

ON VIOLATION OF THE
RIGHTS OF THE
UKRAINIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
COMMUNITIES IN
UKRAINE

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ON VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE

Author NGO Public Advocacy

Date 1 October 2015

<http://www.osce.org/odhr/188076>

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

The international community has to pay careful attention to the processes currently taking place in Ukraine in view of the attitudes of state authorities to one of the biggest religious denominations in the country. We have to state with regret that in Ukraine, especially in its western part, the number of illegal seizures of the UOC churches keeps growing alongside with discrimination and violent behavior with regard to both particular faithful Orthodox and big religious centers.

The case in point is accepting by Ternopil regional council of the address to the Prime Minister of Ukraine which states that "... there have been actively created and galvanized fifth columns to serve the neighboring state. One of the spiritual sanctities of the Ukrainian nation – the Pochaev Lavolta (lavra) of the Dormition – is being purposefully turned into the hub of anti-Ukrainian and interfaith hostility. Under the guise of "canonicity" the UOC of Moscow Patriarchate tries to Russify Ukrainian citizens by abetting invaders". Unfortunately, such official position of the state body can be interpreted by the population of Ukraine as a signal to illegally seize the UOC sanctuaries with impunity and persecute its parishioners.

As early as summer 2015 there got intensified actions of radical organizations and other persons aimed at taking over the UOC property and disrupting the situation in Western Ukraine. At present more than 30 churches of our denomination have been subject to illegal seizure without any legitimate grounds. For instance, in Ptycha village of Rivne region there was illegally seized a church our religious community is entitled to. Despite all the relevant documents and the court decision which confirms ownership of our community of this building, we are unable to use it due to the prohibition of the local authorities to open the church. The authorities reason that in case the owner – our community – exercises their right to worship in the church, radically minded population and separate organizations will resort to mass rioting which the authorities will not be able to defend us from. This is also the case with other churches which are either illegally seized by raiders or closed and sealed by public authorities.

In Ternopil region, in the villages of Bashuky, Kulykiv, Kolosova, Katerynivka unprecedented events occurred when state authorities in the person of Governor S. Barna refused to abide by the court's decision that forbids eliminating our community. Owing to inappropriate unprofessional performance of the local authorities, over 15 people including youngsters and women were severely injured – fractured limbs, brain concussion – as a result of ungrounded use of rudy beats and tear-gas by the Internal Affairs Ministry unit – "Ternopil" battalion – against unarmed civilians who arrived at the church which had been seized before by the adherents of "Kyiv Patriarchate".

Regretfully, we observe that the power no longer takes a neutral stance because internal affairs agencies do not bother to investigate judicial cases upon the petitions we have continually submitted

to state authorities since 2014. They haven't brought even an administrative action against at least a single person being involved in illegal seizures of the UOC churches although these persons are familiar to the authorities and details about those persons are forwarded to the law enforcement agencies. Assaulters of our churches normally wear camouflage uniform, balaclavas, and in some cases, they carry on cold guns and fire weapons.

Of no less importance is the fact that Ternopil state administration has probably urged to abolish the right of ownership of Kolosova village UOC community for the first time since the Communist atheist times wherefore they filed a lawsuit. The Governor of Ternopil region demands that the court should abolish the right of ownership of the church building but forgets about Ukraine's international commitments and obligations with regard to restitution – returning of the property, having been unlawfully appropriated under the Soviet rule, to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Consequently, for the first time ever the state makes an overt act opposite to restitution and urges to abolish the community's title to the church property instead of making the worship building over to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The evidence testifies to the fact that there has been turned on the “green light” in Ukraine to suppress and humiliate the denomination recognized as “politically insecure”. Is it really so? The problem is when religious strives are stirred up, when slogans and conceptual messages directed against our denomination get widely disseminated by mass media. For instance, the slogan was made available to the public via mass media that “each candle bought in a church of Moscow Patriarchate is a bullet fired at the back of the Ukrainian soldier”.

Such defamation alongside with impunity of the persons guilty of property seizure and other violations of rights of the UOC faithful only aggravates religion-based discrimination in Ukraine. To date, it is impossible to hold divine services in more than 30 UOC churches due to the fact they've been either occupied by representatives of “Kyiv Patriarchate” or the authorities have made a decision to terminate worship in these churches.

Religious communities have sent official addresses to the international authorities and structures that assumed the “watchdog” functions with regard to honoring human rights and freedoms. We cherish hope that the influence of the international community will help to halt the wave of religion-based infringements of human rights and freedoms. Besides, we are grateful to Mr. Mark Kirschbeim, OSCE representative in Ukraine, who expressed his concern about problems of the UOC churches seizure in Ternopil region having taken part in an interfaith dialogue on the matter highlighted. However, the presence of international observers didn't shoot the trouble, to make matters worse, the members of the OSCE mission while approaching Bashuky village of Kremenets district of Ternopil region were assaulted by the people who intended to prevent the foreign delegation from meeting with the community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. A statement on the above incident was submitted to the law enforcement bodies of Ukraine, but we received no feedback concerning the effective investigation. We bindingly affirm that continued illegal seizures of the UOC churches, religion-based discrimination of the faithful may entail unpredictable implications and destabilization of the situation in Western Ukraine. Failure of the authorities to take actions has already brought about security threat which is likely to cause new conflicts. We call the Ukrainian authorities to halt the wave of illegal seizures of the UOC churches and take actions to bring the guilty to justice in order to put a stop to impunity and ensure defense of human rights in the country.

Video materials and reference papers on the topic highlighted in this speech are available on the site www.protiktor.com.

Thank you for your attention,
Oleg Denisov
Head of NGO “Public Advocacy”

Regarding the violation of rights of Ukrainian Orthodox Church faithful

Author Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Date 30 September 2015

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/186901>

My dear fellow Conference participants !

I represent the largest religious organization in Ukraine - the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has over 12,700 church communities, in total, that are evenly distributed across the entire country. This includes the territories of the Crimea and the Donbass. In fact, we have 5 dioceses, 1,100 parishes, more than 1,000 priests and 300 monks, in addition to hundreds of thousands of faithful parishioners in the Donbass region.

Since the beginning of the year 2014, the UOC has been the target of numerous and frequent hostile acts, that can most accurately be described as discriminatory. These acts are in connection to the inter-religious and political conflicts within my country. But since the goal of this meeting is not a review of interfaith or political conflicts but , instead, violations of believers' rights and discrimination, I would like to provide you with some concrete facts with regards to such discrimination that have been perpetrated against my Church.

On the twenty eighth(28th) of January, 2015, deputies of the Kyiv City Council adopted a decision which provided benefits to religious organizations of Kiev in the form of exemptions from real estate tax. The only exception were the religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This clearly unconstitutional and discriminatory decision was nevertheless overturned by decision of the District Administrative Court of Kyiv on the eighteenth(18th) of June,2015. In its ruling, the court noted: "that the principle of non-discrimination, impartiality and equal treatment of all organizations, including religious, in particular the prevention of circumstances that gives rise to less favorable conditions or provisions compared with other persons and / or groups must be applied and to the regulatory acts of local self-government. " Similar violations of rights against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been carried out by the Ternopil and Lviv Oblast(or regional) Councils. On the twenty fifth (25th) of June, 2015 , deputies of the Volyn Oblast Council voted for the initiative to rename the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which for some reason they call "the UOC-MP" (since such an organization does not exist in Ukraine) to the name "Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine." .This is a gross interference in the internal affairs of the Church and a blatant attempt to discriminate against the clergy and faithful of the Church in the eyes of Ukrainian society. Similar decisions were also made in other district councils and in certain Oblasts(or Regions) of Ukraine.

