

CENTRE FOR MONITORING THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

Special Report on the Violations of the Rights of the Orthodox Christians in Ukraine in 2014

The Centre for Monitoring the Rights and Freedom of Orthodox Christians in Europe pays specific attention to the rights of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine in 2014. After the victory of the Maidan movement in Kiev in February 2014, the country entered into civil confrontations and military conflict in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk. The escalation of the civilian conflict in the course of 2014 led to serious violations of rights of the country's religious communities, especially of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate, the largest confession in the country. This report represents the facts of such violations. There may also have been violations in Ukraine against Orthodox Christians during the past year that were not registered, communicated, or otherwise escaped our attention.

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Chapter 1. Sources.

The monitoring was made on the basis of

I. Official statements and documents:

June 26, 2014 Letter from Metropolitan Onufriy, Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Ukrainian President P. Poroshenko about attacks on Ukrainian Orthodox priests and church-buildings.

August 5, 2014 Statement by the Synodal Information Department Regarding the Death of an Orthodox Priest and Threats to Religious Peace in Ukraine.

August 18, 2014 letter of the Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All-Russia to the heads of international organisations.

December 23, 2014 Appeal of the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to President Petro Poroshenko concerning the critical situation in Ukrainian society.

II. Websites:

mospat.ru, orthodox.org.ua,

religions.unian.net,

ria.ru/religion, tass.ru/religiya

Chapter 2. Hate Speeches, Violation of the Freedom of Expression, Humiliation of the Dignity of Orthodox Christians.

A special mention should be made of the information campaign launched against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) in the mass media of other confessions and nationalistic organizations. The head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate (UOC KP) Philaret Denisenko, in his interviews openly calls the UOC MP ‘the fifth column’, accusing it of ‘servility to the occupants’ and reluctance to support the Ukrainian Army in today’s armed conflict. Officials and resources of the UOC KP and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) have regularly disseminated false information about the stay of militiamen or armed rebels in particular monasteries and churches of the Moscow Patriarchate.

On September 11, 2014 an act of hostility and of humiliation of the dignity of Orthodox Christians was made by the well-known group “*Femen*”. A member of the extremist group naked from the waist up poured “Ukrainian blood” over herself on the territory of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, the Moscow Patriarchate. She said that “*according to wartime law, these bearded bastards must either be executed or deported from Ukraine for promotion of death*”!!

Local authorities often take part in the information campaign by putting pressure on the UOC MP and provoking inter-confessional strife. By the end of 2014 the following cases had been documented:

On December 5, 59 deputies of the Regional Ivano-Frankovsk Council, made a request to the Ivano-Frankovsk mayor “to evict the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate from the facility in Chernovol Street, #6 and to transfer the church to the UOC KP” under the pretext that “the Moscow Patriarchate has a newly-built facility and its own parish while the Kiev Patriarchate needs at least four facilities. In addition, there is a lack of facilities for kindergartens”.

In December 2014, deputies of the Kiversty District Council, Volhyn Region, appealed to the faithful of the Moscow Patriarchate to move to the UOC KP, accusing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of “not praying for Ukraine”.

In December 2014, after the Convent of Our Lady of Iveron in the Peski village was looted by people in Ukrainian military uniform, representatives of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry alleged that the convent belfry was used to deploy separatist snipers, while the convent was looted by ‘disguised’ militiamen. It was also alleged that churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were actively used by rebels for armament and ammunition storage.

Chapter 3. Acts of Hostility Against Orthodox Priests and Church Staff.

In the period from May to December 2014, during the hostilities and artillery shelling in south-east Ukraine, at least three clerics of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were killed. During violent interrogations by Ukrainian police, at least six clerics were injured.

Threats and in some cases even death sentences in absentia were reported to be received by at least 10 clerics (precise statistics are impossible). The number of clergy forced to leave Ukraine amounted to scores (precise statistics are impossible). These numbers are particularly large in the Russian dioceses bordering on Ukraine.

List of UOC MP Clergy Killed or Wounded in the Anti-Terrorist Operation in South-east Ukraine.

