

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

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SPECIAL REPORT ON THE VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN UKRAINE

FROM SEPTEMBER 2018 TO FEBRUARY 2019

CONTENTS

1. Defamation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its believers
 2. Humiliation, hate speech, inhuman treatment and murders of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine
 3. Discrimination of Orthodox Christians and violation of their freedom of expression in Ukraine
 4. Infringement of Orthodox Christians' right to freedom of assembly including acts of vandalism against Orthodox Worship and Sacred Places in Ukraine
- Appendix A. Church's Communiqué
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1. Defamation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its believers.

The UOC warns that the incidence of spreading false orders on behalf of the bishops of the UOC has risen.

October 7, 2018 – Unknown provocateurs distribute fake documents with fake signatures, sending them directly to the clergy and publishing them on the Internet, with the aim of sowing chaos among Orthodox Ukrainians. It is reported by the [Information and Education Department of the UOC](#).

Among the latest cases is an “order” of Metropolitan Nikodim of Zhitomir and Novograd-Volynsky to stop the prayer commemoration of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, which over the last days has been sent to several clerics of Zhitomir eparchy.

“We inform officially that such “appeals” are false and falsified and have nothing to do with the Zhitomor eparchy and personally with its ruling metropolitan,” the eparchy stressed. “It is regrettable that there are individuals who do not want peace and prosperity for our people, but do everything to divide and alienate people from God.”

Earlier, the fake on behalf of the Office of the Kiev Metropolitanate of the UOC was announced by deputy chairman of the UOC DECR Protopriest Nikolai Danilevich. A pseudo guidance note calling to stop the commemoration of the Primate of the ROC went viral on the web.

On September 20, an “order” appeared on Facebook on behalf of Metropolitan of Ovruch and Korosten Vissarion, in which the decision of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of September 14, 2018 was condemned and it was proposed to stop the commemoration of Patriarch Kirill.

“Due to the fact that in the social network (Facebook) someone created a page called “Vissarion Stretovich”, which features various provocative information which I, Metropolitan Vissarion of Ovruchs, have nothing to do with and consider it my duty to inform once again: this fake page was created by some enemies of the Holy Church of Christ,” goes in the statement published on the official website of the eparchy.

Recently, on September 30, a new fake stuff appeared on this page distorting the essence of the encounter between Metropolitan Vissarion and representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate, which occurred during the celebrations of the City Day. Refuting it, the press service of the Ovruch eparchy on behalf of His Grace wrote

the following: "... On the fake page under my name they placed another lie that I had allegedly discussed the issue of Tomos with these schismatics and want to join them."

As the UOJ reported, earlier in Dnepropetrovsk, Kirovograd and Ivano-Frankovsk eparchies there were mass mailshots of the forged edition of Mir (Peace) Orthodox journal with a statement of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine ostensibly recognizing the Single Local Church and supporting the church initiatives of President Petro Poroshenko.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56372-upc-falyshivymi-zajavlenijami-ot-imeni-cerkvi-provokatory-khotyat-posejaty-khaos>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/10/04/sered-pravoslavnix-ukrajinciv-namagayutsya-posiyati-xaos-provokatori-rozpovsyudzhuyut-falshivi-zayavi-vid-upc/>

Volyn believers adopt an appeal against the lie in media about their rector

October 8, 2018 — The parishioners of the Holy Protection Church in the village of Ozero of the Kivertsy district, Volyn region, adopted an appeal to the authorities and the mass media in connection with the publication in the local newspaper of lies about their rector Protopriest Mikhail Zhuromsky, reports a UOJ correspondent.

As the first protest action, the community decided to block the highway near the village on September 30. The believers do not lose hope that their demands will be fulfilled, and the mass media will publish their point of view on the conflict in the village incited by journalists.

"Nobody believed that we would block the highway," said Irina Khomich, a resident of the village who participated in the action of protest. According to her, representatives of the authorities promised to influence the editorial staff of the district edition.

In early September, a child baptized in the Cathedral of the UOC KP in Lutsk died in the village of Ozero. The rector of the local church of the UOC Protopriest Mikhail advised the parents to turn to the Kiev Patriarchate to hold a burial service for their child. In the media, this woeful event caused public statements by the top officials of the region. The last point for the residents of Ozero was an article going beyond ethics and journalistic standards in a local district newspaper, written by the chief editor of the publication Vasily Nedilsky.

The believers had to block the route because of the district newspaper and authorities ignoring their legitimate demands to publish the viewpoint of the church members on what had happened to protect the reputation of their priest.

As the UOJ reported, the Ozero community waited more than a week for the newspaper's editors to publish their answer to the editor, but to no avail. After the first protest, the parishioners will additionally hold an assembly in the village. Both district officials and representatives of the newspaper's editorial board will be invited to take part in the meeting.

Source:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56394-na-volyni-verujushhije-prinyali-obrashhenije-protiv-lzhi-smi-ob-ih-nastojatele>

Metropolitan Luke reports discrimination of the UOC to Expert Council

October 30, 2018 – Experts of the Ministry of Culture should pay attention to the facts of systematic violations of the rights of believers of the UOC, said Metropolitan Luke.

Hatred and contempt are consistently incited in regard to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church through its positioning as an internal enemy. This is stated in the address of Metropolitan Luke of Zaporozhye and Melitopol to the participants of the on-site meeting of the Expert Council on Freedom of Conscience and Activities of Religious Organizations at the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine.

According to Vladyka Luke, the Ukrainian media, using a policy of double standards, lay the foundation for seizing the churches of the UOC and provide the back-up for the state's discriminatory policies regarding the UOC.

"The layering of society into "right" and "wrong" has been vividly manifested," the hierarch notes. "The 'right' Ukrainians are those who hate the UOC. All those who attend the UOC temple are "Moscow stooges". Since 2014, government officials have been using the term "non-patriotic" and "enemy" in relation to the Church."

His Eminence Luke stressed that adherence to democratic principles of the inadmissibility of violating the autonomy of religious organizations and interfering with liturgical practices would help avoid abuses that can lead not only to the deterioration of church-state relations, but also to a social explosion.

Television News Service (Ukraine) has been making a defaming video in front of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate)

November 13, 2018 – Pursuant to the Union of Orthodox Journalists, representatives of the Television News Service, known for their ambiguous coverage of the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), delivered old women with icons of the Passion-bearer Nicholas1 to the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and organized their photo and video session. This was announced by Protopriest Gennady Shkil on his Facebook page.

According to him, the journalists, among whom it was possible to identify the permanent correspondent of the plots about the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), Nelly Kovalskaya, paid the elderly women the amount of UAH 200 for participating in this session. In the pictures one can see a group of old women, among whom stands out a lady with a "pro-Russian" icon, which is taken up by journalists of the TV channel.

On the same day hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) gathered in Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra for a regular meeting of the Holy Synod led by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy of Kiev and All Ukraine.

"Today we need to discuss a very important problem – the ecclesiastic situation in our Ukrainian state," said the Primate of the UOC, opening the meeting. "A lot of events are developing around the Church today. They are trying to involve the Church in political games. They want to turn the Church into a political tool which would enable to achieve some of their earthly goals. Our ultimate goal is to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith, to preserve our faithfulness to Christ."

The meeting was held at 11 am and should be followed by a meeting at 2pm with the President at the same place. According to the Union of Orthodox Journalists, the meeting was initiated by the President. However, Petro Poroshenko did not come to the meeting.

Sources:

<http://spzh.news/en/news/57491-tsn-organizovalo-provokaciju-v-kijevo-pecherskoj-lavre>

<http://spzh.news/en/news/57482-vstrecha-arkhijerejev-upc-i-prezidenta-v-kijevo-pecherskoj-lavre-ne-sostojalasy>

<http://spzh.news/en/news/57483-v-kijevo-pecherskoj-lavre-nachalosy-zasedanije-svyashhennogo-sinoda-upc>

Spokesperson for UOC MP urges not to believe false publications about clergy

November 18, 2018 — Protopriest Nikolai Danilevich, UOC DECR deputy head, warns that the mass media have posted a series of dirty publications about the clergymen of the canonical Church.

These publications are custom-made, the UOC spokesperson writes on his Facebook page and urges not to believe the false information.

According to him, the publications appear in the regional media of a “patriotic” orientation, but they can also be reprinted by more famous editions.

“In the mentioned custom-made materials, they have gone as far as they blame one bishop for having a car of 2003 (!) Year, worth up to 7000 (seven thousand) dollars. It appears to be already luxury,” writes Fr. Nikolai.

He also shared the publication of the head of the press service of the Volyn eparchy, Priest Oleg Tochinsky, who explains: “Regional media in Volyn and other regions of Ukraine, as if instructed from above, began to talk about the existing and non-existent property of the episcopate and the clergy of the UOC. Therefore, dear bishops and fathers, do not be surprised if suddenly somewhere some yellow site reports that you own what you don’t even have.”

He added: “Apparently, the AP understood that they would not be able to break the UOC over the knee, so they began to extract the pseudo-compromises, giving them for publication to the local media.”

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/57609-spiker-upc-prizval-ne-verity-lzhivym-publikacijam-o-svyashhenosluzhitelyah>

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2155945344426602&id=100000334733996

Reaction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) on false statement of the president of Ukraine that the Church’s service has prayers for president V. Putin and for the Russian army

November 29, 2018 — Metropolitan Jonathan (Yeletsikh) of Tulchin and Bratslav and priests of the Tulchin eparchy of the UOC are going to give advisors to the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko Service books to assure them: at Divine services in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), they do not pray either for president V. Putin nor the Russian Federation’s army, reports [Metropolitan Jonathan’s official website](#).

Clerics of the Tulchin eparchy of the UOC (Moscow Patriarchate) are planning to attach a “respectful request” to their gift to find in the liturgical books “non-existent fake prayers for the Russian army and for the Russian Federation President V. Putin”.

According to [the president of Ukraine’s official website](#), on November 28, during a visit to the Ascension Church of the “Kiev Patriarchate” and communication with residents of the Kozelets village in the Chernigov region, Petro Poroshenko said that in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), services begin with a prayer for patriarch Kirill, the president of the Russian Federation V. Putin, and for the Russian army.

Sources:

<http://vladyka-ionafan.ru/events/2018/11/29-1?fbclid=IwAR0KnzoEWGJ8vYCvbThgQqGgKD0UI9WKw-Yh4JC3mc-Y0npzqakpT-ql0H4>

<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/nasha-velika-naciya-zarobila-pravo-mati-vlasnu-cerkvu-prezid-51466>

<https://spzh.news/en/news/57901-v-upc-prosyat-sovetnikov-poroshenko-najti-v-sluzhebnikah-molityvy-ob-armii-rf>

The Minister of Culture made ungrounded accusations against Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, said in an interview Protopriest Alexander Bakhov, the head of the Legal Department of Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

January 11, 2019 – According to the Union of Orthodox Journalists, Protopriest Alexander Bakhov, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Legal Department, asserts that the Ukrainian Culture Minister Yevgeny Nishchuk’s statements that icons have been stolen from the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra are ungrounded. Protopriest Alexander Bakhov called Nishchuk’s statement a provocation, saying that “the minister has not backed up his statements with any documents or even evidence.”