The following and separate sphere of action, is where, however, the most violations of the rights of believers occur , the so-called 'transfers' of parishes of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the jurisdiction of the so-called UOC-KP. We are ,in fact, talking about our churches being simply seized during raider attacks instigated by supporters of the UOC-KP, who use political forces, local deputies, and even radical nationalist power structures ("Right Sector", so-called "Freedom", and even the National Guard units, in particular the Battalion "Ternopol- 2 ") .

As of today, approximately thirty (30) churches belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been seized. Whilst, four (4) religious communities have voluntarily changed their jurisdiction.

I want to clarify that we are not talking about the free change of jurisdiction according to the Law of Ukraine: "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations", but of takeovers using

force, violence and deceit. Most of our seized churches are located in Volyn, Rivne, Ternopil, Lviv and Chernivtsi Oblasts.

The latest vivid example of lawlessness was the seizure on the twenty-first(21st) of September, 2015, of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of St. George the Victorious in the village of Katerynovka, Kremenets district, Ternopil oblast, which has legally belonged to the community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church since 1946. The above-mentioned Ukrainian Volunteer Corps "Right Sector", as well as soldiers of the "Ternopol-2" battalion with the connivance of the police, together with representatives from the UOC-KP illegally and arbitrarily seized the premises of the church. The raiders did not allow the parishioners of the UOC to enter their own church. Subsequently, everything ended in bloodshed with parishioners being beaten with rubber truncheons as well as suffering the effects of tear gas. About twenty (20) parishioners of the UOC were injured. Those parishioners whose intention it is to remain in the community of the UOC are threatened and intimidated. Law enforcement agencies refuse to accept incident applications as well as victim injury reports from those parishioners who suffered beatings. On its official website "Right Sector" confirms its complicity in the violent seizure of the church belonging to the UOC in the village Katerinovka and, moreover, confirms its intention to interfere in the activities of the religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) <http://pravyysektor.info/news/akciyi/848/pravij-sektor-vidvovuvav-u-moskvi-sche-odnu-cerkvu.html>.

So what exactly are the abuses being perpetrated by local authorities and how are the parishioners being discriminated against ?

Firstly (1.) The said religious community is entitled (under contract) to the premises of the church. This agreement is valid to this very day. Thus, the new decree establishing the procedure for the use of the church and the property on which it is located, is illegal. In addition, this order is being appealed in court;

Secondly (2). The transfer of property that really belongs to the above-mentioned religious community of the UOC to the alternate use by another religious community is also not legal. In this situation, the Chairman of the Ternopil Oblast Administration Mr. S. Barna is exceeding his authority, because he does not have the right to personally dispose of property that belongs to the said religious community;

Thirdly (3.) In addition, one of the main violations of the local authorities in this conflict was the decision of the police to allow representatives of the right-wing power structures ("Right Sector" and "Ternopol-2" battalion) to take part in resolving this conflict. In doing so, the representatives of the state "shared" monopoly on the legitimate use of legal force which is strictly regulated by national legislation with representatives of the unmanageable right-wing formations , leading to a further sharpening of inter-confessional relations, at both the regional and national levels. At a press conference held on 25.9.2015, representatives of the central organ of state power, which provides implementation of state policy in this area (Ministry of Culture), did not have the courage to admit its mistake. Instead, they began to falsely accuse the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and additional unfounded accusations.

And fourthly (4). As a result, we can all clearly see the protectionist policies of the authorities in favour of a specific denomination - being the UOC-KP. It turns out that we are all equal before the law, but some are still more equal than others.

THE VILLAGE OF KOLOSOV: non-enforcement of court ruling.

On the 26th of September.2015, in the capacity as a guarantee for a claim, Kremenetskiy District Court banned the Ternopil Oblast Administration to carry out the registration of the new charter for the religious community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, St. John the Evangelist parish in the village of Kolosov, Kremenets district, Ternopil oblast. Despite this, the head of the

Ternopil Oblast Council Mr S. Barna, acting in defiance of the judgment registers the changes in the statute, according to which the said Ukrainian Orthodox Church religious community became part of the UOC-KP. Thus, the actions of the Ternopil Oblast government Administration are aimed at further inciting inter-confessional conflict, and not on its settlement.

As one can thus see , in such cases, the executive authorities refuse to implement court decisions, which illustrates the point that our Church is openly discredited in the public domain, the rights of believers are being violated, since they are not able to exercise their legal right giving them an opportunity to freely practice their faith and to enjoy the religious buildings which actually belong to them. Deprivation of the religious community's own legal entity through liquidation of this legal entity and deprivation of believers' control over their religious organization in illegal ways is a flagrant violation of the international commitments undertaken by Ukraine.

However, I would like to also say that in defending our rights, our Church does not infringe on the rights and property of other religious communities. In particular, when in the city of Anthracite, which is located in the occupied territory, on the Eighth of September (08.09.2014), armed men seized the prayer house of the Evangelical Christian- Baptists declaring that there it shall become an "orthodox centre", the Ukrainian Orthodox Church officially dissociated itself from such an action and stated that it not only strongly disapproves of their actions, but that it will never accept church property taken from other denominations. A similar refusal followed when a similar offer in Lugansk occurred. Metropolitan Mytrofan of Luhansk and Alchevsk refused an offer to take on the balance of the diocese , being the cathedral and diocesan management belonging to the UOC-KP, which was abandoned by believers of this denomination. Also in the autumn of 2014 in the city of Horlivka, Donetsk region, armed men interrupted the prayer and dispersed the faithful of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and their pastor - Serhiy Hryhorovych Litvinenko . was taken to an unknown destination. In that particular situation, representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church established with God's help that the pastor was alive, and not in danger, and after a short time he was released. Thus, the UOC seeks to feasibly help other faiths in their problematic situations. I would like to see the same attitude with respect to the UOC.

Hate Crimes and Hate Speech in Ukraine

This overview is aimed at drawing attention of the world community to the events related to illegal seizures of religious institutions which belong to one of the most numerous Christian denominations in Ukraine – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Civil factors of the conflict

Extremism is born where there is a place for inequality and interest opposition of social groups in economic, social, spiritual, interracial, interreligious and other respects. Escalation of extreme moods in society occurs in the time of exacerbation of historic, geopolitical, social and economic, social and cultural, informational and other contradictions in society. 2014-2015 years were marked by the wave of illegal seizures of sanctuaries that belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In almost all cases faithful people send a warning to the government about a planned seizure; nevertheless, unfortunately, there is no anticipated efficient response from the state-run public authorities. Church seizure is accompanied by sparkling religious hostility, threats towards faithful people, physical and psychological violence. We have to state with regret that both authorities and even the population is getting used to this reality increasingly losing their hope to seek defense.

Crime scheme

The technology of church seizure involves raiders turning up near a church who then incite local residents using political slogans about “non-patriotism” of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and stir up religious hostility. The population “stuffed” with anti-church propaganda about alleged “Russian roots” of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church at the background of military developments in the country is ready to support those radically-minded. Hereby the amount of supporters is not crucial since stirring up the war issue seems enough to sparkle people’s emotions. It creates a platform for power confrontation with the involvement of radical ultra-right public organizations – “Svoboda” and “Pravyi Sektor” – which foster physical extrusion of religious communities from their churches.

Violators of law disguise their absence of juridical rights by organizing a so-called poll among local residents who have to “correctly” answer the question what confession they would like to have in their village. Normally such an inquiry pretends to look like “referendum”; even though it is considered a formal act, it doesn’t include all local residents and is not conducted within a legal procedure stipulated by the Ukrainian legislation. As a rule, people who don’t go to church and who hardly know what it is all about take part in such pseudo-referendums.