I. Clergy Killed

Date of death	Name, rank	Church	Diocese	Circumstances of death
May 9	Archpriest Pavel Zhuchenko	Off-staff cleric, St Dimitry Church, Druzhkovka, Donetsk Region	Donetsk	Shot to death in his car at a checkpoint near the Kodratyevka village
July 28	Father Geogiy Nikishev	Ss Peter and Paul Church, Pervomaisk	Severodonetsk	Died from a shrapnel wound
July 31	Archpriest Vladimir Kreslyansky	St George Church	Lugansk	Died from wounds under shelling

II. Beating and Violent Interrogation

Date	Name, rank	Church	Diocese	Circumstances of beating
May 25	Archpriest Vladimir Maretsky	Rector, Church of St Nicholas of Myra	Lugansk	Detained, accused of terrorism and support for people's militia; tortured to force him admit the guilt. His kidneys were beaten.
July 13	Archpriest	Rector, Church	Donetsk	Interrogation

	Alexander Kondratyuk	of St Michael, Krasnoarmeisk		with threats
July 19	Archpriest Andrey Chicherinda	Dean, Nikolaev District	Gorlovka and Slavyansk	Car examination, interrogation in handcuffs with threats
July 20	Archpriest Vadim Yablonovsky	Rector, Church of Our Lady the Queen of All, Krasny Liman	Donetsk	During examination of his ID papers was insulted and forced to dig a grave
July 20	Archpriest Victor Stratovich	Rector, Church of Ss Cyril and Methodius, Donetsk village near Slavyansk	Gorlovka and Slavyansk	Interrogated, manacled, driven to woods with a sack on his head, forced to kneel and interrogated in this position.
July 30	Archpriest Yevgeny Podgorny	Dean, Amvrosievsky district	Donetsk	Detained, accused of support for militiamen. Tied up and thrown down, beat up by a butt at his chest and small of the back and by feet at his head. With a sack on his head, put in a pit. His house looted. Threats to kill his son.

III. Clergy Victims of Shelling

Date of shelling	Name, rank	Church	Diocese	Circumstances of shelling
May 5	Archpriest Sergiy Mironov	Rector, Church of Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg	Gorlovka and Slavyansk	Fired upon in his car at one of the checkpoints. Earlier, sentenced to death on one of the Internet sites for aid to militiamen.
June 8	Archpriest Roman Livinyuk	Slavyansk	Gorlovka and Slavyansk	Contused by a shell shock at his flat.
August 23	Archpriest Sergiy Piven	2 nd priest in the Church of St John of	Slavyansk	As the ceiling of his church fell after a shell blast, he was

		Kronstadt, Kirovskoye		wounded and taken to hospital.
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IV. Clergy Sentenced by Extremists to Death by Default

Name, rank	Church, diocese	Accusation	Consequences
Hieromonk Afanasy Parintsev	Donetsk	Prayer services at militia's checkpoints.	
Archpriest Nikolay Fomenko	Rector, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral rector and Dean of the Alexander Nevsky District, Diocese of Gorlovka and Slavyansk	Criticism of the Kievan authorities' actions and help to militiamen.	
Archpriest Alexey Yefimov	Rector, Church of Ss Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev Caves, Vasilkov, Diocese of Kiev	Giving communion to Berkut fighters and calling to oppose Ukraine's Euro-integration.	
Archpriest Oleg Trofimov	Off-staff cleric, Diocese of Severodonetsk	Criticism of Euromaidan and ideology of Eurointegration.	Was forced to leave the country.
Archpriest Andrey Tkachev	Head of Mission Department, Diocese of Kiev	Criticism of Euromaidan and ideology of Eurointegration.	Had to leave the country.
Archpriest Vitaly Vesoly	Rector, Church of the Resurrection, Seraphimovsky Deanery, Diocese of Gorlovka and Slavyansk.	Aid to militiamen.	On July 17 he was subjected to pressure and threats from a group led by a chaplain of the UGCC.
Archpriest Vladimir Ocheretyany	Cleric, Ss Peter and Paul Church, Khartsy Deanery, Diocese of Donetsk	Spiritual nourishment of militiamen.	On May 20 he was kidnapped from the hospital where he was being treated.
Archpriest Maxim Volynets	Cleric, Diocese of Lugansk		Threatened with savage reprisals.

