



**Bulletin No3 of Rights Violations
of Ukrainian Orthodox Church parishioners and clergy
for the period from 29/05/2019 to 10/06/2019**

Starting from January 6, 2019, after the creation of the so-called Orthodox Church of Ukraine ("OCU") and the granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly by the Ecumenical (Constantinopolitan) Patriarchate to its Primate, an unprecedented campaign was launched in Ukraine against the parishioners and clergy of the Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC).

As part of this campaign, representatives of the Ukrainian state authorities are conducting undisguised agitation for the so-called "transition" of religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the "OCU". They are exerting administrative and military pressure against the clergy and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and are assisting the radical militarised groups, the so-called "activists", to seize churches, and itemise its property which belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. They also help to initiate the adoption of changes to national legislation that violate the Constitution of Ukraine and the fundamental rights of believers.

The main goal of this Bulletin is to inform: the clergymen and parishioners from other Local Orthodox Churches, the representatives of foreign governments, the mass media, human rights and expert organisations **about the most blatant violations of the rights of parishioners and clergymen of the UOC in Ukraine and cases of direct interference of the Ukrainian government into the affairs of the Church.**

During the period **from May 29 to June 10, 2019**, dozens of cases of gross violations of the rights of parishioners and clergy of the UOC in Ukraine were recorded and confirmed:

1. **Factual information about the seizure of churches and other cases of the use of physical force and pressure on UOC parishioners in order to forcefully transfer churches and religious communities to the jurisdiction of the "OCU":**

- **On May 31, 2019, the head of the Zastavniivskyi Regional State Administration (RSA), Yuriy Kitar** formed a commission consisting of 12 members, which included representatives of the social services, police, and doctors. The Commission considered the alleged danger posed by educators and teachers who attend UOC church services together with their children. *"Do not take children with you to church services, or immediately after the service, send them home"*, - that was the proposal made by the commission that was led by the head of the Zastavniivskyi Regional State Administration. **Furthermore, should the parents, who are parishioners of the Holy Assumption church in the village of Vaslovivtsy, Chernivetska oblast', not take their advice, they will subsequently run the risk of being deprived of their parental rights.** The Chernivetska eparchy commented that proposal made, as it is quite clear that the goal of such an initiative was to make sure that children wouldn't be in the way during the next attempt to illegally seize the church.

Details: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/03/bukovinski-chinovniki-proponuyut-pozbavlyati-batkivskix-prav-viruyuchix-upc/>

- Metropolitan Meletiy of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna appealed to the President of Ukraine, V. Zelenskyi with a **request that he take action to stop the arbitrary behaviour of officials in the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration**, who, on the basis of false documents, have already transferred eleven (11) UOC communities to the jurisdiction of the "OCU", and that he annul the corresponding orders of the acting head of the Regional State Administration, M. Pavlyuk and resolve the question of the inappropriate appointment of M. Pavlyuk to the above-stated position.

Details: <https://vesti-ukr.com/strana/338733-zakhvat-khramov-upts-reaktsija-zelenskoho-stanet-proverkoj-na-hotovnost-menjat-stranu>

- **On June 2, 2019, "OCU" supporters attempted to seize the UOC church in the village of Hrabove, Shatskyi rayon in Volyn. As a result of the conflict that ensued**

in front of the church, the parish rector, Archpriest Dymytriy Kovalchuk sustained serious injuries. The priest's cross was also torn off, and a series of severe blows to the head and other parts of the body, including broken fingers, were inflicted.