Source:

1. Union of Orthodox Journalists – [UOC lawyer: Culture Minister’s statement on loss of icons is a provocation](#)

2. Humiliation, hate speech, inhuman treatment and murders of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine

Ukrainian church in Lviv vandalized

October 25, 2018 – A church named in honor of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles St. Vladimir the Great in Lviv, Ukraine, was vandalized in the night of October 20-21, reports the site of the [Lviv Diocese](#) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The same church has been attacked several times already this year.

The humble wooden church was pasted with images of Joseph Stalin with the inscription, “The true canonical name of the Moscow Orthodox Church is ‘Stalin’s Patriarchate.’”

In January, nationalistic forces picketed the church, and on February 3, the church was set on fire. The perpetrators have yet to be found. Restoration work is still underway.

The diocese is calling on vandals to cease attacking the church, reminding them of the 5th paragraph of the [recent statement](#) from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in which its Holy Synod “appeal[s] to all sides involved that they avoid appropriation of churches, monasteries, and other properties as well as every other act of violence and retaliation so that the peace and love of Christ may prevail.”

“Unfortunately, we see neither Christ’s love for others nor the desire for peace in the actions of these unknown persons who desecrated St. Vladimir’s Church,” the diocesan message reads. It also entreats the parishioners of the church to remain calm, pray, and entrust the situation to the providence of God.

The message also calls on those involved in the current sectarian strife in to maintain their dignity as Christians and to remember that they were “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20), that they “are Christ’s” (3:23), and that they should “glorify God in [their] bod[ies], and in [their] spirit[s], which are God’s (6:20).

Sources:

<http://upc.lviv.ua/novini/novini-eparkhiji/1037-pres-sluzhba-lvivskoj-eparkhiji-vislovyue-zanepokoennya-prikrim-intsidentom-shcho-stavsya-v-nich-z-20-na-21-zhovtnya-2018-roku-u-mikrorajoni-sikhiv>

<http://orthochristian.com/116796.html>

Three ukrainian churches vandalized accused of being russian government agents

November 12, 2018. According to [OrthoChristian](#), provocative graffiti appeared around three Ukrainian Orthodox churches (Moscow Patriarchate) in Lviv over the weekend, accusing the clergy and faithful of the canonical Church of being agents of the Russian government.

The graffiti, appearing on walls, rocks, and the ground around the churches reads, “The Moscow Patriarchate—a branch of the FSB¹.” Moreover, the Lviv city branch of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists “gleefully” [reported the news on their Facebook page](#), calling the parishes of the canonical Church “so-called ‘churches’” and referring to the perpetrators as “patriots.”

Another church in Lviv was vandalized in [late October](#) in similar fashion, being pasted with images of Joseph Stalin with the inscription, “The true canonical name of the Moscow Orthodox Church is ‘Stalin’s Patriarchate.’” The Ukrainian nationalists also write that they believe there are three branches of the FSB working in Lviv under the guise of Christian churches.

Commenting for [zaxid.net](#), the speaker of the Lviv Diocese, Fr. Markian Kayumov, noted, “We consider that this was done not by patriots but provocateurs.” In response to the late October vandalism, the Lviv Diocese called on vandals to cease attacking churches, reminding them of the 5th paragraph of [the recent statement from the Ecumenical Patriarchate](#), in which its Holy Synod “appeal[s] to all sides involved that they avoid appropriation of churches, monasteries, and other properties as well as every other act of violence and retaliation so that the peace and love of Christ may prevail.”

[A Facebook page dedicated to demonizing Ukrainian priests in Lviv as Russian agents](#) appeared last year, stating, “Our group asks all who are not indifferent to send information here about all activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Lviv Province known to you, in particular about individual parishes and their location,” claiming that such parishes lead people astray into the hands of Moscow. “By collecting this information, we here in this group will develop a plan to counter this anti-Ukrainian organization,” the statement, pinned to the top of the page, continues.

Further: “The tumor of the Moscow Orthodox Church has spread throughout Ukraine... It is time to say ‘no’ to Moscow Orthodoxy, and to send their priests to their ‘historical homeland’...”

The aim of this Facebook group is reflected in Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko’s recent statement that the canonical Ukrainian Church has no place in Ukraine and its people should leave for Russia.

Sources:

<http://orthochristian.com/117174.html>

<http://orthochristian.com/116796.html>

<http://orthochristian.com/116410.html>

<http://orthochristian.com/117101.html>

<https://zaxid.net/u/lvovi-nevidomi-rozmalyuvali-vhodi-do-troh-tserkov-upts-mp-n1469592>

<http://orthodoxrights.org/ukrainian-church-in-lvov-vandalized.html>

Attack on the residence of Metropolitan Ephraim of Krivoy Rog (UOC MP)

November 19, 2018 – Several dozen Ukrainian activists in favor of Constantinople creating a new, autocephalous church in Ukraine storm the residence of His Eminence Metropolitan Ephraim of Krivoy Rog.

Brandishing posters campaigning for the new church, they tried to break down the Metropolitan’s door and gate and shouted insults at him, reports the site of the [Ukrainian Orthodox Church](#).

The Metropolitan’s crime, in their eyes, is his stance of loyalty to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church rather than joining with the Ukrainian in a new church. At a meeting with representatives of the main

department of the national police in the Dnipropetrovsk Region and the Dnipropetrovsk regional department of the Ukrainian Security Services [in October](#), Met. Ephraim testified to his faithfulness to the canonical Church and its primate His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine.

Moreover, Met. Ephraim was among the 82 bishops who signed the resolutions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Council of Bishops on [November 13](#) which reaffirmed the Ukrainian Church's severance of communion with Constantinople and demanded the repentance of the Ukrainian schismatics if they wanted to unite in the Church.

The provocateurs' posters had slogans that revealed their political motivations, such as "Leave Moscow, return to Ukraine, Ephraim," and "Ephraim, forget Moscow."

National police watched the entire event unfold though they did nothing as the provocateurs damaged the diocesan building and shouted calls for religious enmity.

One of the participants admitted to being a member of the terrorist group Right Sector and that he is not a religious person but yet favors the creation of the new church. Another admitted he is "in the know" about the current situation in Ukraine but only supports "a free Ukraine," and a third simply demanded that Vladyka Ephraim change his position.

The protesters hung up their posters on the gate and fence of the residence, and having spoken with one policeman, dispersed.

Sources:

<http://orthochristian.com/117322.html>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/11/18/storonniki-avtokefalii-pytalis-shturmovat-rezidenciyu-krivorozhskoj-eparxii/?lang=ru>

Rivne Diocesan building vandalized following Ukrainian-Russian naval incident

November 27, 2018 – The diocesan administration building of the Rivne Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was vandalized last night, with provocative slogans being painted on the walls, reports the [diocesan website](#).

The [Rivne Diocese](#) is among those that have officially expressed their support for the canonical Ukrainian Church and its primate His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine during the ongoing ecclesiastical crisis.

Unknown perpetrators painted "FSB agents the blood of our sailors is on your hands" in reference to the recent naval incident between Ukraine and Russia. They also poured paint near the entrance to the building.

Three Ukrainian naval vessels were seized by Russian sailors in a confrontation off the Crimean Peninsula yesterday morning, with a number of Ukrainian sailors reportedly being injured. Each country blames the other.

The painted slogan is curious given that no Ukrainian sailors died in the confrontation.

Sources:

<http://orthochristian.com/117504.html>

<http://rivne.church.ua/2018/11/27/nad-rivnenskim-jeparxialnim-upravlinnyam-upc-bulo-skojeno-akt-vandalizmu/>

<https://pravlife.org/ru/content/vandaly-nanesli-na-zdanie-upravleniya-rovenskoy-eparhii-upc-razzhigayushchuyu-rozn-nadpis>

Dmitry Yarosh, leader of the Ukrainian Volunteer Army and State Initiative of Yarosh organization, called for “manhunt on Moscow priests”

December 17, 2018 – According to [the Information and Education Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church \(Moscow Patriarchate\)](#), MP of the Verkhovna Rada, Greek Catholic Dmitry Yarosh congratulated his “Orthodox brothers and sisters” on the establishment of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and called for “manhunt on Moscow priests”. He wrote that on his Facebook page, addressing not only like-minded people, but also he “tagged” under the publication Prosecutor General of Ukraine Yuriy Lutsenko, the head of the supreme legislative body Andriy Parubiy, and other authorities.

“Trying to be a Christian and a confessional-determined Greek Catholic, I understand that everyone has their own path to God,” wrote Yarosh. “We, Ukrainians, are merciful, and consequently, we crush the enemies of God and Ukraine – with Love.” The founder of the Right Sector is convinced that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP) is not the Church, while its hierarchs are not servants of God.

“The so-called UOC MP is not a church. This is the FSB station, which ‘is SS-26 Stone’ in the hands of Satanist Putin, like before it was a weapon in the hands of Stalin, Beria, Zhukov and other atheists. <...> The hierarchy of the so-called UOC MP, who did not find national courage, strength and arguments to join the Ukrainian Church, is thus not the servants of God, but the agent network of the FSB and Putin, which means – the Enemies of Ukraine,” Yarosh noted and assured that ‘hunting Moscow priests’ who faithfully serve Putin and Kirill is a matter pleasing to God and our homeland.”

“Get out Moscow priests from Ukraine!” called the MP, who sees the future of Ukraine in the “union of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.” In his opinion, the recognition of such a union by Constantinople and the Vatican will be “the next landmark step in the development of the nation and the state.”

The Information and Education Department also noted that, as of December 17, 2018, Dmitry Yarosh’s publication on [his facebook page](#) disappeared, but remained in other media, in particular on [blogs.informator.news](#).

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58383-jarosh-ohota-na-moskovskih-popovdelo-ugodnoje-bogu-i-ukraine>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/12/17/narodnij-deputat-d-yarosh-ogolosiv-polyuvannya-na-svyashhennikov-upc/>

<https://blogs.informator.news/pravoslavnu-tserkvu-ukrainy-stvoreno/>

The Right Sector in Chernigov pressured believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) via Social Media to join a newly established non-canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine

January 6, 2019 – the Right Sector in Chernigov [announced on social media](#) that the time has come for the parishioners of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)² “to pass peacefully to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine”. This message was part of the post aiming to invite everyone to join the rally in front of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate) cathedral in Chernigov for agitating the parishioners to leave their Church for the newly established non-canonical church.

