims' bodies were found in an unmarked grave in Slovyansk after the Ukrainian government restored control over the town.

On June 26, militants seized an evangelical church in Druzhkivka, Donetsk Oblast, and kidnapped Protestant pastor Pavlo Lis'ko and his wife. The two were released after several days.

On July 3, UOC-KP leader, Patriarch Filaret, told the media that the separatists had banned its religious services in Luhansk Oblast. He gave details of an assault on Bishop Afanasiy, head of UOC-KP Luhansk and Starobilsk Diocese. Pro-Russian militants had taken control of the bishop's home in Luhansk, blindfolded him, and threatened to kill him. They released the bishop outside the city, damaged his car's brakes, and ordered him to drive away from Luhansk.

On July 8, pro-Russian militants in Donetsk kidnapped UOC-KP priest Yuriy Ivanov. They released him on July 30.

In a May 15 statement the UOC-KP cited multiple threats to the lives of its clergy and laity and efforts to hinder UOC-KP activities in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts by "terrorist and separatist forces controlled and inspired from Russia." The UOC-KP called on the UOC-MP leadership to condemn publicly the "frequent instances" when representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate had supported the "criminal activity" of armed separatists, and to punish those responsible.

According to the UOC-MP, one of its priests detained May 25 by Ukrainian forces as an alleged member of an armed separatist group in Luhansk Oblast, and several other clerics who allegedly had acted in support of separatists, were banned from exercising all clerical functions. The UOC-MP said many Orthodox clerics, including those who came from Russia, expressing support for pro-Russian militants in Donbas, had been either suspended or expelled from the priesthood, and some individuals in clerical garb who had been seen accompanying the separatists, were impostors.

On June 2, UOC-MP Metropolitan Olexandr stated the separatist group describing itself as the Orthodox Militia of Donbas had "nothing in common" with the Orthodox faith. The UOC-MP rejected an offer by LPR representatives to hand over the Luhansk UOC-KP cathedral and diocesan office to the UOC-MP.

On July 9, the AUCCRO condemned "all instances of persecution and discrimination of believers in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and the seizure of church buildings and other religious premises, and their use in the armed conflict regardless of justification." The AUCCRO called on "everyone who holds arms illegally to lay those down and stop the bloodshed."

On May 27, Roman Catholic Bishop Jan Sobilo stated on Radio Vatican that separatists in Kramatorsk, Donetsk Oblast, had opened fire on a Roman Catholic chapel and damaged the building. As a result, he said, local parishioners were afraid to pray there. Their priest was unable to come to the chapel because gunmen surrounded that part of the city. The bishop said Roman Catholics in Donetsk, Slovyansk, Horlivka, and Luhansk faced similar problems.

On October 4, self-described Russian "Cossacks" seized UOC-KP Holy Trinity Cathedral in Luhansk.

According to the media, on November 12, armed men seized the building of the Protestant Church of Christ the Savior in Donetsk.

On August 16, a Baptist church was destroyed by an arson attack in Pervomaysk, Luhansk Oblast.

On March 31, participants in a separatist gathering in Luhansk chanted anti-Semitic epithets after one of the speakers described the recent anti-Yanukovych protests in Kyiv as a "Zionist coup."

On April 20, pro-Russian separatists who seized a local broadcasting center in Slovyansk, Donetsk Oblast, launched their own TV channel. Their video about the inaugural broadcast described it as "a very powerful informational and conceptual strike against ... Zionist brainwashing."

The UGCC reported that in April it had 30 operating congregations in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, but at the end of the year, only four existed. The church could not operate openly and members had to worship as an underground church. Church buildings, including houses of worship, the bishop's residence, schools, and a monastery, were all occupied by pro-Russian separatists.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The Secretary of State visited Kyiv March 4 and met with interfaith religious leaders. He praised their peacekeeping efforts and the active role played by religious groups.

The Ambassador, embassy officers, and other U.S. government officials raised concerns over religious freedom and anti-Semitism with the presidential administration, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of parliament, political parties, and local officials. The Ambassador raised the broader topics of communal property restitution and

cultural heritage preservation in meetings and correspondence with government officials at the highest levels. In Lviv, the embassy continued to monitor disputes related to construction on the site of the city's former main synagogue, which was destroyed during the Holocaust, and the Krakivskiy Market. The embassy continued to intervene with the government as necessary to defend foreign religious workers' rights to due process under the law.

The embassy maintained contact with local religious and political leaders regarding the status of the Jewish cemetery in Lviv and continued to monitor cases involving discrimination against Tatars in Crimea. The Ambassador and embassy officers also met regularly with leaders of major religious groups in Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, and Lviv to understand better the concerns of these communities.

Embassy officers maintained close contact with clergy and lay leaders in religious communities and with representatives of faith-based international social service NGOs to encourage assistance to orphans and provision of children's services.

The Ambassador and embassy representatives visited various religious sites. Embassy officers participated in a ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre, emphasizing the need for religious tolerance and respect.

The U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism visited Ukraine May 14-16, and met with religious, government, and community leaders to encourage efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

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