Details: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/05/aktivist-pcu-zhorstoko-pobiv-svyashhenika-upc-v-seli-grabove-na-volini-foto/>

- On June 6, 2019, on the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, there was another provocation near the Holy Assumption of the Theotokos church in the village of Tovtry, Chernivetska oblast'. The "OCU" hired paramilitaries "to defend their rights" with the use of pepper spray against the UOC parishioners; while police officers idly watched on. *The Chernivtsi-Bukovinian eparchy of the UOC officially contacted the Security Services (SBU) and the State Police headquarters in Chernivetska oblast' asking them to help identify the paramilitaries.*

Details: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/06/na-bukovini-pcu-najnyala-bojovikiv-vidstoyuvati-jixni-prava-z-gazovimi-balonchikami-proti-viryan-upc/>

- Contrary to the will of the believers as well as overstepping the bounds of the law, on June 7, 2019, the head of the Department for Nationalities and Religions in the Vinnytsia Regional State Administration, I. Saletskyi personally completed the state registration of the newly formed "OCU" religious community in the village of Luka Meleshkivska, Vinnytskyi rayon, using the same registration data as the existing parish of the UOC. In the Vinnytska eparchy, such actions **are called** collusion, and are very evident when the state connives with church raiders. It is feared that in the near future an attempt will be made to forcibly seize the Holy Transfiguration Church, which legally belongs to the UOC parish.

Details: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/08/misceva-vlada-poturaje-cerkvnomu-rejderstvu-na-vinnichchini-pres-sluzhba-jeparxiji-upc/>

- Appeal to the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, from the parishioners of Archangel Michael's church in Zadubrivka village: *"We ask for a long-awaited PEACE,*

tranquillity and RULE OF LAW! For brother to reconcile with brother, parents with children. Our religious community in Zadubrivka village, the parish of the Holy Archangel Michael of the UOC, has now for a period of almost 120 days been, ROUND-THE-CLOCK, defending the Orthodox Faith and as well as our constitutional right and will to remain in the bosom of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). We want to peacefully attend prayer services in our own church, but instead, we have had to endure attacks and fighting during the past 120 days, at virtually every liturgy. President Zelenskyi, we voted for the PEACE in Ukraine".

Details: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2345072285745780>

- **Petey Ivanna, an activist of the "OCU" community, organised an end-of-school-year Parents' Meeting whose children are in the 9th grade (Zadubrivskyi Educational Complex in Chernivetska Oblast'), after a vote, it was decided to ban their children's classmate, Christina Velushchak and her mother, from attending the graduation party.** *The UOC religious community of St. Archangel Michael in [the village of Zadubrivka](#), has now for more than 120 days been prayerfully defending its right to freely practice the Orthodox faith and defend its choice to remain united with the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is led by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy.*

Details: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/09/u-zadubrivci-za-prinalezhnist-do-upc-shkolyarci-zaboronili-prixoditi-na-vipusknij-foto/>

- Christina Veluschak, a graduate of the 9th grade at Zadubrivskyi Educational Complex in Zastavnivskyi rayon of Chernivetska oblast', has become a victim of discrimination on religious grounds in her school, simply because of her affiliation with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). She graduated from school with honours, has been attending church all her life, sings in the church choir, and is planning to attend medical college. One may say that she is a normal Ukrainian school student, if it were not for one huge so-called "flaw" - her choice of religion. For several months now, after the beginning of the confrontation on religious grounds in the village, the supporters of the newly formed "OCU" have ostracised Christine and made her an outcast due to her religious beliefs.

Read more: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/09/zaberi-svoji-moskalski-groshi-ti-na-vipusknij-ne-pidesh-bukovinska-shkolyarka-ta-jiji-mama-rozpovili-pro-ostanni-misyaci-u-shkoli/>

- **On One of TSN broadcasts (on 1+1 TV Channel), it was reported that on May 8th this year, the religious community of Holy Archangel Michael in Novo-Mykhailivka village, Mariivskyi rayon of Donetska oblast', had allegedly joined the "OCU". In support of this argument, TSN used, as they named it, a *'map of jurisdictional transfers to the "OCU"'*. The Donetska eparchy absolutely refutes the validity of this information - the relevant statement was published on the [official website](#) of the Donetska Eparchy on June 9, 2019.**

Details: <http://donetsk.church.ua/2019/06/09/press-sluzhba-doneckojj-eparkhii-zayavlyaet-soobshhenie-o-perekhode-odnoj-iz-obshhin-v-pcu-fejjk/>

- **On June 7, 2019, "OCU" supporters brutally bashed a man in the village of Nova Moschchanytsia in the Zdolbunivskyi rayon of Rivnenska oblast' simply because he defended a UOC priest and did not allow him to be expelled from the village.**