There is a growing incidence when the powers-that-be don’t detain violators of law and give their de facto consent or sometimes even compel faithful people to seal sanctuaries. After a religious community under official pressure and that of radicals has been displaced from their sanctuary with the church sealed by the government as a “trade-off” decision, raiders – with

impunity and even intimidating local authorities – cut off locks, force the doors open and break into the church. As a result, the church property is hardly returned to its legal owners – communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

In many cases occupants don't even bother to return the property stolen from the church interior for they believe this is their "trophies". European human rights defenders are aware of the prospects of starting a legal action in Ukrainian courts based on numerous resolutions of the European Court of Human Rights. Still, the situation is aggravated by the fact that raiders are particular physical persons wearing balaclavas, carrying clubs and sticks and have to be identified only by the militia. Law enforcement officers hardly ever detain violators.

There is also a problem to trace down criminals because it's not clear who actually seize churches due to the fact that the militia doesn't catch "customers" and "performers" of illegal seizures in flagrante. Inefficiency of the power is one of the factors that provokes raiders to illegally take hold of the property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and make law-unaware religious communities get stuck in a futile litigation despite an overt crime – plunder. At best law enforcement officers manage to prevent bloodshed. Religious institutions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church instead of having efficient protection of their rights in case of criminal acts overt are offered to file suits and wait for years for the "law justice" which people tend to believe less and less given a "blind eye" of the government.

A list of the recorded evidence (homicides, corporal injuries, threats etc.) regarding clergymen of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

For the recent year numerous ordeals have fallen to the lot of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Over 70 UOC churches have been damaged with bullets and shells, more than 30 churches have been illegally seized as a result of assaults or unlawful actions of the Kyiv Patriarchate proponents. In view of the above, a lot of UOC communities were deprived of the churches they had been building with their own hands and at their own expense for many years. Certain forces have launched a large-scale information campaign aimed at defamation of the Church. Most regrettably, the gush of lies and falsehood against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church led, in particular, to deaths through violence.

28 July 2015

atrocious murder of the member of Saint Florus Convent of Kyiv city, nun Alevtina (Kravchuk)

A criminal procedure according to Article 115 of the Penal Code of Ukraine (intentional homicide) is opened.

The murder was committed with particular brutality.

Forensic medical examination revealed while she was being beaten all her ribs were broken and visceral organs damaged, whereas the death was of suffocation. The nun was 64 years old.

On 8 September 2015, according to the official announcement of Public Relations Department of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the CID officials detained three persons affiliated to the homicide.

<p>29 July 2015, a clergyman of Kyiv eparchy priest Roman Nikolayev died not regaining consciousness after injuries suffered</p>	<p>On the night of 25-26 July 2015 there was made an attempt upon the life of priest Roman Nikolayev, senior priest of the parish of St. Martyr Tatiana in Obolon district of Kyiv city.</p> <p>In the building near his flat the malefactors injured the priest with two shots in his head. No signs of mugging were found out. A criminal procedure according to Article 115 of the Penal Code of Ukraine (intentional homicide) is opened.</p>
<p>December 2014 deacon Vitaliy Luha suffered leg damage (dislocation)</p>	<p>A cleric of St. George church in Dubno city, Rivne region, deacon Vitaliy Luha suffered leg damage (dislocation) while he was defending the church in Ptycha village.</p>
<p>October 2014 priest Ioann Savchuk suffered head injury</p>	<p>Priest Ioann Savchuk, senior priest of Pokrovsky church in Pidluzhzhia village in Dubne district, Rivne region suffered head injury while he was defending the church in Povcha village of the same district.</p>
<p>14 August 2014 Priest Volodymyr Navozenko was not allowed to finish worship, was poured with tomato juice, and offended with obscenities.</p>	<p>Attempts to illegally seize the church in Chervona Motovylivka village of Fastiv district, Kyiv region by representatives of the “Radical Party” and all-Ukrainian Association “Freedom” were accompanied by desecration of the throne, worship sabotage, humiliations of the priest.</p>
<p>31 July 2014 protopriest Volodymyr Kreslianskyi was killed during the shooting attack</p>	<p>In the city of Luhansk during the shooting attack there was killed a clergyman of Luhansk eparchy protopriest Volodymyr Kreslianskyi. His 5 children were left orphans.</p>
<p>28 July 2014 Priest Georgiy Nikishov died of shell fragment wounds</p>	<p>Shell fragment wounds took the life of the priest of Sieverodonetsk eparchy – cleric of Saint Paul and Peter church in Pervomaisk city, Luhansk region – priest Georgiy Nikishov.</p>
<p>In the night of 9 May protopriest Pavlo Zhuchenko was killed under unclear circumstances</p>	<p>Outside Sloviansk there was killed cleric of Horlovka eparchy protopriest Pavlo Zhuchenko who had served in the church of St. Dmitry Donskoy in the city of Druzhivka of Donetsk region. Circumstances of the priest’s death are unclear. On the night of 8-9 May he was shot near Kondratyevka checkpoint.</p>

Below is some selected evidence provided by the parties involved in raider events in Western Ukraine. More detailed information - www.uoj.org.ua/eng

MASS BASHING OF CIVILIANS - THE UOC FOLLOWERS IN KATERYNIVKA VILLAGE, TERNOPIL REGION – “LATENT WAR”: TIMELINE

1. In June-September 2015 there is an exacerbation of socio-political situation in Ternopil region on religious grounds. In particular, certain individuals are spreading calls for the seizure of religious buildings which belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The information resource of the "Right Sector" has posted information that this structure will provide legal, power and information support to persons wishing to go into the denomination of the Kiev Patriarchate.

2. Using the scheme of the so-called "referendum", in which supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate call common meetings of the part of the village community, people interested in seizing religious buildings of the UOC submitted documents on amendments to the statutory documents of religious communities of the UOC in vlgs. Bashuky, Kulykiv, Kolosova of Kremenets district. In addition, a confrontation started in Katerynivka village, Kremenets district. Religious communities of the UOC sent a number of appeals to the Ternopil Regional State Administration, the district and regional Prosecutor's Office, the Department of Internal Affairs, which provided a full explanation for the fact that the religious communities of the UOC in vlgs. Bashuky, Kulykiv, Kolosova of Kremenets district, are separate legal entities with their own governing bodies - the parish meeting, and only these governing bodies are authorized in accordance with the statutory documents or the laws of Ukraine to decide on statute change. The local authorities were informed that our religious communities had not taken decisions on the transition to another denomination.

3. Meanwhile, documents submitted by residents of vlgs. Bashuky, Kulykiv, Kolosova, who are not members of the parish meeting, resulted in the start of interfaith talks with representatives of the OSCE mission, which took up the function of the observer in this conflict. In order to achieve mutual understanding, a face-to-face meeting of Metropolitan of Ternopil and Kremenets Sergiy with the head of the Ternopil Regional State Administration S. Barna was held, where the authorities were notified of the systematic attempts of the "Right Sector" and the Kiev Patriarchate to commit a forcible takeover of our churches. S. Barna was warned that further escalation of the conflict could lead to unpredictable consequences in view of the fact that individuals, who identify themselves as supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate and members of the "Right Sector", use threats to our parishioners, exert pressure, wearing balaclavas and camouflage uniforms, carrying about knives, in some cases - guns. These actions are accompanied by incitement to religious hatred, in particular, charges of the UOC faithful in the "pro-Moscow position", "financing Moscow", etc. They are spreading offensive slogans that "each candle bought in the church of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a bullet in the back of a Ukrainian soldier".

4. Representatives of the UOC religious communities of vlgs. Bashuky, Kolosova, Kulykiv, Katerynivka of Kremenets district, have repeatedly appealed to the law enforcement authorities with claims on violations of their rights and interests, which resulted in opening a number of criminal proceedings. But by these proceedings, unfortunately, no effective investigation has

been conducted yet; the authority does not fulfill its function of providing law and order. In some cases they do not even carry out the examination of witnesses on the applicant's side. Appeals of our communities to the President of Ukraine, prosecutor's bodies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ombudsman of the Verkhovna Rada for Human Rights in Ukraine also did not bring the desired results. There is an impression that the authorities deliberately neglect the flagrant violations of the rights and interests of our communities.