“We strive for unity because this is our strength. We want every Orthodox believer to go to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and revive national identity. The Moscow Church manifests alien traditions, intoxicates the heads of our brothers and sisters, makes Ukrainians doubt their own independence and power but now is the time to move peacefully to the Ukrainian Church,” representatives of the Right Sector said.

Sources:

[The Right Sector's Facebook invitation to join the rally in front of the Holy Trinity Cathedral](#)

3. Discrimination of Orthodox Christians and violation of their freedom of expression in Ukraine

3.1 Impediment of the normal functioning of the Church

Moscow Theological Academy rector was barred from entering Ukraine

November 7, 2018 – According to [Interfax](#), the rector of the Moscow Theological Academy¹ has been prevented from entering Ukraine, the head of the Synodal Department for Church, Society and Media Relations Vladimir Legoyda said.

“Archbishop Amvrosy today was barred from entering Ukraine at passport control in Kyiv. The priest arrived for a one-day event at the Kyiv Theological Academy, which will now proceed without him. We are awaiting details,” Legoyda wrote on his Telegram channel.

The Russian Orthodox Church has expressed its regret over the Ukrainian authorities’ refusal to let Archbishop Amvrosy into the country.

“As the head of a leading theological school which features in the biographies of many contemporary Ukrainian clerics, Archbishop Amvrosy was on his way to Kyiv to attend a one-day event at the Kyiv Theological Academy. However, the Ukrainian authorities barred him from entering the country, probably thinking him to be a spy,” Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, the secretary for Orthodox Relations at the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, told Interfax.

“Such hypertrophic spy-mania, more characteristic of the 1930s than of the 21st century, is bringing shame upon those who foment it,” he said.

Source:

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14658>

Analysis of the situation around the barring of Moscow Theological Academy rector to enter Ukraine on November 7, 2018.

November 8, 2018 – As was published earlier, his Eminence Archbishop Ambrose of Verey, the rector of the Moscow Theological Academy¹, was denied entry to Ukraine on the 7th November, 2018. Pursuant to [OrthoChristian](#), he had arrived in Kyiv at the Zhuliany Airport to visit the Kyiv Caves Lavra and the theological seminary and academy located there to participate in the celebrations for the day of St. Nestor the Chronicler—the Academy’s patron saint.

However, Vladyka Ambrose was detained and interrogated at the airport, eventually being denied entry onto the territory of Ukraine, reports the press service of the Moscow Theological Academy.

The official reason given for denying the archbishop’s entry was “cannot confirm the purpose of the planned stay in Ukraine”—an obvious farce, given that Abp. Ambrose had his invitation from the rector of the Kyiv Academy, His Grace Bishop Sylvester of Belgorod, on his person at the time, which also explained that he would be staying at the Kyiv Caves Lavra with the other guests. Showing this documentation, the Moscow rector asked how to understand the border guards’ decision—they didn’t answer.

Responding to the incident on the Moscow Academy’s Telegram channel, Abp. Ambrose writes that just an hour before his arrival in Kyiv, people pushing for the “Autocephalous Church of Ukraine” learned of his plans and called for him to be barred from the country, practically charging him with cooperation with the KGB.

Recall that the KGB has not existed since 1991.

Abp. Ambrose would have participated in the All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy in honor of St. Nestor and also in the academy's traditional assembly day.

As the Moscow Academy's press service writes: "This incident, in the context of the growing tension in Ukraine, eloquently illustrates the consequences of the decisions made by Patriarch Bartholomew, and is one of the many violations of the rights of believers provoked by the Ukrainian authorities headed by Poroshenko."

Vladyka himself wrote on Telegram, "For me, this situation is an illustration of the 'love' that Patriarch Bartholomew has been talking so much about lately, placing it as a counterweight to the actions of the 'norther brothers,' that is, the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church."

The Academy also notes that Abp. Ambrose was barred on the same day that Poroshenko declared that priests of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC) and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) have "nothing to do" in Ukraine, calling on them to leave the country.

In a video posted on his personal Facebook page, Poroshenko said "Representatives of the ROC" should leave the country and "return" to Russia, since, in his view, "the ROC is an element of the Russian political system."

Recall that the push for an autocephalous Church in Ukraine began precisely with the Ukrainian state, and with Poroshenko in particular, and that Poroshenko has continually expressed his view that an autocephalous Church is needed as a political defense against Russia, to help Ukraine become a stable nation.

"My dears, you have nothing to do here. Your Church has nothing to do, your armed forces have nothing to do, your weapons have nothing to do. Go home, to Russia," the President said, addressing "representatives of the ROC in Ukraine."

The hierarchs and clergy of the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate who live and labor in Ukraine are, by and large, Ukrainians, such as His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kyiv and All Ukraine, thus a call for them to "return" to Russia is nonsensical, though it fits with Poroshenko's desire to rename the "UOC" to the "ROC in Ukraine" and thus legally classify it as a wing of an aggressor state.

Likewise, the ROC has responded that it has no representatives in Ukraine, as the UOC is ministered to by Ukrainians.

"The multi-million strong UOC that Mr. Poroshenko wants to expel from the country consists practically entirely of Ukrainian citizens," commented Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

"Ukraine is their home, and none of them are going to leave it of their own will. That means the President's wish can only be fulfilled by coercion," Fr. Igor said, noting that Poroshenko's words "obviously contradict his own assurances that the creation of the so-called unified Local Church will provide for the right of every believer to choose, and that no one will be forced to transfer to it by force."

Moreover, Abp. Ambrose has now been added to the database of the infamous Ukrainian government-backed Mirotvorets ("Peacemaker") website that compiles and publishes personal information on those it dubs enemies of Ukraine, reports the Union of Orthodox Journalists.

The site writes that the Russian hierarch is an "enemy of the independence of Ukrainian Orthodoxy from under the control of Russia (an aggressor state) ROC."

As OrthoChristian has previously reported, a number of hierarchs from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and from other canonical Orthodox Churches, have been added to the website, including His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kyiv, His Eminence Metropolitan Paul of Vyshogorod and

Chernobyl, the abbot of the Kyiv Caves Lavra, His Eminence Metropolitan Vladimir of Pochaev, the abbot of the Pochaev Lavra, and even His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia.

While the site declares itself to be an independent NGO, there are in fact many links to the Ukrainian government. The site was launched in December 2014 by politician and activist George Tuka, as he announced on his Facebook page. Tuka served as the governor of the Lugansk Province from 2015-2016, and has served as Deputy Minister for the Ukrainian Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons since April 2016.

The Mirotvorets Center is led by Roman Zaitsev, a former employee of the Lugansk branch of the Security Service of Ukraine, and the site is curated by the Security Service of Ukraine itself, and promoted by Anton Gerashchenko, an MP and aide to the Interior Minister, according to the International Business Times.

The head of the uncanonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate congratulated and blessed the team behind the site on Counter-Intelligence Day, December 27, 2017, bestowing a medal "For the sacrifice and love for Ukraine" upon them.

The Russian Orthodox Church has commented that the inclusion of Abp. Ambrose in the database is just an attempt to justify the fact that the Ukrainian Security Service barred him from the country.

Sources:

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14658>

<http://orthochristian.com/117101.html>

Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and All Moldova's open letter on situation around Pochaev Monastery November 28, 2018 – The Ukrainian Ministry of Justice commission, in response to a complaint from the Ministry of Culture, has recently cancelled the state registration of the right to use the Pochaev Laura of the Dormition's Cathedral of the Dormition, Cathedral of the Trinity, monastic cells, belfry, Archbishop's House and Holy Gates. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and All Moldova has appealed to Ukrainian President Petr Poroshenko with an open letter expressing concern over the situation and called upon the Ukrainian leadership to fulfil their constitutional function as guarantor of the preservation of freedom and religious peace in the country.

'The Pochaev Laura of the Dormition, which the faithful of the Republic of Moldova love so much to visit, is above all a true stronghold of our faith for the whole Orthodox world. It has been safeguarded for many years with special devotion in spite of all the hardships and misfortunes', the letter reads. As Metropolitan Vladimir underscores, in the years of trials and in the period of reviving religious life, it is the Pochaev Laura that 'has become a real school of spiritual and moral education in which the Orthodox conscience of our faithful has been formed'.

'In the Republic of Moldova, with our blessing, an annual tradition has taken root to hold a foot procession with the cross to the Pochaev Laura. A great many Moldovan pilgrims take part in it to take upon themselves this blessed feat in order to solicit the intercession of the Mother of God, Ss Job and Amphilochius and all the ascetics and spiritual fathers who tirelessly serve on Pochaev Mount'.

The open letter states that the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Moldova, the clergy and all the pious Moldavian people express support for all the clergy and Ukrainian people who obey the only canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which preserves and hands down the inviolable Truth to future generations.

'With special anxiety we follow the deep crisis into which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been driven. Its aim is to sow religious enmity among the Ukrainian population'.

'In the context of the above, we call upon the Ukrainian leaders to fulfil their constitutional role as guarantors of the preservation of freedom and religious peace in the country, and we, on our part, will

enhance our prayers to All-Merciful God that He may grant us peace and the unity of faith, according to the call of St. Paul: to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3)'.

Sources:

<https://mospat.ru/en/2018/11/28/news167338/>

<http://mitropolia.md/scrisoare-deschisa-a-ips-mitropolit-vladimir-adresata-presedintelui-ucrainei-domnului-petru-porosenco-in-legatura-cu-situatia-creata-in-jurul-lavrei-din-poceaev/>

The Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) conducted searches at the place of residence of the abbot of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl (Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate)

November 30, 2018 – On the morning of November 30, The Ukrainian Security Service began to search through the place of residence of the abbot of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl (Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate) , reports [the Security Service site](#).

“The Ukrainian Security Service is conducting searches at the place of residence of the head of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Metropolitan Pavel according to Art 161/2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine on the violation of the equal rights of citizens due to their race, nationality, or religion,” the Security Service reported.

[The Informational and Education Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church \(Moscow Patriarchate\)](#) reported that the search was taking place in vil. Voronki of the Borispol district, Kiev region. According to the press service of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), three buses full of Security Service employees arrived at the dependency at 9:00 this morning to carry out the search.

The Security Service seized only one book – “The Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Relations with the State. The Attitude Towards the Conflict in Donbass and to the Church Schism. Questions and Answers”.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/57914-sbu-nachala-obyski-u-nastojatelya-kijevo-pecherskoj-lavry>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/11/30/namestnik-kievo-pecherskoj-lavry-rasskazal-ob-obyskax-v-xozyajstve-lavry-video/?lang=ru>

<https://ssu.gov.ua/ua/news/1/category/2/view/5477#.cBjSLwcf.dpbs>

Metropolitan Hilarion, an Ukrainian citizen, was denied the right of freedom of movement inside Ukraine, while he was attempting to enter Ukraine through an official entry-exit checkpoint on the demarcation line around eastern territories of Ukraine.