Details:

<https://www.facebook.com/RivneGoloscerkvy/photos/a.696553560777056/698216130610799/?type=3&theater>

2. Cases of direct administrative and forcible pressure exerted on the clergy of the UOC by the state authorities of Ukraine

- **On May 29, 2019, the State Bureau of Criminal Investigations questioned a clergy belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.** The testimony of the clerics, factually confirmed the organised nature of the criminal case, which the Ukrainian Security Services (SBU) in Rivnenska oblast' had instigated against the head of the UOC Department for the Settlement of Inter-confessional Conflicts at the Rivnenska Eparchy, **Archpriest Victor Zemlyanoy**. Leading religious scholars of Ukraine have also spoken in defence of Archpriest Victor. Experts have repudiated SBU's version that the religious pamphlets and booklets, that were used as evidence in this case, had allegedly distorted historical facts, Orthodox canons and biblical subject matter, and that they deliberately offended the religious feelings of Kyivan Patriarchate supporters and its leader, Filaret Denysenko. **Despite this, representatives of the Rivne Security Service (SBU) continue to exert pressure on witnesses in the "case" against Archpriest Victor Zemlyanoy.**

Details: <https://izvestia.kiev.ua/item/show/117317>

- The Draft law No. 10244-1 "On Military Chaplaincy", adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU), on June 6, 2019, in its the first reading, limits the potential opportunities of various denominations of Ukraine. *"The Draft bill artificially narrows the possibilities of various denominations of Ukraine to ensure pastoral care of their faithful - servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, - firmly stated Yuriy Yevgenyevich Reshetnikov, who was the Head of the State Committee for Nationalities and Religions in 2009-2010.*

Details: <http://news.church.ua/2019/06/10/zakonoproekt-pro-vijskove-kapelanstvo-obmezhuje-mozhливosti-riznix-konfesij-ukrajini-religijnij-ekspert/>

Also: <https://news.church.ua/2019/06/10/novij-zakonoproekt-pro-vijskove-kapelanstvo-yu-reshetnikov-nazvav-osnovni-nedoliki-ta-nadav-7-m-propozicij-dlya-doopracuyvannya/>

3. Protection of the rights of clergymen and parishioners of the UOC in the judicial field

- On May 30, 2019, in the Lutsk District Court of Volynska oblast', a ruling found in favour of Fr. Vasiliy's complaint regarding the professional inactivity of the prosecutor of Volynska oblast' – whereby the latter had failed to enter information regarding the perpetration of a criminal offense onto the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations and subsequently question the plaintiff and witnesses in detail and to initiate a pre-trial investigation.

Details: <https://volyn.church.ua/2019/06/08/sud-zobov'yazav-pravooxoronciv-vnesti-do-jedr-dani-pro-namagannya-primusovogo-viselennya-simji-svyashhenika-z-cerkovnogo-budinku-sela-mirne/>

Brief information about the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC)

The UOC is the Local Orthodox Church of the people of Ukraine, which is officially recognised by all the Orthodox Churches of the world and is in spiritual communion with them. Spiritual and prayerful unity with the entire Orthodox world is witnessed by the Patriarchs and Primate of all the Local Churches, who repeatedly come to Kyiv to concelebrate Divine services with the Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine.

The UOC is completely independent and self-governing in its administration and structure. The Administrative Centre of the UOC is located in Kyiv, Ukraine. According to the UOC Charter, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church independently elects the Primate and Bishops, ordains priests, conducts administrative and economic activities. The highest authority in the UOC belongs to the Church Council, which is made up of the bishops, ministers and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The UOC is the largest Church in Ukraine, uniting millions of believers in 12,092 territorial church communities. The UOC has 258 monasteries, 4,500 monks and 100 bishops. During the time of Ukraine's independence, thousands of churches and hundreds of monasteries have been erected and restored with donations from believers of the UOC.

The UOC has consistently advocated the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and unites the Orthodox citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their nationality, political convictions or place of residence. In all its sermons, the UOC blesses Ukraine, the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian state.