5. The situation of confrontation in the region has aggravated in August-September 2015 due to the fact that S. Barna, contrary to decisions of the Kremenets District Court of Ternopil region and despite numerous requests from the faithful of the UOC, registered amendments to the statutes of the UOC religious communities of vlgs. Bashuky, Kolosova and Kulykiv, by which these communities are subject to the denomination of the Kiev Patriarchate. Such actions of Mr. Barna were apparently illegal, particularly in view of the fact that on 26.08.2015 the Kremenets District Court injunctioned to make changes to the statute of the religious community of Kolosova village. But in spite of this decision, on 28.08.2015 S. Barna signed a directive to amend the statute of our religious community and resubordinated it to the Kyiv Patriarchate, thus demonstrating the apparent lack of respect for law. On 04.09.2015, the UOC believers attended an appointment with S. Barney and demanded an explanation for the failure of the court decision. S. Barna explained that he "did not know" about such a decision (although the Ternopil Regional Administration is a party to court proceedings on the case), and promised to set a commission on revoking of his order, made despite the court injunction. But such a commission has not been established. Instead, on 04.09.2015, in fact, during the reception of our parishioners S. Barna signed another order - to amend the statute of the religious community of Bashuky village, Kremenets district, also contrary to the decision of the Kremenets District Court, which on 02.09.2015 restrained the Ternopil Regional Administration from making any changes to the statutory documents of the UOC religious community of Bashuky village.

6. Taking these orders, the Ternopil Regional State Administration acted contrary to the legislative findings of the Kremenets public administration, the village councils of Bashuky and Kolosova, which on the request of the Ternopil Regional State Administration reported that the religious communities in the villages of the UOC actually exist and are not willing to change religious affiliation. It should be noted that during the preparation of these findings officials of the Kremenets RSA and village heads worked under the pressure by representatives of the "Right Sector" and supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate to force these individuals to provide findings on the feasibility and expedience of religious affiliation. One of the facts of the aggressive behavior of these individuals is an attempt to do acts of violence against representatives of the OSCE mission, foreign nationals who arrived in the village of Bashuky to initiate interfaith dialogue. A great number of unidentified people attempted to overturn a foreign vehicle with official marks of the OSCE mission in order to prevent them from meeting with local residents - members of the religious community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This fact was publicly notified to law enforcement officers and prosecutors during the talks in the Kremenets RSA, who heard comments of Bashuky village head on this account.

7. Simultaneously with the above actions S. Barna signed a statement of claim to the Ternopil Regional Administrative Court, which asked to revoke the right of ownership of the church building, which belongs to a religious community of Kolosova village beneficially owned,

justifying their actions by the fact that this church is supposedly the state-owned, which does not correspond to reality (the church was built by the religious community of the UOC). **Such actions have been assessed by the UOC believers as being similar to the actions of the Soviet communist government confiscating church property in 1918.**

8. On 07.09.2015, the head of the Ternopil Regional State Administration S. Barna signed an order on the establishment of alternating (with the Kiev Patriarchate) use of the church, which has belonged to the religious community of the UOC of Katerynivka village since 1946, in accordance with the agreement made with the Soviet power, which is still valid and recognized by the legislation of Ukraine. The message of our believers that the church cannot be transferred to the alternative use because of the agreement signed with our community and not terminated yet, was ignored.

9. According to the order of the head of the Ternopil Regional State Administration S. Barna, each religious community – the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - is to enter into a separate agreement, which will contain the terms and the schedule for the use of the place of worship. On 09.10.2015 the Kremenets Regional State Administration signed an agreement on the use of the church with the Kyiv Patriarchate. The community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was not even sent a copy of the draft contract.

10. Immediately after the adoption of the above order on the alternate use of the church in Katerynivka village, the Kiev Patriarchate supporters activated their attempts to seize the religious building of the village, which belonged to the UOC community. As a result of such efforts and failure on behalf of the authorities to protect the rights and interests of people, the believers were forced to lock the building and serve outdoors. Meanwhile, the official position was not clear, because according to this order the alternate use of the church by religious communities of the UOC and the UOC-KP was supposed to be made by securing an agreement with each religious community (UOC and the UOC-KP) separately. But such an agreement was not even offered to our religious community. And representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate have just announced that they can conduct service in the church now. The same position was taken by the head of the Kremenets District Office of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the Ternopil region.

11. On 09.21.2015, in Katerynivka village there was a public worship on the occasion of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Religious communities of the UOC and the UOC-KP celebrated the divine service without collisions next to the closed church out in the open air. But around 15.00 representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate by breaking a window got into the premises of the church, broke open the front door, entered the church and began the evening service. After that, the faithful of the UOC religious community of Katerynivka village arrived at the church. The representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate refused to allow them in. The confrontation was witnessed by the head of the Kremenets District Office of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and representatives of the DMIA in the Ternopil region. Officials of the Kremenets DSA and the Ternopil RSA were not present. Entrance to the church was blocked by representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate, who formed the first line up at the church doors, police officers who formed the second line, and militants of the "Battalion Ternopil," who appeared at the direction of the MIA authorities after the UOC followers refused to leave the parish territory. Suddenly, without any reason, the soldiers of the battalion "Ternopil"

started beating people with rubber truncheons, though the presence of the UOC faithful was peaceful. Among the believers of the UOC were a lot of youngsters. People were bashed on the head, kidneys and limbs. As a result, they suffered serious injuries - fractured limbs, broken heads – and had numerous hematomas and minor injuries. The total number of victims is more than 15 people.

12. It should be noted that DMIA authorities who were present in the territory of Katerynivka village behaved aggressively and provocatively demanding, without any explanation, that believers of the UOC should not only give up any attempts to get into the owned building but also leave the church territory. Such demands were supported by the statement that our community supposedly "did not agree to a compromise." Surprisingly, there were no officials of the Kremenets DSA and the Ternopil RSA, who would be authorized to address the issue related to the order of the church use. The "operation" on conflict resolution was entirely carried out by force units.

13. After numerous calls of the injured to the Emergency Medical Service, it turned out that health care providers refused to come to the village of Katerynivka, despite of severe injuries in humans. Immediately after the events the representatives of the "Right Sector" appeared in the Kremenets district hospital and pressed medical workers for the information about people who had applied for medical assistance in connection with the incident in Katerynivka village.

14. On September 22, after the mass bashing of people and the beginning of media coverage campaign, the Kremenets DSA called out representatives of the UOC and the UOC-KP to force the senior priest of the religious community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to sign an agreement on alternate use of the church. At that, the UOC community had no possibility to make any suggestions and changes to the text of the agreement.

15. Following the legal statements to the police on severe beating of the faithful, the authorities reported about the opening of criminal proceedings on the abuse of power by law enforcement officials and on offering resistance to public officers.

16. On 25.09.2015 was held a press conference with the Head of the Department for Religious and Ethnic Affairs of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine A. Yurash, the Head of the Department for Religious Affairs of the Ternopil Regional State Administration V. Kulchytsky, at which the parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were accused in the attack on police workers, collaboration with the Russian security services and other illegal actions.

17. According to the officials, who represent the interests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Head of the Ternopil Regional State Administration S. Barna takes the position of openly lobbying the Kiev Patriarchate, which resulted in further destabilization in the region. The UOC community finds this official entirely responsible for the mass bashing of people in Katerynivka village and the adoption of ill-conceived and illegal orders, which has already led to violations of the rights and interests of the residents of Ternopil region.