December 9, 2018 – [The press service of the Donetsk Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church informs](#) that the representatives of the Ukrainian authorities did not allow the ruling bishop of Donetsk and Mariupol diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), His Eminence, Metropolitan of Donetsk and Mariupol, to cross the demarcation line in the official entry-exit checkpoint “Novotroitskoye”.

Metropolitan Hilarion went from Donetsk to the Holy Assumption Nikolo-Vasilyevsky Monastery in the village of Nikolskoye, Volnovakhsy District of Donetsk Region to perform the traditional (for the past 20 years) joint prayer with the UOC – MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate) hierarchs, residents of the monastery and numerous pilgrims on the feast of the Icon of the Mother of God “Znamenie”, December 10. A visit to the local almshouse, a meeting with the inhabitants of the monastery and numerous Orthodox believers from different regions of Ukraine, traditionally arriving on December 10 to participate in the above celebrations, were provocatively disrupted.

There was no objective justification given for denying the right of Metropolitan Hilarion to cross the line of demarcation. According to the employee of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) at the entry-exit checkpoint “Novotroitskoe”, the reason for the occurrence of such situation was : “... special order from Kiev ...”.

Additional reason for denying the entry was not definite: the electronic pass of Metropolitan Hilarion, according to the same officer of the SBU, was canceled on December 7, but on December 8, Metropolitan Hilarion returned from the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra after the meeting of the Holy Synod of the UOC – MP in Donetsk, and there were no problems passing the line of demarcation. An even greater misunderstanding was the fact that a citizen of Ukraine was denied an inalienable right to enter the Motherland. Such actions indicate the reluctance of certain forces to establish peace, because the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – MP is the only link between authorities on both sides of the line of demarcation, in the face of ongoing conflict.

Also, the above actions of the Security Service of Ukraine can be considered provocative, especially in the context of the recent appeal of the President of Ukraine P.A. Poroshenko to the Primate of the UOC – MP of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry with a request for assistance in the return of the Ukrainian sailors.

The question arises – what is it: a provocation directed against the peacekeeping initiatives of the President of Ukraine or the conscious hypocrisy of the country’s top leadership?

This situation is a blatant testimony that the Ukrainian authorities continue to follow the line they have chosen to grossly interfere in the affairs of the Church and openly persecute and discriminate the hierarchs and priests of the UOC- MP on religious grounds, clearly violating the constitutional rights of Ukrainian citizens (in the case of Metropolitan Hilarion, the right to freedom of movement, indicated in article 33 of the Ukrainian Constitution) and a number of articles of the “Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, ratified by Ukraine as far back as 1997.

To recall, this is not the first case in the current year of pressure and restrictions on the rights and freedoms of archpastors and clergymen of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the part of representatives of various levels of government.

In conclusion, the Donetsk Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) expressed its intention to continue to be united territorially, in spite of any obstacles, including the so-called “line of demarcation” and obstacles artificially arranged by the authorities in the form of restriction of the rights and freedoms of the Ruling bishop and clergymen, as well as to unify the priesthood and all believers in a common prayer to the All-merciful Creator and the glorified holy saints of God who shone in the land of Donbass.

In addition the Diocese expressed its hope that this gross violation of rights and freedoms will not remain without public attention and in the future the Church will be able to carry out its ministry, guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation of Ukraine.

Sources:

<http://donetsk.church.ua/2018/12/09/mitropolitu-ilarionu-otkazano-v-proezde-cherez-liniyu-razgranicheniya/?fbclid=IwAR3KbZP1hv86LtJyDjUezbXP2tabQ&vCtXHEJQicFkZMILh1jscJYpVgHE4>

Metropolitan Mitrofan, an Ukrainian citizen, was also denied the right to enter Ukraine

December 10, 2018 – [The official website of the Gorlovka and Slavyansk Diocese](#) confirmed that Metropolitan Mitrofan (Nikitin) of Gorlovka and Slavyansk Diocese (a clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate, and an Ukrainian citizen) was also denied the right to cross the demarcation line around some eastern territories in Ukraine through the official entry-exit checkpoint by the Security Service of Ukraine. Therefore, combining with previous case, the incident becomes the following: His Eminence together with, the ruling bishop of Donetsk and Mariupol Diocese, Metropolitan

Hilarion, attempted and did not manage to enter Ukraine through the entry-exit checkpoint “Novotroitskoye” on December 9 as the Security Service of Ukraine had arbitrarily annulled their passes.

Sources:

<http://gorlovka-eparhia.com.ua/sbu-annulirovala-propuski-arhiereev-donbassa-cherez-liniyu-razgranicheniya/>

Ukrainian customs denied the entry of Nativity epistles of Patriarch Kirill (Russian Orthodox Church) few days before the Christmas

January 3, 2019 – Vladimir Legoyda [informs](#) that, according to sources in Ukraine, the local customs has denied the entry of Patriarch Kirill’s Nativity epistles edition, previously sent from Russia, for solemn reading according to tradition on festive divine service on Christmas day (on January 7). The provided reason for denial: some customs formalities allegedly were not fulfilled.

Sources:

<https://t.me/vladimirlegoyda>

Metropolitan Pavel, the vicar of Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, denied recent accusation that there are illegal constructions on the territory of the monastery and testified about the persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

January 10, 2019 – The vicar of Holy Dormition Kiev-Pechersk Lavra¹ Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl made an announcement today in a video message posted on [the monastery’s Youtube channel](#). Metropolitan Pavel called untrue a statement voiced by the former director of the National Kiev-Pechersk Historical and Cultural Reserve Sergei Krolevets that 16 buildings were allegedly built illegally on the territory of the Monastery. In addition, he stated that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)² is being persecuted.

Metropolitan Pavel connects accusations of illegal construction with the desire to transfer the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra to the “political church” that is recently formed.

“Today I address all believers of our Church, the ones who are far from the Church, and other confessions both Christian and non-Christian, and others: today they are persecuting us, tomorrow they will start to persecute you, so let’s unite against this unrighteousness and lawlessness, give each other a helping hand, and let’s pray that the Lord would reason with the outrages, put a barrier to the evil, and, maybe, that He would bring fear (to the outrages – editor’s note) like at one time to the Philistines, to Rome and to others who opposed God and the Holy Church,” said metropolitan Pavel.

Sources:

Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra’s Youtube Channel – [“The brethren do everything to preserve our cultural heritage” – Metropolitan Pavel](#)

3.2 Interference into autonomy of religious organizations

Kiev court to hear claim against President’s interference in Church affairs

October 2, 2018 – The legitimacy of the church initiatives of Petro Poroshenko will be considered by the District Court of Kiev.

The Kiev District Administrative Court accepted the claim of the public organization “The Rule of Law” regarding the competence of the Ukrainian authorities to interfere in the activities of the Church, reports [the website of the District Court of Kiev](#) on October 1.

“The plaintiff requests the court to establish the lack of competence (authority) of the head of state to interfere in the activities of the Church and religious organizations, in particular, by signing and sending a petition to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for granting the Tomos on autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, which was later supported by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with the relevant decree,” says the statement.

The court decided to open proceedings on this administrative case and scheduled a preparatory session for October 13.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56285-kijevskij-sud-rassmotrit-isk-o-vmeshatelystve-prezidenta-v-dela-cerkvi>

<http://oask.gov.ua/node/3515>

Georgian Church refutes false information coming from Ukrainian parliamentary chairman

October 8, 2018 – The Patriarchate of Georgia has released a statement refuting the information spreading through the Ukrainian media about its supposed support for the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

“Such information began to spread after the meeting of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II of Georgia with the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Andrei Paruby last week in Tbilisi. The information that the Georgian Church has recognized the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church does not correspond to reality,” emphasizes patriarchate’s statement.

It notes that Paruby spoke to Pat. Ilia of the desire of some Ukrainians to receive autocephaly for their Orthodox Church, to which the Georgian primate responded by speaking of the difficulty of attaining this dream at present and advised being extremely careful “so as to prevent a civil confrontation.”

“As for the position of the Georgian Church on the issue of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church, it remains unchanged: Until the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow fix their final official positions on the basis of canonical Church norms, the Georgian Patriarchate refrains from commentary,” the Georgian Church’s statement reads.

As Interfax-Religion reports, the Patriarch expressed the same sentiment to Paruby during their meeting, which the Speaker then reported as the Patriarch’s support. According to the statement on the Georgian Church’s site from after the meeting with Paruby, His Holiness spoke of the “need to refrain from premature assessments” on the issue.

However, Paruby told journalists, supposedly quoting Pat. Ilia: “We expect that this difficult problem in Ukraine will be solved positively. The Georgian Orthodox Church has also passed a very difficult way to obtain autocephaly.”

Speaking with journalists after the Speaker’s statements, the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Georgian Patriarchate, Metropolitan Gerasim (Sharashenidze) of Zugdidi and Tsaishsky, refrained from commenting on the issue of autocephaly but only spoke of the Georgian Church’s prayers for peace and unity in Ukraine.

Paruby’s meeting and false information comes just days after the Georgian Holy Synod made a statement to the same effect as today’s statement: that it does not want make any hasty evaluations until the two sides have formulated their official and non-appealable positions on the basis of the norms of canon law.

Note that the Synod did call for any decision to be worked out between Moscow and Constantinople, not unilaterally.

Sources:

<http://orthochristian.com/116297.html>

<http://patriarchate.ge/geo/saqartvelos-sapatriarqos-ganmarteba-08-10/>

<http://interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=70894>

<http://patriarchate.ge/geo/sruliad-saqartvelos-katolikos-patriarqi-ukrainis/>

<http://orthochristian.com/116142.html>

Head of UOC Law Department: Stocktaking of church property is unlawful

October 18, 2018 – Protopriest Alexander Bakhov explained that the property in the churches and monasteries of the UOC is not the property of the state.

The Ministry of Culture has no right to make an inventory of the property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, chairman of the UOC Legal Department, Protopriest Alexander Bakhov, informed the Information and Education Department of the UOC.

Recently, the media published documents that prove the existence of the September order of the head of the Ministry of Culture to conduct a complete stocktaking of “historical and cultural values.”

“All property located in the churches of the UOC is the property of religious communities,” commented Father Alexander. “Even if the building is owned by the state and is used or leased, this does not entitle the authorities to encroach on the property of religious communities.”

The UOC cleric is convinced that the authorities expected to take advantage of the legal ignorance of believers. “Officials are in a position to inspect the “historical and cultural valuable assets” in the case when certain property was transferred to the storage or use by the religious community, as evidenced by the relevant documents – contracts, acts of transfer and acceptance,” he explained.

Protopriest Alexander assumed that, according to the findings of the church property stocktaking, the government hoped to “try to remove it for their own purposes later on occasion – just like during Soviet times”. Then the powers that be also operated with the formulation “historical and cultural values”.