Rev. Vladimir Navozenko	Rector, Church of the Intercession, Krasnaya Motovilovka, Diocese of Kiev	Indicated on a letter plate 'Russian Orthodox Church' as his jurisdiction.	On August 16, Svoboda Party members and radical nationalists disrupted a service demanding that he leave Ukraine in a week's time and poured tomato juice over him, saying it was 'the blood of Ukrainian patriots.'
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V. Some other cases

Name, rank	Church, diocese	Description of the situation
Archpriest Alexy Chaplin	Head, Mission Department, Diocese of Zaporozhe	Under pressure from law enforcement officials and threat of imprisonment was forced to leave the country.
Archpriest Andrey Novikov	Press secretary, Diocese of Odessa	Under pressure from law enforcement officials and threat of imprisonment, was forced to leave the country.
Archpriest Oleg Mokryak	Head, Mission Department, Diocese of Odessa	Declared wanted by police for aid to, and contacts with, Antimaidan activists in Kulikovo Field in Odessa.

Chapter 4. The Right of Freedom of Assembly for Orthodox Christians.

The situation of the faithful in the regions which are not touched by the military hostilities is a matter of no less concern. In the regions of Kiev, Lvov, Ternopol, Volhyn, and Rovno, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kievan Patriarchate (UOC KP), which is not recognized by canonical world Orthodoxy, has illegally captured fourteen churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, with at least six more remaining under threat.

December 23, 2014, the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) informed the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko about these facts: “Historical experience shows that conflicts on religious grounds prove to be the most serious and cause the most bloodshed. They deeply affect the lives of countries and peoples. It may take more than a single decade to overcome their consequences. Therefore, today we should exert as much effort as we can to preserve inter-confessional and interreligious peace in Ukraine”.

In almost all the cases, churches were seized with the local authorities’ and law-enforcement bodies’ failure to act, or with their indirect support.

The UOC KP, with the support of militant nationalists, has developed the following effective plan for seizing Orthodox churches:

- 1) In the territory of a church or outside it, a fictitious “assembly of the community” or a “gathering of the villagers” is organized, involving outsiders who have nothing to do with church life to make “the people’s decision” to move to “the Kiev Patriarchate”;
- 2) With support from local authorities and without agreement with the Orthodox community, illegal changes are made to the community statute (actually, the canonical Orthodox community is thus liquidated);
- 3) With non-interference or support of law-enforcement bodies, the church is seized and transferred to the UOC KP clergy.

In addition, in 2014 there were an estimated 60 aborted attempts to seize churches. There were two more cases as the year ended: On November 30 militant nationalists and the UOC KP clergy attempted to seize the Church of St Mary Magdalene at the Badovka village, Diocese of Rovno. The faithful managed to defend their church by force; on December 26, the UOC KP clergy, supported by the Right Sector militants and the Cossack Guard public formation, broke open and seized by force the church of the Assumption at the Ptichya village, Rovno Region. After a two-day confrontation, the local faithful forced them to leave the church. At present, the church is locked and sealed.

Chapter 5. Acts of Vandalism and Desecration Against Orthodox Worship and Sacred Places.

According to the statistics published by the Metropolia of Kiev in December 2014, 9 churches have been completely destroyed and 77 churches damaged in the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions.

In the territory controlled by the Ukrainian authorities, there are regular acts of vandalism against churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Moscow Patriarchate, including scores of cases of arsons or fires ‘for unestablished reasons’ (such as in the diocese of Izum, Kiev, Rovno, Nikolaev, Belaya Tserkov); cases of insulting graffiti calling to violence (Diocese of Kiev), dissemination of leaflets and posters flaring up inter-confessional and inter-ethnic strife (Diocese of Kiev, Khmelnytsk, Rovno, Vinnitsa, Odessa and other cities).

The destruction and damages of churches are a threat to the freedom of assembly for the Orthodox Christians in Ukraine.

List of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s worship places damaged in the process of the Antiterrorist Operation in south-east Ukraine

I. The Diocese of Lugansk

Date	Name	Kind of damage
June 2	Church of St Andrew the First-Called, Lugansk	Under fire, the church fence was riddled and the cupola was pierced.
July 4	St Olga Convent, Lugansk	Under fire
July 6	St Nicholas Chapel, Molodogvardeisk	Under fire
August 7	Church of Our Lady, the Adoration	Damaged by shell splinters.
August 20	Church of Protecting Veil	The cupola was broken in direct hit. No information about victims.