CHUMAKY VILLAGE, DNIPROPETROVSK REGION

Metropolitan of Kryvyi Rih and Nikopol Ephrem sent an open letter addressed for the head of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration V.M. Reznichenko regarding

the situation in the village of Chumaky of Pyatykhatky district, Dnipropetrovsk region (Kryvyi Rih eparchy).

The chief of Regional State Administration has been addressed with a request to counteract interdenominational confrontation stirred by representatives of the so called "Kyiv Patriarchate" in the village of Chumaky.

Below is a full text of the open letter.

"We were compelled to address you in view of the distressing and disappointing events going on around the village of Chumaky of Pyatykhatky district. A religious community led by senior protopriest Ivan Yusypovych recovered an old Orthodox sanctity for years and years after times of irreligious adversity. To date a handful of ambitious people led by deputy of the Verkhovna Rada Yuriy Bereza and farmers V.G. Baisar and S.V. Zhydko make believe a religious confrontation in order to illegally seize the church and let it under jurisdiction of the so called "Kyiv Patriarchate" being unrecognized in the Orthodox world. Prior to that there had been made numerous threats to inflict bodily harm to the senior priest as well as shown inappropriate behavior by farmer V.G. Baisar.

Taking into account these incidents, on 9 September 2015 beneficiary of Pyatykhatky district, protopriest Oleksandr Ponomarenko held a general parish assembly of the religious community of Saint Nicolas Church in the village of Chumaky of Pyatykhatky district which was attended by 82 people who unanimously confirmed their affiliation with the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, despite this fact on 11 September 2015 another conflict was brought about by farmer V.G. Baisar who expressed disregard for the clergymen and the faithful in a humiliating way using obscene words in his threats. All endeavors to shoot the trouble peacefully were futile.

Nowadays when our Ukraine is going through hard times, when the country's best men die in the East sacrificing their lives for peace and unity of the whole country, when the clergy maintain aspirations of the people towards peace and rest, certain persons mentioned before under the slogan of pretended "patriotism" tend to satisfy their ambitions by means of ruining churchly peace and public rest.

Referring to the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" we would like to remind that according to Article 17 of the Law it is prohibited to arbitrarily seize church property or take over places of worship. As for the decision about changing of jurisdiction by the community, such decision can be taken solely by the members of parish assembly chaired by the senior priest of the church.

Assuming further quite numerous calls to take over the church and pursuing the aim of preventing interdenominational confrontation and bloodshedding, we request and call you to approach this statement with proper understanding and take a relevant decision that could put a stop to arbitrary and illegal seizures of places of worship and church property.

We hope you will consider this issue with genuine concern and make your contribution to maintaining peace and rest throughout our Dnipropetrovsk land".

KOLOSOVA VILLAGE, TERNOPIL REGION

On August 27, 2015, the Ternopil Regional State Administration of Ukraine took the first official step in the expropriation of the church of St. John the Theologian, located in Kolosova village (Kremenets district, Ternopil region) from the rightful owners - the Orthodox parish of the Ternopil diocese of the UOC. It is reported by the lawyer Oleg Denisov, representing the interests of the diocese. The statement of claim (with the signature of the Ag. Head of the Regional State Administration V. V. Shumada) is already registered in the Ternopil district administrative court and, despite the statute of limitations expired, it is likely to be accepted by the court for consideration.

In its initiative the Ternopil Regional State Administration proposes to cancel the state registration of property rights of the UOC community to the church complex, the bell tower and amenities buildings. The statement of claim reads that the RSA has found out about the alleged irregularities in the registration of property rights only recently, after an appeal of the Kolosova Orthodox community to them with the request to register the statute, amended and restated. "This motivation of officials (which, in fact, the whole claim is based on) deserves attention, - says Oleg Denisov. - Firstly, because the bureaucratic desire to follow the letter of the law itself violates the legal logic – in the name of the state of Ukraine it is decided not to deprive of churches (as in the Ukrainian SSR), but to return them to the Church. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the UOC religious community of the village of Kolosova did not appeal to the State Administration with a request to reamend the statute."

It is known that since April, 2015, the church of St. John the Theologian in Kolosova, Kremenets district, Ternopil region, has been the subject to raider attacks. A number of cases is reported when part of the village community wishing to come under the jurisdiction of the "Kiev Patriarchate", accompanied by the clergy of the UOC-KP and unknown men in balaklavas, tried to occupy the church building. Following the incidents, the police even initiated a criminal case.

According to Oleg Denisov, re-registration of the statute of the UOC community in this story is part of the scheme, involving the legalization of ownership of the church in the interests of "KP". To actually existing orthodox communities re-leasing (including the fixed change of canonical jurisdiction), in fact, leads to their elimination – to pray with the self-proclaimed "KP" is against the canons of the Orthodox Church.

According to available information (audio recordings and transcripts of "round tables" with participation of representatives of local authorities, law enforcement agencies, OSCE) in 2015 the Ternopil Regional State Administration did receive a petition for re-registration of the UOC communities into the communities of "the UOC-KP." Igor Kulchitsky, deputy director of the Department of Culture, Religions and Nationalities of the Ternopil Regional State Administration, was repeatedly informed (both formally and informally) of the fact that such motions were made by the part of the villagers, and not by the religious communities of the UOC.

It is not unexpected that on August 26, 2015, the Kremenets District Court issued a ruling that sustained the claim of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church community of the village of Kolosova (the owner of the church of St. John the Theologian) and prohibited the Regional State Administration any manipulations on the parish statute.

It is to be recalled that on August 25 supporters of the UOC-KP blocked traffic on the highway "Domanovo-Kovel-Chernivtsi" and agreed to free it only after the meeting with Igor Kulchitsky, who promised to investigate the case and make a decision as soon as possible. In this connection, it is quite possible that the claim to the Ternopil Regional State Administration is an attempt to defuse the situation. However, even in this context the following question arises: "Can't the RSA be playing into the hands of one party of the property dispute between the faiths?"

VILKHA VILLAGE, ZHYTOMYR REGION

A cleric of the so-called "Kiev Patriarchate" said that the priest of the UOC refused to pray for the health of his fellow villager, who participated in the ATO in Donbass.

On his page in Facebook, Konstantin Kholodov, a cleric of the UOC – KP, wrote that in the village of Vilka, Romaniv district, Zhytomyr region, a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church supposedly refused to pray for the health of his fellow villager, an ATO soldier. According to him, a resident of the village, whose husband was fighting in the east of Ukraine, asked the local priest to pray for her husband but her request was "eloquently denied". "By the way, the priest's name is Peter. The surname I failed to find out. But the question is not the names, you know ... "- wrote Kholodov in Facebook.

The portal "About the Church" became interested in this case and appealed to the diocesan administration of the Zhytomyr diocese of the UOC for clarification. As it turned out, the whole story made up by Kholodov is a sheer lie. "As reported in the Zhytomyr diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, in the village of Vilka, as well as in the whole Romaniv district, there is no priest named Peter. The rector of the Holy Pokrovsky Church of Vilka village has long been a schema-archimandrite Amphilochius (Voloschenko), " - said the authors of the portal.

According to the schema-archimandrite Amphilochius, the incident described by the priest of the UOC-KP is not true, because such a request has never been received and prayers for the servicemen of the Ukrainian Army in the church are taken up regularly."

Either Mr. Kholodov deliberately spreads false information in order to escalate aggression against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, or what he heard and posted was initially a lie", - the authors of the portal "About the Church" stated. Anyway, they advise to clarify such information, if any, with the official representatives of the press services and the dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

TERNOPIL REGION

On April 28, the site of the Religious Information Service of Ukraine, the office of which is located at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, spread a pseudo-sensation that supposedly 54 parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of only Shumsk district, Ternopil region, want to go under the jurisdiction of the so-called "UOC-KP." The agency referred to the chief of public security police of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the Ternopil region Ruslan Balyk. Readers were surprised by the strange statistics, because all of six deaneries of the Ternopil diocese of the

UOC include 120 parishes, and how half of them suddenly appeared in only one Shumsk district is unclear.