“What are these “historical and cultural values”? There is no such definition in the legislation. What it is about, it is not clear. I once again emphasize the illegality of such claims in relation to the property of religious communities,” said the chairman of the Legal Department.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56780-reshenije-vlastej-opisaty-cerkovnoje-imushhestvo-nezakonno-glava-jurotdela-upc>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/10/17/minkultu-ne-vdalosya-prixovati-svoyu-prichetnist-do-situaciji-z-opisom-majna-upc-dokumenti/#more-238617>

The Law Department of the UOC appealed to President Poroshenko request to veto bill No 5309, as it discriminates millions of believing citizens of Ukraine on the religious ground

December 20, 2018 – The Law Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church appealed to President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko with a request to veto the bill No. 5309 adopted on December 20, 2018, reported the [Information and Education Department of the UOC](#).

This draft law violates the right to freedom of religion and discriminates on the religious ground millions of believers of citizens, warned the statement issued by the Law Dept.

“We consider this law to be unconstitutional and intend to protect our rights by all legal means. We appeal to the President of Ukraine to veto this law,” the Law Department of the UOC said.

The bill #5309 is contrary to the norms of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, stressed the department.

“Ukraine being a secular state, makes it impossible to establish any advantages or restrictions at the legislative level for certain religious associations,” the lawyers reminded.

They reported that the MPs, who adopted this bill, intend to apply it against the UOC.

“This draft law does not refer to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church but as it is known from public statements it is targeted against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in favor of the newly formed religious structure, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which wants to assign this name to itself,” the Law Dept noted.

They added that the UOC is the Church of the Ukrainian people being founded by the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and was registered in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, while its center is located in Kiev.

Recall, bill No. 5309 foresees amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” regarding the name of religious organizations (associations) that are included into (form part of) a religious organization (association) whose governing center (administration) is located outside Ukraine in the country that, according to the Law of Ukraine, is recognized as carrying out military aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine.”

[On September 7, 2018, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko in his address to the MPs of the Verkhovna Rada stated that he would not sign a bill in which the candidatures of bishops would have to be coordinated with state bodies.](#) At the same time, he mentioned the bill No. 5309 and recalled that “the Ukrainian state is separated from the Church,” although “it has the right to have its Local Church.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58537-jurotdel-upc-prosim-prezidenta-nalozhity-veto-na-zakonoprojekt-5309>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/12/20/zayava-yuridichnogo-viddil-u-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-u-zvyazku-z-prijnyattjam-verxovnoyu-radoyu-ukrajini-zakonoproektu-5309/?fbclid=IwAR1Rf9WU7RutTLonc0KJgVtkhq7mxcOZ6EapKITpS8mJYqOlVAV6NY0cGM>

Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) believers start prayerful standing outside the Verkhovna Rada as a protest against the possible adaptation of anti-church bills

December 20, 2018 – The believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) gathered at the walls of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to hold a prayer as a protest against interference of the authorities in the affairs of the Church.

About two thousand UOC-MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate) believers took part in the prayer standing at the walls of the Verkhovna Rada. Bishop of Vasilkovsky Nikolay, Bishop of Ivanovsky Kassian and Bishop of Gostomelsky Tikhon joined the prayer.

They were praying that the Lord instructed the members of the parliament to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the Church and not to adopt anti-church laws aimed at discriminating believers of the UOC-MP and restricting their constitutional right to freedom of conscience and religious belief.

It should be noted that today, December 20, the Verkhovna Rada is considering the so-called anti-church bills. At the moment, the head of parliament A. Paruby proposed to consider the draft law No. 5309 on amending the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” regarding the name of religious organizations, as well as draft law No. 4228 on amending the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” (Regarding the change of subordination by religious communities),

which, according to him, should simplify the “transitions ” of the parishes of the UOC-MP to the newly created “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” .

1. Paruby urged members of the parliament to “hear the request of Patriarch Filaret to include these bills on the agenda, consider and support them, as they affirm the Ukrainian Church [newly created “Orthodox Church of Ukraine”] and help it to gain wider adherence and support in Ukraine.”

Recall that on December 14 of this year, as well as on May 18, 2017, prayer standing was already taking place near the Verkhovna Rada. Then, the UOC-MP believers expressed their position regarding the adoption of some other anti-church bills. People expressed their prayer standing against the adoption of scandalous bills No. 5309 and No. 4128, which can legitimize the “church raiding”, and bill No. 4511, designed to discredit the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and implies state control in its affairs.

Sources:

<http://pravoslavye.org.ua/2018/12/%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%B2-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%BB%D0%B5-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%8B-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%BE-2/>

<http://spzh.news/en/news/58511-u-rady-nachalosy-molitvennoje-stojanije-upc-pryamaja-translyacija>

<http://foma.in.ua/news/zavtra-u-sten-verkhovnoj-rady-sostoitsya-molitvennoe-stoyanie-veruyushchikh-upts>

The Verkhovna-Rada have adopted anti-church bill No 5309

December 20, 2018 – According to the [Union of Orthodox Journalists](#), the Verkhovna Rada have adopted the anti-church bill No. 5309, which obliges the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to change its name as the Church, whose “governing centre (management) is in the aggressor country”, and become the “Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine”. 240 deputies voted in favour of the bill, 31 deputies voted against, 1 MP abstained.

The Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Andrei Parubiy said that he had submitted the bill to a vote “at the request of the head of the UOC KP Filaret” and expressed hope that he “will be supported by the entire Ukrainian parliament, all Ukrainians and patriots who are in this parliament, <...> today we will all support the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Patriarch Filaret.”

“We have always advocated for the freedom of religion, but the Church whose spiritual centre is located in the aggressor state should bear the name of the country where its centre is located. This decision is wider than the religious issue,” the head of the Ukrainian Parliament stressed.

Bill No. 5309 proposes amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” “regarding the name of religious organizations (associations) that are part of a religious organization (association) whose governing centre (management) is outside Ukraine, in the state which, according to the Law of Ukraine, is recognized as carrying out military aggression against Ukraine and / or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine”.

Earlier, the Central Scientific Experts Office of The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine prepared the Conclusion that bill No. 5309 contradicts the Constitution and recommended that it should be rejected due to inconsistency with the goals stated by the authors of the draft law.

In the meantime, there is a prayerful standing of UOC-MP believers against the adoption of anti-church laws under the walls of the Verkhovna Rada .

Sources:

<http://pravoslavye.org.ua/2018/12/%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%B2-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8B-240-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE/>
<http://spzh.news/en/news/58521-verkhovnaia-rada-prinyala-anticerkovnyj-zakonoprojekt-5309>

Bill No. 5309 is the abuse of the Constitution of Ukraine, noted the Chairperson of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Synodal Commission “Church and Culture”

December 22, 2018 – Commenting anti-church bill No 5309, Hegumeness Serafima, abbess of the Holy Archangel Michael Convent of Odessa, Chairman of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Synodal Commission “Church and Culture” said on the program [“Evening on Dumska”](#) that nobody will be able to drive the Ukrainian Orthodox Church into the ghetto .

“As for changing our name, our title. I want to remind you that there have been cases in history when names were forcibly changed. It was in the Nazi concentration camps when a number was put on the person’s arm, which was his/her name. <...> Nothing can make us change our name and our identity. We are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and millions of people think so. Nobody will be able to drive us into any ghetto,” noted Hegumeness Serafima.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58600-igumenija-serafima-nikomu-ne-udastsya-zagnaty-upc-v-getto>

The Deputy Head of the Department of External Church Relations (Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate) emphasizes that Law No. 5309 artificially makes the believers of Ukraine strangers in their own country

December 24, 2018 – Union of Orthodox Journalists reports with reference to the [ZIK](#) channel, that the Deputy Head of the Department of External Church Relations (Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate) Protopriest Nikolai Danilevich stated: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) will not agree to name change and will protect its rights by all possible legal means

“We will protect ourselves by all legal means,” Father Nikolai noted. “This question will be considered in courts. We will challenge this and not agree to name change, because by this renaming they want to make us strangers in our country.”

The DECR Deputy Head also noted that Law No. 5309 itself is controversial.

“Today Russia is an aggressor state, and what should we do tomorrow if it is not an aggressor state? Laws are not written for the future. If laws are written for half an hour ahead, there will be no order in the country,” the cleric noted.

Also, Father Nikolai noted that the Ukrainian authorities confuse legal matters with church canons.

“Legally, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church centre is located in Kiev. And the canonical communion, the remembrance of the Patriarch are canonical things, which are nothing for the state. How we baptize or do not baptize, who we have a prayer connection with, and who we do not have it with – this does not concern the state. We do not live in the times of the Byzantine Empire, where church canons had the power of state laws. <...> And what the Verkhovna Rada does is a confusion of church and canonical issues with legal issues,” said Father Nikolai.

To recall, on December 22, 2018, Petro Poroshenko signed anti-church bill No. 5309, which obliges the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as the Church, “whose governing centre is in the aggressor country”, to change its name and become the “Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine”.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58624-spiker-upc-my-ne-soglasimsya-na-pereimenovaniye-i-budem-zashhishhaty-svoi-prava>

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) is set to challenge the discriminatory law in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine

December 25, 2018 – The head of the Law Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), Protopriest Alexander Bakhov gave an interview to the [UOC-MP Information and Education Department](#) where he commented the recently signed anti-church bill N5039. He stated, that since 1990, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been officially registered by the government authorities with this very name and will retain it in the future.

“We intend to protect our rights by all legal means. We sent an appeal to the President of Ukraine – to use the veto, but, as we see, he did not use such a right. In addition, since there is a flagrant violation of constitutional norms and principles, we will initiate an appeal to the Constitutional Court,” said the head of the Law Dept, adding there will be broader understanding of human rights actions after the law enters into force and begins to be implemented.

The Protopriest stressed that any attempts by the state to force the Church to change its name are illegal and are regarded from the point of view of international law as interference in the internal affairs of a religious group. In addition, the decision to change the name of the Church can only be taken by its governing body, the Council of the UOC, therefore “even if this law enters into force, it will not mean that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its institutions automatically lose their names.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58670-upc-obratitsya-v-konstitucionnyj-sud-v-svyazi-s-zakonom-o-pereimenovanii>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/12/25/predsedatel-yuridicheskogo-otdela-v-upc-ne-soglasysya-na-pereimenovanie-i-budut-zashhishhat-svoi-prava/?lang=ru>

Mayor Michel Tereshchenko interferes into the internal Church relations

December 28, 2018 – Officials of the town of Glukhov in the Sumy region call on the priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) to move into the newly created Orthodox Church of Ukraine¹. Mayor Michel Tereshchenko puts a direct and categorical question: “When will you transfer to a new church?” Protopriest Alexey Rodionov, dean of the Glukhov district, told the [Union of Orthodox Journalists](#).

This happened on December 17, during the on-site meeting of the Expert Council of the Ministry of Culture, which gathered there to discuss state-church relations after the “Unification Council”. According to Father Alexey, members of the assembly stressed that in Ukraine there is now a new church structure officially and transition into it is a matter of national security.