II. The Diocese of Gorlovka and Slavyansk

Date	Name	Kind of damage
May 26	Church of Our Lady the Queen, Slavyansk	During shelling, the window glasses were broken and the façade damaged. A woman was killed near the church.
June 8	Church of the Holy Spirit, Slavyansk	Shelling
June 16	Church of St Seraphim of Sarov, Cherevkovka	Under shelling, the chapel and refectory were completely destroyed and the fence was damaged.
June 16	Cathedral of St Alexander	Shelling

	Nevsky, Slavyansk	
June 21	St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Slavyansk	Shelling
June 30	St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Slavyansk	Shelling during the liturgy.
July 19	Convent of Our Lady of Iveron, Donetsk	Burnt down from shells hitting the gas pipeline.
August 7	Church of the Annunciation, Gorlovka	Burnt down from shell hit.
August 10	Church of St John of Kronstadt, Cherevkoivka	Shelling
August 10	Cathedral of the Annunciation, Gorlovka	Shelling. Six refugees wounded in the lower church.
August 23	Church of St John of Kronstadt, Kirovskoye	Destroyed by direct hit during All-Night Vigil; three persons killed, 6 hospitalized with various wounds.

III. The Dioceses of Donetsk and Mariupol

August 25	Church of St John of Kronstadt, Trudovskoye	The church was burnt down after a direct hit. During the shelling, the rector and parishioners were safe in the crypt.
November 21	St Alexander Nevsky Monastery, Debaltsevo	Two grad rockets exploded in the Monastery causing serious damage to the church and the chapel.
November 25	Ss Peter and Paul Church, the Kuibyshevsky District in Donetsk	A shell knocked down the cupola of the church.

IV. Other Ukrainian Regions

Date	Name	Type of damage
Early April	Khmelnitsk	Dissemination of posters with inscription, "Those who serve Kirill serve Satan". Insulting graffiti on the UOC churches.
April 29	Church of the Elevation of the Cross, Uzum	Arson
May 19	Church of the Holy Trinity, Peskovka village	Arson. The building was burnt down.
June 6	Church of the Resurrection, Kiev	Arson attempt
June 17	Chapel of St Varsonofy the	Arson

	Kherson Confessor Kherson	
August 15	St Simeon's Cathedral, Nikolaev	Arson attempt. The church was not damaged.
August 15	Church of St Sergius of Radonezh, Nikolaev	Arson attempt. The fire was extinguished.

Conclusion

In 2014 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the largest confession in Ukraine, and her faithful faced escalating discrimination and direct violence against her members, increasing toward the end of the year. In some cases the methods and forms of the actions against UOC MP are reminiscent of the worst periods of atheistic persecution in the Soviet Union.

The grounds for this escalation are the alleged accusations that the UOC MP and her members are “the 5th column of the Kremlin in Ukraine” and harbor pro-Russian aspirations. At the same time, the official representatives of the UOC MP called for peace and mutual understanding between the different groups of the country. Many UOC MP churches and volunteers are both helping refugees and acting as mediators in some conflict situations.

It is necessary to understand that historically Ukraine has long been a place of inter-confessional disputes and tensions between the Greco-Catholics and the Orthodox, between the canonical Orthodox recognized by the other Orthodox Churches, and those groups that are not recognized. This situation was aggravated after the collapse of the USSR. The Greco-Catholics and the Kiev Patriarchate (neither recognized by the canonical Orthodox Churches), although representing important minorities in Ukrainian society, have tried to become an “all-national church” playing the nationalist card in religious relations. In order to attain this status they are aiming to damage the majority-member Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate or even to completely displace it.

It is hazardous for Ukrainian society and for its peaceful co-existence with neighboring countries to regard the religious situation in Ukraine through a political prism. For this reason, religious communities must exert every effort to stay above political conflict and for politicians to maintain neutrality towards religious organizations.

Invitation for Cooperation

The “*Centre for Monitoring the Rights and Freedoms of Orthodox Christians in Europe*” invites the cooperation of everyone who can provide it with information about the violation of religious rights of Orthodox Christians in the member countries of the Council of Europe.

You can contact us by e-mail: info@orthodoxrights.org