The journalists of the Synod Information Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church asked personally Ruslan Balyk for comments, who said that he had never claimed to the media about the alleged desire of 54 parishes of the UOC in Shumsk district to change jurisdiction. On April 27, during a press conference he reported the journalists that only in Kremenets and Shumsk districts, there are about 54 parishes of the UOC. And the information posted by RISU hurt him personally. Ruslan Balyk said that in cases of incitement to religious tension in some villages of Ternopil region the local police always keep the situation under control and do not allow provocations - this is what he said at the press conference. In clarification of the Information Department of the UOC on the participation of the "Right Sector" in such conflicts, the police chief of public security service said that the representatives of this organization made visits to some villages, where they do not reside, to destabilize the confessional situation.

It is not the first time when the Religious Information Service of Ukraine has had a biased coverage of activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and, as well as in the above case, resorted to fiction and distorted information.

VERBYCHNE VILLAGE, VOLYN REGION

The head of the UOC community of Verbychne village, Turiysk district, the rector of the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God Archpriest Vladimir Greben was publicly accused of ordering to paint over the emblem of Ukraine on the church gate. It even came to an inquiry of the Deputy Head of Volyn Regional Council, Alexander Pyrozhyk, a member of the "Svoboda" party, to law enforcement bodies to investigate the provocation and outrage upon the state symbol – in the version of that political power.

According to the rector of the church, provocations indeed have taken place in the village, and he managed to inform the appropriate authorities about them. As Father Vladimir explained, the Orthodox community has been living quietly so far until a few "activists" appear, one of whom is going to run for the post of the head of the village council this autumn, which includes Verbychne. A month ago, as it happens traditionally before the seizure of Ukrainian Orthodox churches, they even initiated a village assembly on the denomination jurisdiction of the church, which, however, had no legal consequences.

A memorable "painting over the emblem of Ukraine" was the scheduled maintenance: the church fence around the premises has been newly repainted in blue. No emblem was painted over on the fence: the upper bar at the gate had been made yellow-blue before, and during the regular overhaul it was covered with another layer of paint. Time will tell if law enforcement bodies see anything criminal in it.

When the "hot" publications came out in Volyn press, the believers honored Holy Maccabean Martyrs, the great Orthodox holiday. As it turned out, that very a village meeting on reforming the village council was held in Verbychne. Of course, newly appeared political activists took a chance with the occasion to change the discussion into the denomination field, but in vain: all their initiatives proved useless for the villagers.

According to Father Vladimir, who has served the Orthodox community of the village for 38 years, the present church-political core group of activists is strongly connected with the

political party "Svoboda", whose representatives – let us recall – read out a "sensational" inquiry of deputy during the session of Volyn regional council on August 14, 2015.

RYASNIKI VILLAGE, RIVNE REGION

Assessment of the leadership of the chairman and the secretary of the Ryasniki village council, which do not provide the local community of the UOC with the necessary documents, will be given by the prosecutors. A petition to the prosecutor's office with the request to check the work of the local officials was initiated by the chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Rivne region, Alexander Zaychuk.

The reason for the appeal to the district prosecutor's office was a complaint from believers of Ryasniki village, Goshchansky district, Rivne region. According to them, the chairman and the secretary of the village council breach their duties, refusing to turn over the necessary documents to the UOC community. Alexander Zaychuk said that despite the clearly defined job descriptions, the chairman of the Ryasniki village council takes the side of the emotions, but not the law. "This is unacceptable," - he stressed out.

Upon the complaint an appeal to the Goshchansky district prosecutor's office with a request to assess the work of local officials was initiated.

Alexander Zaychuk also expressed concern about the situation that is unfolding around the seizure of churches in the Rivne region.

"For me it is unacceptable when men of the athletic built go to villages with inter-church conflicts to put pressure on the community", - said the chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Rivne region.

Musorivtsi village, Ternopil region

In this small in amount of residents locality there used to be an old church of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Village community by their own efforts managed to build a new sanctuary. Ioann Pyvovarchuk, beneficiary of the parish, supervised the construction process which lasted for 10 years.

While the church was being built there weren't any disputes or misunderstanding between the people. However, once the sanctuary had been erected and the question arisen about its dedication service – it turned the tide. At that moment part of the parish wished the new sanctuary to belong to the Kyiv Patriarchate rather than the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. All in all, members of the only registered parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were able to dedicate the newly built sanctuary as Pokrovsky Church.

On January 3rd 2010 after the Divine Liturgy was over a few dozen of young hefty men led by Mykhailo Holovko, an authorized delegate in Ternopil region of Oleh Tiahnybok, the then candidate for the presidency came from Ternopil accompanied by faction deputies of "Svoboda" pan-Ukrainian organization in Ternopil Regional Council in the face of Mykhailo Tymoshyk, Natalia Mandziuk, Volodymyr Karpinskyi and Sviatoslav Shvets, priest from the Kyiv Patriarchate. As for the congregation, they managed to lock the church door from within.

Then the church assault began. The attackers carrying breakages and axes were trying to force the entrance door of the church open. Simultaneously, they were thundering threats and extremist slogans. Local policemen who were watching this just turned their blind eyes and deaf ears to the barbarous action. On seeing desperate attempts of the raiders to break in militia major Tabaka directed them to the side door of acolyte's section of the church.

The church was being assaulted with the slogans like "moscals must be cut with knives!", "glory to heroes – death to enemies!" Young muscular guys began to push the side doors, broke the windows and started to hurl burnt items inward the church. The assault was led by Mykhailo Holovko, Ternopil municipal council deputy.

Through the open windows the intruders were beating parishioners, went on breaking the side door. This entire horrible spectacle was being witnessed by law enforcement authorities whose sole response was video recording. After the intruders succeeded in breaking the side door open they kept on beating the parishioners with sticks.

Under the hit squall the people inside the church were doing their best to cover the broken door. It wasn't until one of the injured parishioners lost her consciousness and the ambulance arrived that the assault diminished. The young men left the church grounds thundering threats to come back with a bigger number of actors and to seize the church for sure at Christmas.

Bashuky village, Ternopil region

A congregation "Parish of St. Archistratigus Michael" from Bashuky village, Kremenets district, Ternopil bishopric of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has owned and continually used the church as a historical legal successor of the developers of this structure since 1946. Starting from April, 2015 aggressively-minded individuals have repeatedly organized meetings in the village where they required that the "Parish of St. Archistratigus Michael" congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church should leave the church building and transfer it to the denomination of Kyiv Patriarchate. On being refused the raiders resorted to pseudo-judicial procedures in order to pretend they have powers to compulsorily alter confession of the Orthodox Church congregation.

There appeared publications on the site of the nationalist organization "Pravyi Sektor" which said it would "provide assistance" for the Ternopil region villagers who are eager to pass to another denomination and receive tenure of the buildings concerned. Alongside with such publications there were initiated public hearings and disputes in the village, voting by means of collecting signatures on the lists where they raised an ultimate question – "if the villagers want to see in their locality the Ukrainian Orthodox Church or the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate. Based on the majority of votes to go to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate raiders began a forceful attempt to seize the church. In particular, on April 26th individuals with aggressive behavior broke into the Orthodox church building during worship, began to swear and interrupted the service demanding to leave the building and crying out provocative slogans.