The dean noted that all Glukhov churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) belong to the communities of the canonical Church – and are not in temporary use. However, the mayor does not pay attention to it. The day before the meeting of the council, Michel Tereshchenko said that a comprehensive inventory of UOC-MP churches was expected in the town and warned of possible provocations.

“According to my information, artificially created unrest with unpredictable consequences is possible in Glukhov,” he [wrote on his Facebook page](#). “Now, on the eve of receiving the Tomos, the Ministry of Culture has sent a whole group of several dozen people for inventory. It is clear that from the side of the MP (UOC –

Ed.) they will be resisted by all possible methods, including with the involvement of fanatically-minded armed people. As it happens, we have repeatedly observed.”

At the same time, Tereshchenko could not answer the direct question of the dean why the mayor spreads flagrant lies.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58749-vlasti-gluhova-sklonyajut-klirikov-upc-k-perehodu-v-novuju-cerkovy>

<https://www.facebook.com/hlukhiv.mer/posts/2108746742773474>

The Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), Chief Rabbi of Ukraine believes that with the adoption of Law No. 5309, no religion in Ukraine can feel protected from state interference

January 2, 2019 – The Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), Chief Rabbi of Ukraine Yakov Dov Bleich called the law No. 5309⁴ anti-constitutional and said that he would ask the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and the Verkhovna Rada to delay its implementation.

According to the spiritual leader of the Jewish community, who has been holding the position of chairman of the AUCCRO since July 2018, by adopting the anti-church bill, MPs crossed all borders, “playing religion according to political rules”.

“The State wants to decide for the Church how to name it,” Jacob Bleich expressed his position in an interview with [“Glavkom”](#). “<...> We cannot exclude 20-25% of the population of Ukraine and say that if you are believers of this Church, you are second-rate citizens. These people are also Ukrainians, they live in Ukraine and believe in God.”

He stressed that such decisions of the State could later affect any other religious organizations in Ukraine.

“The decision made by the Verkhovna Rada means that no religion can feel protected from state interference in Ukraine,” the chairman of the AUCCRO noted. “Today it is the Moscow Patriarchate, and tomorrow is Islam, Jews, etc. That is, if the State does not like you, it can interfere because the State indicates how to believe in God.”

According to Bleich, he was absolutely sure that the President would not sign this law since it contradicts the Constitution of Ukraine and has negative consequences for a large part of the population.

“It seems to me that the Constitutional Court will declare the law unconstitutional, because it is clearly against the Constitution of Ukraine, by 100%. International organizations, even those that support Ukraine, have already made statements that this is wrong and what happened in parliament is a provocation. <...> I will ask the President, the Verkhovna Rada to wait for the implementation of this law while the Constitutional Court is studying it,” resumed the chairman of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches.

Source:

<https://glavcom.ua/interviews/yakov-blayh-prositimu-prezidenta-radu-pocheckati-iz-vikonannyam-zakonu-yakiy-zobovyazuje-pereymenuvati-upc-mp-557969.html>

<https://spzh.news/en/news/58822-glava-vsciro-prizyvajet-otsrochity-vypolnenije-zakona-o-pereimenovanii-upc>

Commentary of Archbishop Feodosiy, Chairman of the Church Court of the Kiev Diocese (Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate), about the State interference into Church Affairs

January 12, 2019 – The state began to gradually shift from intimidation of believers to repression against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This was said by Archbishop Theodosius of Boyarka on January 10 in an interview with the portal Orthodoxy.Ru.

“From searches and interrogations they have turned to specific actions,” the hierarch explained. “The first anti-church law No. 5309 was adopted and signed by the President (Petro Poroshenko – editor’s note) entered into the force; serial seizures of temples were commenced. The scheme of seizures is purely raider: they bring their people to the village by buses, organize with their participation and under the supervision of the authorities “an assembly of the religious community”, and everything is presto. Believers are thrown onto the street, while the legal authority of the parish and the church building are transferred now to the OCU.”

Vladyka Theodosius recalled that the authorities intend to adopt Bill No. 4218 and it is unlikely that anyone will be able to interfere.

“The Church belongs to those in power,” noted Archbishop Theodosius, “True though it looks like medieval Europe... In the media, there is information that the distribution list was forwarded from the top into the districts regarding how many churches must be pointedly “seized” from believers in favor of the “Tomos”. In addition, the reserves, on the balance of which are complexes of the Kiev-Pechersk and Pochaev Lavras, were obliged to file applications to the court and through court to cancel long-term lease agreements with the monastic communities of these monasteries. The only condition is to do it quietly so that Istanbul does not get scared ahead of time.”

According to the hierarch, the authorities’ hatred of the canonical Church is caused by the fact that the UOC is the last public institution in Ukraine that does not lie.

“The Church can keep silence. She may just not say anything. But She will never lie; the powers cannot accept that. They need a “church” that will approve everything, justify everything, explain any ugliness with high meanings, and stupefy people. After all, when you live in the kingdom of crooked mirrors, where mirrors deceive and flatter those who look in them, where everything is in pink light, and black is reflected in white, freaks are seen as handsome, and frogs as princesses – in such a kingdom there is no place for a real ordinary mirror. After all, it may display an unpleasant truth, as it is. And if a real mirror is suddenly discovered, they are either trying to hide it away or simply break it. This is what we are living through now,” concluded Archbishop Theodosius.

Sources:

1. Union of Orthodox Journalists: [“Abp. Theodosius: Power is moving from intimidation to repression of the UOC”](#)
2. pravoslavie.ru: [“About the Future of Orthodoxy in Ukraine and in the world. Interview with archbishop Feodosiy \(Snigiryov\)”](#)

Metropolitan Luka addresses a request to the chairman of Novonikolaevskaya Regional State Administration to stop pressuring the priests of Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) [open letter]

January 15, 2019 – An open letter of Metropolitan Luke of Zaporozhye and Melitopol to Vladimir Gryanistom, the chairman of Novonikolaevskaya Regional State Administration, has been published on the official website of Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate)¹Zaporozhye Diocese. The metropolitan states that the chairman and his administration coerce the priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s Zaporozhye Diocese and requires to stop that. The priests are being pressured by persuasion and intimidation to leave the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) for the newly established religious organization. Metropolitan Luka emphasizes that these actions are against the Constitution of Ukraine.

“Let me quote you Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which states that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and religion ... The Church and religious organizations in Ukraine are separated from the state ... No religion can be recognized by the state as compulsory. Your actions to coerce, by persuasion and intimidation, the clergy of Novonikolayevka deanery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s Zaporozhye Diocese, to make them relapse into schism through the treachery of the Mother Church – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which bore them as priests, completely contradict this article, which is a violation of the oath of the public servant,” says metropolitan Luka in the open letter.

Source:

The official website of Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate) Zaporozhye Diocese – [Open Letter of His Eminence Luka to the Chairman of Novonikolaevskaya Regional State Administration](#)

Bishop Gedeon has been detained in the airport by the Security Service of Ukraine

February 13, 2019 – The Union of Orthodox Journalists reported in the evening that the abbot of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate)¹ Desiatinny (Tithe – Ed.) monastery, Bishop Gedeon (Kharon) of Makarov was detained at the Borispol airport and is about to be deported, Protodeacon Anthony, Secretary of Gedeon, told [Facebook](#). The bishop was returning from the United States where he told the US Congress about persecutions of the canonical Church and oppression of Ukraine Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate) believers. In addition, the following day on February 14 Bishop Gedeon is supposed to participate in the hearing at the Supreme Court of Ukraine questioning the legitimacy of Tomos.

“Where he is to be deported is unknown because he is a citizen of Ukraine. He was born in Ukraine. And at the moment he is deprived of citizenship, and where to deport is not clear,” shared Protodeacon Anthony.

The secretary of the bishop informed that the staff of the State Border Service of Ukraine had no questions to the abbot of the Tithe Monastery.

The detention of Bishop Gedeon was carried out by the Security Service of Ukraine. They seized the passport from him and declared it “lost”, said Protodeacon Anthony, despite the fact that the bishop successfully used allegedly “lost” document to travel to and from the United States. Representatives of the Security Service also stated that Bishop Gedeon had lost his Ukrainian citizenship and the issue of his deportation was being resolved.

Sources:

1. Union of Orthodox Journalists – [“UOC Bishop Gedeon \(Kharon\) deported from Ukraine”](#)
2. The Facebook channel UOC Centre of Information –
 - [“After the Visit of the Usa the Abbot of Desiatinny Monastery is not Being Let in Ukraine – Bishop Gedeon is Being Detained at Borispol.”](#)
 - [“UOC’s Bishop Gedeon has been Detained at the Airoport Borispol on the Eve of the Session of the Supreme Court of Ukriane on the Case of Canceling the Directive of the Parlaiment About the Tomos”](#)

The citizen of Ukraine, Bishop Gedeon has been deprived of his citizenship and deported to the United States, on the day of his participation in the session at the Supreme Court of Ukraine questioning the legitimacy of a Parliament’s directive with respect to a religious issue

February 14, 2019 – the abbot of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s (Moscow Patriarchate)¹ Desiatinny (Tithe – Ed.) monastery, Bishop Gedeon (Kharon) of Makarov, that [was detained at the airport by the Security Service of Ukraine on 13 February](#), was denied entering Ukraine and was deported to the USA. The bishop was returning from the United States where he told the US Congress about persecutions of the canonical Church

and oppression of Ukraine Orthodox Church's (Moscow Patriarchate) believers. In addition, today Bishop Gedeon is supposed to participate as the plaintiff in the hearing at the Supreme Court of Ukraine questioning the legitimacy of the Parliament support of the President's request from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to grant Tomos.

The State Border Service publishes on its Social Media channel: "yesterday in the evening during the border check of passengers of flight "Frankfurt-Kiev" at the airport "Borispol" with respect to this person (Bishop Gedeon – edit.) the database of lost, stolen, and invalid documents was triggered. It was discovered, that the passport of the citizen of Ukraine, that he presented, is not valid, moreover he is deprived of citizenship of our State. The document was taken from him, then the man was returned in the opposite direction".

Sources:

1. The Facebook channel Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Centre of Information – "[Bishop Gedeon has been deported to the USA](#)"
2. The Facebook Channel of State Border Service of Ukraine – video publication "[the border guards executed the orders of law enforcement authorities against a citizen of Yuri Charon \(Bishop Gideon\)](#)"

3.3 Freedom of expression

Nationalists issue threats against the priest who installed a monument to Prince Vladimir

September 30, 2017 – Threatening inscriptions of unknown hooligans with the symbols of the "National Corps" appeared at night on the house of the UOC priest, Father Pavel Linnik in the village of Slobodka, who was one of the main initiators of the installation of the monument to Holy Prince Vladimir in Malin, writes "[Orthodox Ukraine on Guard of the Constitution](#)".

It is reported that the inscriptions and stickers "greetings from Givi" and "get away Moscow priest from Zhitomir" were found in the morning. The priest's children are frightened.

Similar inscriptions and damages of the name-bearing plate of the temple were also found on the church of the icon of the Mother of God of Kazan, the rector of which is Father Pavel.

The day before, the director of Malin Forestry College informed the priest that he had received threats in connection with the monument.

The monument to Vladimir the Great in the city of Malin, Zhytomir region, was opened on September 25. The monument was installed on the territory of Malin Forestry College on the site of the former monument to Lenin. Hundreds of Malin citizens and residents of nearby villages participated in the celebrations.

Sources:

<http://uoj.org.ua/en/novosti/sobytiya/nationalists-issue-threats-against-the-priest-who-installed-a-monument-to-prince-vladimir>

<https://www.facebook.com/PravoslavnaVartaUkrainy/posts/475226809518396>

Unknowns stoned the bus full of believers of the UOC heading towards the peaceful protest for the protection of the canonical orthodox Church in the Ukraine

October 2, 2018 – The attack happened on the territory of St. George's monastery around 02:00 in the morning in the city of Rivno (western Ukraine). As [a correspondent of the UOJ have reported from the scene](#), four fit and tall unknowns in black balaclavas stoned with large stones a bus that was filling with parishioners of the UOC to drive to Kiev for the peaceful protest. Women and children were also in the bus.

As a result, the windshield of the bus has been damaged making this vehicle impossible to use. One of the attackers was nearly captured by some parishioners but got away using a tear gas. The police had arrived, documented the incident and interviewed witnesses.

Moreover, the driver of the bus was warned to refuse the transportation service to the parishioners just a few days before the trip. Nikolay Filchuk, the bus driver was [interviewed by a correspondent of the UOJ](#). When N.Filchuk arrived at the Ukrainian Transportation Security for paperwork, he was told that they do not welcome his decision to provide the transportation service to Kiev for the believers and notified about a call from the Ukrainian Security Service. "It was explained to me, that there had been a phone call from the Ukrainian Security Service, they asked to suspend me from driving to Kiev." – N. Filchuk said.

Sources:

<http://spzh.news/ru/news/56302-avtobus-s-verujushhimi-upc-pytalisy-zablokirovaty-po-zvonku-iz-sbu-istochnik>

<http://spzh.news/ru/news/56300-v-rovno-neizvestnyje-zabrosali-kamnyami-avtobus-s-zhenshinami-i-detyami>

<http://orthochristian.com/116168.html>

Intensive cyber attacks blocking the work of the Orthodox information resource

October 12, 2018 – The Kiev-based Union of Orthodox Journalists website has been under attack by hackers since October 11, 2018, the [Union](#) reports.

The site went down just after the Ecumenical Patriarchate made its announcement in which it declared its entrance into communion with Ukrainian non-canonical bodies, and the intense cyber-attacks have continued since then.

The Union of Orthodox Journalists supports the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the headship of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine and has been very active in reporting on the words and activities of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Source:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56553-sajt-spzh-podvergajetsya-massirovannym-khakerskim-atakam>

4. Infringement of Orthodox Christians' right to freedom of assembly including acts of vandalism against Orthodox Worship and Sacred Places in Ukraine

In Khmelnytsky region non-canonical church proponents obstruct construction of UOC church

September 2, 2017 – In the town of Volochisk in the Khmelnytsky region, non-canonical church proponents demand to forbid the construction of a UOC church. Several priests of the Kiev Patriarchate call on the residents to obstruct the building of the church in every possible way. At the same time, they film their illegal actions and post them on [Facebook](#).

According to a UOJ source, the temple of the canonical Church is being built on legal grounds: all the permissive documents are available.

Kiev Patriarchate followers and their supporters have already violated the law on private property: they moved a construction trailer to where they considered it necessary.

Sources

<http://uoj.org.ua/en/novosti/sobytiya/in-khmelnytsky-region-schismatics-obstruct-construction-of-uoc-church-video>

Priest of UOC won an appeal against the church seizure

September 23, 2017 – The rector of the Holy Protection Church of the UOC in the village of Gribovitsa of the Ivanichi district, the Volyn region, Protopriest Igor Margita won an appeal against the chairman of the Gribovitsa village council Pavel Stepanets, who was one of the initiators of the Orthodox church grab by the Kyiv Patriarchate.

The priest filed a lawsuit in the case of Stepanets' abuse of authority: the representative of the local authorities refused to provide Protopriest Igor with the information he needed.

In the first instance, the case was closed, as the period for recovery was exhausted during the trial. On September 20, 2017, by the decision of the Volyn Court of Appeal, Igor Margita's claim was partially satisfied: Pavel Stepanets was recognized as a violator, but the court did not impose a fine on him, justifying it by the fact that the statutory period has expired.

In Gribovitsa, there was a two-year confrontation between the community of the UOC and the local village council, whose head actually led the seizure of the Orthodox church by the Kyiv Patriarchate. [The priest of the UOC faced persecution and attempts of administrative pressure](#), which became senseless after the opening of a new temple of the canonical Church in the village.

The secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada authorized representative for human rights joined the conflict resolution. On October 12, 2016, the ombudsman responded to Protopriest Igor Magrita's complaint that there are grounds in Stepanets' actions for bringing him to administrative responsibility.

Sources:

<http://uoj.org.ua/en/novosti/sobytiya/priest-of-uoc-beats-in-court-the-head-of-the-village-council-initiating-church-seizure>

Lviv court takes away Orthodox church in the village of Kutu from UOC community

September 30, 2017 – On September 26, the Lviv Economic Court of Appeal handed over to the Kyiv Patriarchate [the Church of the Holy Righteous Anna in the village of Kutu](#) in the Shumsk district of the Ternopil region, reports [Zaxid.Media](#).

For several years, the religious community of the Holy Righteous Anna has been trying unsuccessfully to secure the return of title rights to the temple it built. The Ternopil Economic Court abolished the right of ownership of the UOC community to the church. The basis was the absence of the "Act of commissioning". The document was not found in the archives, although the shelf life of such documents is 10 years. The church was built in 1997.

According to the court's decision, the Ternopil regional state administration was recognized as the temple's administrator, which has the right to provide the church with alternate use for the communities of the UOC and the UOC-KP.

According to local residents, the community of the UOC headed by the rector Fr. Igor Kushniruk, has practically lost hope of upholding its rights in court and is planning to build a new church.

Sources:

<http://uoj.org.ua/en/novosti/sobytiya/lviv-court-takes-away-church-in-the-village-of-kutu-from-uoc-community>

<http://zaxid.media/news/3678111>

Malware programme circulating fake news about an attack on Kiev-Pechersk Lavra

October 2, 2018 – The ROC warned that the virus mailing about the attack on the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra is a fake and urged not to circulate it.

This is not the first case of this kind of disinformation about the Lavra, explains the head of the ROC Synodal Department for the Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media Vladimir Legoida, reports the ["Interfax"](#).

"This is the second (or third) time the virus mailing about the attack on the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra has been thrown. Thank God, now all is calm at the Lavra. I understand your concern, but believe that the harm from the dissemination of false information is much greater than the benefits if it were true," V. Legoida stressed.

He assured that modern mass media "will report in less than an hour if, God forbid, something serious happens".

"Do not multiply unverified rumours," concluded the ROC representative.

As the UOJ reported, earlier the abbot of the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra, Metropolitan Vladimir of Pochaev, reported threats to the monastery, asked for prayerful support, and urged to protect the shrine, if necessary.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56287-v-rpc-prizvali-ne-tirazhirovaty-fejkovuju-novosty-o-napadenii-na-lavru>

<http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=70835>

In Sumy provocateurs attempt to disrupt the service of UOC

October 14, 2018 – A group of unidentified persons arranged a "concert" during the traditional service at the site of the destroyed Intercession Church in Sumy.

The provocateurs were located a few meters from the place of the worship performed in Pokrovskaya Square, turning up the loudspeakers through which the music was broadcast, reports ["Pravoslavnaya Sumschina"](#) ("The Orthodox Sumy region").

On the feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos, more than two thousand Orthodox citizens of Sumy, who gathered for the worship, were forced to tolerate this "concert". Law enforcers did not react to the actions of provocateurs.

Metropolitan Eulogy of Sumy and Akhtyrka noted that this provocation, like last year's, became possible only with the tacit consent and inaction of the authorities. The archpastor expressed regret in this regard and stressed that the sin committed at outraging the Church of Christ, as well as its consequences, fully falls on the governor of the Sumy region and the mayor of the regional centre, who did not do anything so that Orthodox Sumy believers could have a possibility to freely honour the patronal feast of the Holy Protection Church, destroyed in the years of godless persecution.

As the UOJ reported, last year provocateurs also tried to disrupt the UOC worship service on the feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos in Sumy, broadcasting loud music. We recall that in 2017, for the first time, the executive committee of the Sumy city council did not allow Archbishop Eulogy of Sumy and Akhtyrka hold a traditional service in Pokrovskaya Square and a religious procession on October 14.

Sources:

<https://spzh.news/en/news/56630-v-sumah-provokatory-pytalisy-sorvaty-bogosluzhenije-upc>

<http://portal-pravoslavie.sumy.ua/pid-chas-bogosluzhinnya-na-pokrovskij-ploshhi-v-sumah-stalasya-provokaciya.html>

Holy Trinity Church in the city of Rzhishev (Ukraine) arsoned

December 11, 2018 – The Holy Trinity Church in the city of Rzhishev in the Kiev Province of Ukraine, of the Belotserkov Diocese of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church was set ablaze in the morning, December 9, leaving the doors completely burned and the iconography damaged, reports the site of the [Ukrainian Orthodox Church](#).

The parish rector Fr. George Gichki left the house at 7:00 AM yesterday to serve the Divine Liturgy and noticed the smoke billowing from the church and immediately called the fire company and the local police. When they arrived, the firefighters began extinguishing the burning doors, which were already nearly completely destroyed, and the right side of the church where the flames were coming from. Parishioners then started arriving and began to help put out the fire in the church that was filled with smoke.

Meanwhile, the police delayed in coming, arriving only after the fire was already completely put out. As Fr. George explains, they were more interested in which patriarchate it belongs too—Moscow or “Kiev”—than in the fact that arson had been committed.

“One way or another, I see the indifferent and biased attitude of the police,” Fr. George said. “When I called to say the church was on fire, the operator, first of all, wanted to clarify which church. When I answered that it was ‘not a mosque, not a synagogue, but a church of God,’ they answered: ‘You don’t understand. Which patriarchate does the church belong to?’ How absurd, but a fact is a fact. The police are more interested in which patriarchate than in witness testimony and the suspect’s identity.”