At further Sunday services, in particular, on 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th of May similar events took place: representatives of the "Pravyi Sektor" came to the village dressed in camouflage uniforms with sticks and bats and explained their presence with "having to keep the public peace". Undoubtedly, such a "show of force" was aimed at exercising psychological pressure on parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. With such "defenders" in the background aggressively charged local population and furriners were trying to muscle out parishioners from their "legal" premises. In their turn, the Orthodox congregation had to invite faithful people from

other communities to come to Bashuky village for common prayer and assistance should there be any raid attempt.

Time and again the congregation of Bashuky village turned to law enforcement authorities who personally witnessed the raid but didn't take a single action to detain violators of public order. It's noteworthy that militia started a criminal proceeding upon worship sabotage; however this action not in the slightest bothered the invaders who pursued with their aggressive pressure on villagers, loyal to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Eventually, the raiders made an attempt to reregister a juridical person – i.e. congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – into a different denomination. According to the statutory documents of the congregation adoption of the resolution on changing denomination and passing under jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate can be implemented by means of amending the Statute of the religious community. Such amendments can be made only at parish assembly by the empowered members who meet the criteria stated in the Community Charter.

Hence, nobody else is entitled to make decisions. Still the raiders didn't bother to observe legal formalities. In particular, having gathered the villagers who are members neither of the religious community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church nor of the regulatory body of this community – i.e. parish assembly – those individuals wrote minutes and made up a “protocol of parish assembly of the congregation”. By these minutes the religious community allegedly had to pass to another denomination. The documents on status change were submitted to Ternopil Regional State Administration which is currently looking into a possibility to reregister the congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church into that of Kyiv Patriarchate.

The negotiations of representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with state authorities, in particular, with the head of Department on Religious Matters of Ternopil Regional State Administration proved the fact that the authorities are put under pressure by the “Pravyi Sektor” which demands to reregister the congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church into denomination of Kyiv Patriarchate. Otherwise it threatens to hold actions and protest rallies near the building of Ternopil Regional State Administration.

Upon that the Bashuky congregation didn't even receive a formal notification concerning the protocol of parish assembly of the congregation about transfer to another denomination. The congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church told the Ternopil Regional State Administration in writing that its administrative body – beneficiary and parish assembly – didn't take any decisions on passing to another denomination while the documents submitted had nothing to do with the congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. At the same time during the talks the head of Department on Religious Matters referred to “poorly regulated legislation in force” and impossibility to define who exactly had taken a decision about “congregation transfer”. He stated he had to overhaul the documents.

Consequently, there is a risk for the authorities to approve an illegal resolution under the pressure of “Pravyi Sektor” with further power collision in the village and unpredictable effects. Given an official announcement made by the “Pravyi Sektor” this organization intends to offer its “services” on the way to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate in other villages as well, in particular, Kuliky and Kolosovo in Kremenets district of Ternopil region. In case an illegal resolution on reregistration of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church congregation in Bashuky village is adopted by the authorities it's highly probable Ternopil region will be hit by a large-scale power confrontation on the religious ground.

Novostav village, Shumy district, Ternopil region

The parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of St. Archistratigus Michael sanctuary in Novostav village was created on 24.09.1991.

The building for public worship was erected in 1865 and has always been owned by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. By the Order of Ternopil Regional State Administration in 2000 the ownership of the church building in Novostav village was transferred to the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Novostav village.

On May 26th 2014 an aggressively behaved group of individuals consisting of strangers, villagers and priests of the so called Kyiv Patriarchate under the guise of worship made an attempt to illegally seize the church building whose authorized owner as it was mentioned above is the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Novostav village. They reasoned their actions by the fact that according to the Order of Ternopil Regional State Administration the given parish had been eliminated with the ownership delivered to them.

Illegal church seizure attempts occurred on a regular basis till the issue of illegality of the Order of Ternopil Regional State Administration had been submitted to Ternopil county administrative court.

The case was heard in the court from 11.07.2014 to 11.09.2014. During the proceeding the court of the 1st resort found out a number of law violations by civil servants and state authorities.

Alongside with the trial on August 19th 2014 representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate without any permission took off the window glass in the church and illegally went inside. Due to this on 21.11.2014 the worship didn't take place and the sanctuary was sealed. However, despite the ruling of the court on prohibition of any illegal actions as regards the church property the congregation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate made up their own service schedule, opened the door and had an unauthorized worship.

At present the church hosts alternate worships of the two denominations – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate though the church as it was said before is owned by the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Novostav village. The Lviv administrative court of appeal delays handling the church case at the moment.

Butyn village, Zbarazh district, Ternopil region

The parish of St. Archistratigus Michael from Butyn village, Zbarazh district, Ternopil region has existed since 1991 (when Ukraine was proclaimed independent) and appears as a sole legal successor to the rights and liabilities of the parish mentioned. There have never arisen any property disputes or claims since it is the only registered parish in Butyn village.

As a matter of fact, on February 23rd 2014 they began to implement an illegal seizure scenario by means of secret collection of signatures of Butyn villagers and making amendments to the Statute in force of the parish following a familiar practice of illegal seizure in Novostav village.

At first, the conflict of interests was aroused by village head A. Zhyla who behaved in a hostile and aggressive way blaming the beneficiary, father Vitaliy Huriev, for the fact that he prayed for the deceased but didn't mention separately those who had died during Maidan event.

The act of provocation continued until 28.02.2014 when the initiative group of the villagers turned to the parish head and demanded that worships be performed in Ukrainian (*NB* the centuries-long recognized worship language of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is liturgical Old

Slavic). Upon that 7 particularly Ukrainian-conscious villagers even resorted to violence making the residents put their signatures in favor of the Ukrainian language. It's noteworthy the village gathering that took place on 28.02.2014 and was attended by 160 people didn't keep minutes and the issue of changing the church jurisdiction wasn't discussed then (audiorecord is attached).

On March 7th 2014 aggressively-minded Butyn villagers led by the village council head arrived at Ternopil bishopric demanding to meet with its chief. On the same day there was a gathering on the church grounds at which the demand of aggressive villagers to replace the beneficiary was satisfied and father Volodymyr Slobodian was appointed new beneficiary of the parish. The worships were agreed to be performed in Ukrainian. So the conflict seemed to be exhausted.

On October 5th 2014 on Sunday there began a new round of events when the church was illegally seized by representatives of the so called Kyiv Patriarchate. The entrance to the church was guarded by strange men wearing balaclavas who called themselves "Pravyi Sektor" and barred the parishioners and the senior priest from going inside. Militia tour of duty was quietly watching the whole process. The Sunday worship was eventually sabotaged. After these unlawful actions there were collected over 70 signatures of Butyn residents who testified their loyalty to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church and spoke against conversion to the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate".

To date law enforcement authorities refused to open a criminal case against illegal seizure of the church which belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church because according to them "they didn't find any acts of infringement". This resolution of the authorities which explicitly challenges the rights of the faithful has been litigated for 5 months now. Obviously, the court procrastinates with defending the violated rights of the Orthodox congregation in Butyn village.