When the police did finally arrive, they didn’t interview any witnesses at the scene. Only later was Fr. George summoned to the national police for questioning as a witness. The police informed him that he should not mention the fact that the church is an architectural monument of the 19th century, as it could complicate the situation for the clergy of the UOC, saying, “The state could impose a fine for not preserving the monument entrusted to the UOC.”

Further, the priest informed the police that he had seen the suspect stealing metal from the church territory the night before and had grabbed him and took it back. And despite the fact that the suspect had confessed in Fr. George’s presence that he had set some wastepaper on fire at the door of the church, which caused the blaze according to the fire department, the police insisted it was an “unintentional arson,” saying the suspect was “in a state of intoxication.”

The suspect is also currently under house arrest for “minor crimes” and has previously committed illegal actions against Holy Trinity Church, including the theft of parishioners’ donations. In that instance, the police did not open a case because of the “lack of documentation of the donations.” In regards to the fire, criminal proceedings under “Violation of the legal requirements of fire safety” and “arson” have been opened.

Sources:

<http://orthochristian.com/117814.html>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/12/10/na-bilocerktivshhini-stavsyia-pidpal-svyato-trojickogo-xramu-upc-foto/>

Appendix A Church's Communiqué

Ukrainian Orthodox Church Synod says its episcopate, parishioners pressured, persecuted

December 7, 2018 – The Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) said its bishops, other clerics and parishioners were being pressured following the Bishops' Assembly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on November 13.

“Following the Bishops' Assembly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which took place on November 13, 2018, pressure has been put on and groundless criminal prosecution has been conducted against the episcopate, clerics and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In particular, hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been summoned for ‘conversations’ to the Ukrainian Security Service, and obstacles have been put to their crossing of Ukraine’s borders,” the Synod said in its bulletin following a meeting chaired by the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine.

Among other factors, the Synod mentioned the cancellation of the decision on registering the church's right to use the complex of buildings comprising the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra (a monastery in Ukraine's Ternopol Region), an inspection by a Culture Ministry commission of the cultural valuables of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, searches in various eparchies and the summoning of their clerics for questioning.

“Government bodies have conducted groundless prosecutions and put pressure on the episcopate, clerics, and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to force them to take part in the so-called unifying assembly. Such actions should be viewed as a violation of Ukrainian people's constitutional right to freedom of religion,” it said.

The Holy Synod also resolved to ask Metropolitan Onufry to inform local Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada human rights commissioner, international human rights organizations and diplomatic institutions that Ukrainian Orthodox Church clerics and parishioners have been pressured and persecuted.

Sources:

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14758>

<http://news.church.ua/2018/12/07/zhurnali-zasidannya-svyashhennogo-sinodu-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-vid-7-grudnya-2018-roku/>

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill sends letters to religious leaders, senior statesmen and heads of international organizations regarding the pressure exerted by the Ukrainian authorities on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the government's interference in the ecclesiastical life in Ukraine

December 14, 2018 – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia sent messages to the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches; Pope Francis; Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, head of the Anglican Communion; Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General; Mr. Thomas Greminger, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; as well as to H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of France; and H.E. Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany as heads of the Normandy Four states. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill draw their attention to the large-scale violations of the rights and freedom of hierarchs, clergy and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

“Recently, the interference of the leaders of the secular Ukrainian state in church affairs has grown into a blatant pressure on the episcopate and clerics of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, what allows us to speak of the beginning of the large-scale persecutions,” the letter reads, “The pressure increased because of the

refusal of the Ukrainian Orthodox episcopate to participate in the so-called “unification council” backed up by the leadership of Ukraine. During this “council” the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the largest in the country religious confession uniting thirteen thousand parishes, over two hundred monasteries and millions of faithful, is supposed to be replaced by some new religious organization that is being created by the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko in concert with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.”

As is stated in the messages sent to the religious leaders, senior statesmen and heads of international organizations, “in order to force the episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to participate in this event, the governmental authorities and law-enforcement agencies of Ukraine are taking actions flagrantly violating the constitutional rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian citizens.”

His Holiness mentions that hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are being summoned for “talks” and questioning by the Security Service of Ukraine; they are encountering obstacles when crossing the state border of Ukraine, are being detained under different pretexts and subjected to humiliating searches. For instance, on December 9, the Security Service of Ukraine denied Metropolitan Ilarion of Donetsk, a citizen of Ukraine, entry into the country, invoking “special instructions from Kiev.”

At the level of the Government and local authorities attempts are being made to deprive the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of its legal rights to use the Kiev Caves and Pochaev Lavras – major holy sites of the Orthodox Ukraine. “Thus, on November 23, 2018, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine revoked the decision on the state registration of the right of the monastic community to use the complex of buildings of the Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra. And on November 28, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine revoked its instruction of July 17, 2003, On the Exclusion of the Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra from the Kremenets-Pochaev State Historical-Architectural Reserve. The reserve representatives do not conceal that in future the monastery can be given for use to another religious organization. On December 5, the Kremenets-Pochaev Reserve conducted an inspection of items of church value in the Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra,” the letter says.

His Holiness mentions that on November 28, for the first time in thirty years, a commission of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine conducted an inspection of cultural property in the territory of the Holy Dormition Kiev Caves Lavra. On November 30, a search was conducted in the territory of a subsidiary farm of the Kiev Caves Lavra in the village of Voronkov of the Borispol district, Kiev region. During the search, a number of irregularities in judicial proceedings occurred.

As it is emphasized in the messages, attempts are being made to hold bishops and clerics criminally liable on baseless charges of “high treason” and “incitement to religious hatred.” In a number of regions in Ukraine massive searches are being carried out on the premises of diocesan administrations, churches and places of clergymen’s residence.

For instance, on December 1, this year, twenty clergymen from the dioceses of Rovno and Sarny of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Rovno region) were summoned at the same time for questioning by the Security Service of Ukraine. On December 3, searches were conducted in cathedrals, diocesan administrations, churches and even private houses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s clergymen in the cities of Zhytomir, Ovruch and Korosten. On December 5, twelve clergymen from the dioceses of Rovno and Sarny of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were interrogated. As is stated in the documents, an investigation is being carried out within the framework of criminal proceedings under Article 111 (“high treason”) and Article 161 (“incitement to religious hatred”) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

“The state-run mass media continue their massive campaign aimed at discrediting the Ukrainian Church by publishing confidential personal data of hierarchs and clergymen of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that are at the disposal of the government. In particular, personal data of a considerable number of bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been published on the Myrotvorets website, along with the comments stirring up religious hatred,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia says in his letters, pointing out that this website functioning with the direct support of the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine “became notoriously famous for publishing personal data of the Ukrainian, American and European journalists who

were after that subjected to beatings and threats; some of them were even killed.” His Holiness emphasizes that “despite protests of the American and European public, the governmental authorities of Ukraine did not close the Myrotvorets project, and the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior continues to support it.”

His Holiness notes that “the high-ranking Ukrainian officials are not averse to making allegations in public against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, thus inciting inter-confessional hatred.” For instance, on November 30, 2018, Mr. Zoryan Shkiryak, adviser to the Ukrainian Minister of Interior, said in public that Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, abbot of the Holy Dormition Kiev Caves Lavra, “is a vampire who hates Ukraine, the Ukrainians and everything Ukrainian.” Mr. Andriy Parubiy, chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, also took the liberty of making public insulting and slanderous allegations against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In particular, he said in public that clergymen of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were instrumental in perpetration of murders of the Ukrainian citizens.

“The Ukrainian President himself does not make secret his hostile attitude towards the Church. Mr. Petro Poroshenko publicly threatened to banish from the country those Ukrainians who do not want to join the “autocephalous church” which is being created by the government,” the letters say, “It speaks for itself that the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church received invitations to the “unification council” signed by Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople from government officials, while the Constitution of Ukraine stipulates that “the church and religious organizations in Ukraine are separated from the state” (Constitution of Ukraine, Article 35), and therefore any interference of the state in inter-church relations is unconstitutional.”

“We do not know what steps the authorities of Ukraine will take next, what actions they can dare to undertake to achieve their goal in a time left before the presidential elections. Yet, the numerous facts of discrimination to which the Ukrainian Church has already been subjected make us fear even more serious infringement on the rights and freedoms of the Orthodox Christians, their greater sufferings for remaining faithful to the canonical Orthodoxy,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill writes in his letters.

As His Holiness notes, at its session held on December 7, the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was forced to admit the fact of “baseless criminal prosecutions” brought by the governmental authorities and “the pressure put on the episcopate, clergy and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the view of making them take part in the so-called unification council.” The Synod rightfully concluded that such actions “violate the constitutional rights of the citizens of Ukraine to freedom of religion.”

“In our plain view the governmental authorities of Ukraine are blatantly interfering in church life, the fundamental human rights are being violated, and an obvious attempt is being made to use the Church for political benefits and in the election campaign,” the letters read.

The Primate of the Russian Church called upon the religious leaders, senior statesmen and heads of international organizations to make every effort to protect the episcopate, clergy and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from discrimination and pressure exerted by the Ukrainian authorities and to defend the freedom of conscience and religion secured by the international law.

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The position of the representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) to European International Organizations on the Ukrainian law on renaming religious organizations

December 28, 2018 – The Ukrainian authorities made an ill-considered political step when they disregarded the norms of international law and adopted the law on renaming religious organizations, said Bishop Victor

(Kotsaba) of Baryshevka, head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Representative Office to European International Organization to [the Information and Education Department of the UOC-MP](#).

“Even the Main Scientific and Expert Department of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine negatively characterized this bill and recommended to reject it,” Bishop Viktor recalled. “Quite eloquent is a quotation from paragraph 3, clause II of the conclusion of the department, which notes that “<...> the provisions of the draft law contain signs of incompatibility with the Constitution of Ukraine, which excludes the possibility of establishing special requirements regarding the name and content of the statutes (regulations) of individual religious organizations (associations).”

The UOC-MP hierarch stressed that the Constitution of Ukraine has the highest legal force, and therefore the new law cannot annul the constitutional rights of citizens of Ukraine.

According to the head of the UOC-MP Representation to European International Organizations, bill No 5309 “will for long become a black spot in the history of Ukrainian parliamentarism and appear at the international level as an example of a thoughtless political step.”

If the pressure of the authorities on the canonical Church steps up, the UN Human Rights Council, the European Court of Human Rights and other international human rights organizations will receive more and more complaints, Bishop Victor commented on the possible scenario.

He noted that the legislative act adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine deals only with those organizations whose governing centre is located in the territory of the aggressor state. Since the UOC-MP lead center is located in Kiev, bill No. 5309 de jure cannot be extended to the canonical church, Bishop Victor explained. He added that the pressure of the authorities on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church suggests the likelihood of politicians trying to apply this law specifically to it.

If state officials insist on the application of this law to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), then, according to Vladyka Victor, Ukraine will face lengthy court proceedings. After all, the UOC-MP communities have the full right to challenge the actions of state officials and state bodies in court.

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