Mylcha village, Rivne region

Explanatory memorandum by members of the religious community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church:

"12.02.2015 in the local House of Culture there was a meeting of villagers where they considered a motion that the land plot occupied by the building of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church should be transferred to the Kyiv Patriarchy whereas the community should pass into the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchy (hereinafter referred to as KP). There were about 80 attendees in the House. On this very day from 14:00 to 17:00 an inquiry was made as for belonging of the church building and the land plot to either of the confessions. Voting was conducted by means of ballot cards prepared beforehand which contained the following questions: "Are you in favour of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchy?", "Are you in favour of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy?" To elderly villagers came "authorized delegates" with ballot cards and boxes. It's noteworthy Mylcha church beneficiary, archpriest Oleksiy Halun emphasized for the participants of the meeting that this inquiry was lawless while its results aren't legally binding. According to the information available a part of village residents were either not informed about the polling-to-be or consciously refused to participate. In the same village archpriest Volodymyr Hlavatskyi announced that without any permission or agreement from the parish council advocates of the KP Ukrainian Orthodox Church had illegally put a metal lattice on the acolyte room's door. 26.02.2015 congregation and clergymen were barred from taking part in the church service. The ongoing situation is controlled by village head Mishchuk Y. According to the information supplied by the villagers the community of the KP Ukrainian Orthodox Church submitted the registration documents to the regional council wherein village head Mishchuk Y. was noted as a

KP community monitor. Among the documents submitted there was one to testify that the executive committee of Mylcha village council upon the request of village head Mishchuk Y. changed the juridical address Tykha 1 for Tykha 1a – the latter being actually the juridical address of the long-standing community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, the community members were not informed about this change in the address. !8.03.2015 supporters of the KP Ukrainian Orthodox Church arrived at the church with their own priest and their choir-master from the Kyiv Patriarchy, broke the door locks and had a service. After that they sealed the church again.”

Chudnytsia village of Rivne region

Below is a text of the written application of the head of religious community of St. Paraskeva parish of Rivne bishopric of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Chudnitsa village to law enforcement authorities on the subject of the church service disruption (following the church seizure)

Hoshchany’s District (Rayon) Municipal Department
Ministry of Home Affairs Administration, Ukraine
House 11, Zastavye Str., Hoshcha town
Hoshcha rayon, Rivne oblast

Applicants:

1) Religious community
of St. Paraskeva parish of Rivne bishopric of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Chudnytsia village, Hoshcha rayon

Tserkovna Str., Chudnytsia village, Hoshcha rayon, Rivne oblast 35424
2) Ivan P. Yaroshchuk – a physical person – participant of the church service
8a Shevchenko Str, Zhavriv village
Hoshcha rayon, Rivne oblast

**APPLICATION
on starting a criminal proceeding**

01.03.2015 a religious community of St. Paraskeva parish of Rivne bishopric, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, in Chudnitsa village of Hoshcha rayon were having a prayer service with Acatistos to Godmother reading in front of the church that belongs to our community, standing on stairs. Around 12.00 approximately 30 people (out of whom 20 were from Chudnytsia) came up to the congregation. These “visitors” approached us from different sides and began to grab and snatch our clothes, hair, hands, and using physical power they pushed us down off the stairs and pulled away from the prayer venue. The priest who was running the service (father Yuriy Hopanchuk) was pushed away from the service table. There were holy items on the table: the Icon, the New Testament and the Cross. The table was overturned with the items falling onto the ground. As a result, our faithful people were not able to finish their service: the priest had read the Acatistos up to the 6th song, the congregation were made to leave while the raiders began to break the door locks of the church building by means of the angle grinder. Based on the evidence laid down,

WE REQUEST:

1. To start a criminal proceeding under Article 180 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

2. To call the faithful congregation members who were directly involved in the event in the capacity of witnesses.
3. To grant the above mentioned persons as well as other faithful people who participated in the disrupted service the status of the injured in the criminal case.
4. To grant the religious community as a juridical person the status of the injured in the open criminal proceeding.

I. Yaroshchuk
Head of the religious community

Hodosy village, Rivne region

An application fragment of Acheiropaeic image church beneficiary in Hodosy village to the prosecutor of Rivne oblast

«... On September 20th 2014 I was told there would be a meeting of villagers at 16.00 with the agenda as follows: transfer of our parish to the Kyiv Patriarchy... After the moleben (the prayer service) at 16.00 we began the night vigil at which 50 parishioners gathered. Meanwhile behind the church fence the villagers got together to make for the meeting in the eastern part of the village. After a while several minibuses and cars drove up to the church with old and young people dressed in camouflage suits – from “Pravyi Sektor” and “Svoboda”. On noticing that we went inside the church and locked the door. Hardly had we done it as they started to force the door open, cut off the locks with angle grinders and began to drive the congregation out of the building swearing and yelling. Those who showed resistance were pulled out, beaten and struck with tear gas. Following this “riot” the KP priests entered the church and started their prayer service. All our reports to the militia and state bodies regarding the incident yielded no results. Though our parish has all valid juridical documents, no one even paid attention to that. The so-called gathering of the villagers (local villagers made up just to 20%) was supervised by the head of Rivne rayon state administration and law enforcement agencies. The Kyiv Patriarchy assures it has nothing to do with the illegal seizure of the church but it’s not true because their bishopric secretary Mr. Luchanin pulled our priests out of the church, beat and pushed them. He was stopped personally by the dean archpriest father Valeriy...In view of this dishonourable action the village community inquires if we actually live in a sovereign, independent, democratic country and – what’s most crucial – the country with the rule of law?...”

NGOForpost invites to cooperation all individuals concerned with obtaining verified information about the ongoing situation in Ukraine caused by persecutions of Orthodox Christians of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

We request everybody to give the best possible coverage of true positions within this discourse and offer the willing human rights watchdogs as well as other organizations and communities to contribute to cooperation in the sphere of rights and freedoms defense in Ukraine. Our capabilities lie in our determination to highlight developments in Ukraine and provide a true verified law-related evaluation for them based on the available evidence of witnesses as well as in-depth analysis of actions taken by the state bodies concerning elimination and prevention of violation of the rule of law by virtue of primary monitoring, in particular.

Uhryniv village, Volyn region

The Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Uhryniv village, Volyn region was built in the 19th century by the confession of the Russian Orthodox Church. The parish of Uhryniv village as a legal successor of the Russian Orthodox Church has been continually using the church since 1946. Despite the fact the parish hasn't received any eviction notice so far they were driven out of the church by local entrepreneur Andriy Turak.

This person is an exclusive owner of most business property in the village and simultaneously he's a deputy of Volyn Regional Council. In fact, his religious preferences were given to a different denomination – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate. A. Turak personally managed "village gatherings" where the church lot was determined without any compliance with regular proceedings.

Afterwards individuals hired by Mr. Turak forced the local congregation out of their church. By seizing the church its beneficiary protopriest Rostyslav Sapozhnyk (local resident) was heavily beaten with a stick resulting in head hematoma.

Despite numerous appeals to law enforcement bodies by parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church the investigation hasn't been made yet due to the great influence Mr. Turak has on local authorities. At the end of May the problem was exacerbated because A. Turak demanded that father Rostyslav evicts from the house built by the parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

At the moment protopriest Rostyslav together with his wife and two under-age children are scared of the raid attack on his house and doesn't hope to have local authorities interfere to effectively handle this issue. Why A. Turak resorts to these actions can be explained by the fact that father Rostyslav Sapozhnyk remains committed to his religious viewpoints and the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church having turned down a proposal of A. Turak to pass to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate.

«Hate speech» - in resolutions of state run public authorities

A case which illustrates an attitude of the government to the religious denomination of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is that representatives of the elective state body – Ternopil Regional Council – who are supposed to act ethically and within the legislation took the liberty to openly defame the denomination of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church having blamed a centuries-old religious sanctity of the Ukrainian people – the Pochaev Lavolta (Lavra) of the Dormition – in antinational activity. In particular, the state body approved by voting of the deputies the following theses: "The Kremlin occupants are interested, like never before, in splitting Ukraine destroying its territorial integrity. For they feel uneasy when they watch Ukrainians become the nation of courageous and brave people. In order to further undermine our society the occupants create and activate "fifth columns" to serve the neighbouring state. The Pochaev Lavolta of the Dormition, one of the spiritual sanctities of the Ukrainian people, is being intentionally transformed into the focal centre of anti-Ukrainian activity and inter-religious conflict. Under the "canonical" guise the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy intends to Russify the Ukrainian population assisting occupants."

Regrettably, this official standpoint of the state body can be interpreted by the population as a flash signal to seize sanctuaries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with impunity.