

UKRAINE 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

In February 2014, Russian military forces invaded and occupied Crimea. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 adopted on March 27, 2014, and entitled Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, states the Autonomous Republic of Crimea remains internationally recognized as within Ukraine's international borders. The U.S. government does not recognize the purported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and considers that Crimea remains a part of Ukraine.

UKRAINE

Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of religion and provides for the separation of church and state. By law, the objective of domestic religious policy is to foster the creation of a tolerant society and provide for freedom of conscience and worship. In October the Ecumenical Patriarchate announced its intention to grant autocephaly (independence) to a new Ukrainian church after receiving a joint appeal from the government and bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), as well as several bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC-MP), affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate. In November Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew initiated steps to implement that decision. In December the UOC-KP, UAOC, and several UOC-MP representatives formed the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and elected its leader at their Establishment Council in Kyiv. Government leadership called on all parties to refrain from violence and respect the choice of those who decided to remain within the Moscow Patriarchate. According to human rights groups, documented acts of anti-Semitism declined from previous years. Some Jewish leaders continued to state their concerns about what they considered impunity for and long delays in completing investigations of acts of anti-Semitism. Religious leaders also continued to urge the government to establish a transparent legal process to address property restitution claims. In various regions of the country, minority religious groups continued to report discriminatory treatment by local authorities in land allocation for religious buildings. According to the UOC-MP, law enforcement gave far-right groups a "free hand" to pressure UOC-MP parishioners into leaving the Church, although some media reports stated the Russian government sought to spread trumped up charges of pressure on the UOC-MP.

According to media sources, religious freedom activists, the UOC-KP, Muslims, Protestant churches, and Jehovah's Witnesses, Russian proxy authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (regions) intensified pressure on minority religious groups. In Luhansk, proxy authorities banned Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization and the "Supreme Court" in Donetsk upheld a similar ban. In June proxy authorities raided and later closed the one remaining independent mosque in Donetsk. Proxy authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk adopted laws requiring all religious organizations except the UOC-MP to undergo "state religious expert evaluations" and reregister with them. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), more than 1,000 religious groups recognized under Ukrainian law had not reregistered because of stringent legal requirements under Russian legislation preventing or discouraging reregistration of many religious communities. Many religious groups refused to reregister because they did not recognize the self-proclaimed proxy authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia-led forces also continued to occupy religious buildings of minority religious groups and use them as military facilities. Crimea is reported in an appendix following the report on the rest of Ukraine.

There were continued reports of what some media and political observers characterized as far-right nationalist political groups physically assaulting and pressuring UOC-MP supporters and vandalizing UOC-MP property. In July supporters of the Svoboda Party physically assaulted the chief editor of a newspaper in Chernihiv Oblast for reportedly publishing a report about a UOC-MP-organized summer camp. In January representatives of C14, which observers describe as a far-right group, and others tore down an information board near UOC-MP churches in Kyiv. Two individuals doused the same UOC-MP church with flammable liquid, stating the act was in retaliation for the Moscow Patriarchate's endorsement of Russian aggression against Ukraine. UOC-MP leaders stated the UOC-KP continued to seize churches belonging to the UOC-MP. The UOC-KP again stated parishioners and not the UOC-KP had initiated the transfers of affiliation. A group of local residents tried to prevent the construction of a Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) facility in Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Oblast. Members of the Jewish community stated their continued concern about new construction on a site at Lviv's Krakivskiy Market located on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery. There were again reports of vandalism of Christian monuments; Holocaust memorials, synagogues, and Jewish cemeteries; and Jehovah's Witnesses' Kingdom Halls. The All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) and the All-Ukrainian Council of Religious Associations (AUCRA) continued to promote interfaith dialogue and religious diversity.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials met with the Administration of the President, ministry officials, and members of parliament to discuss the protection of religious heritage sites, manifestations of anti-Semitism, and issues within the Orthodox Churches. In connection with the move towards autocephaly for the OCU, the Ambassador urged government and religious leaders to practice tolerance, restraint, and mutual understanding to ensure respect for all individuals' religious freedom and preferences. The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to urge religious groups to resolve property disputes peacefully and through dialogue with government officials, in particular the dispute regarding the location of parts of the Krakivskiy Market on the site of Lviv Old Jewish Cemetery. Embassy officials continued to meet with internally displaced Muslims from Crimea to discuss their continuing inability to practice their religion freely in Crimea. In September the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom visited Kyiv. He met with government, religious, and community leaders to promote religious freedom, encourage interfaith dialogue, and assure leaders of U.S. support for all people to practice freely their faiths.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 44 million (July 2018 estimate). According to the annual March national survey conducted by the Razumkov Center, an independent public policy think tank; 67.3 percent of respondents self-identify as Christian Orthodox; 9.4 percent Greek Catholic; 2.2 percent Protestant; 0.8 percent Roman Catholic; and 0.4 percent Jewish. Another 7.7 percent self-identify as “simply a Christian” and 11 percent say they do not belong to any religious group. Small percentages of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, adherents of other religions, and individuals who chose not to disclose their beliefs constitute the remainder of the respondents.

The same survey breaks down the 67.3 percent identifying as Christian Orthodox: 28.7 percent UOC-KP (26.5 percent in 2017); 12.8 percent UOC-MP; 23.4 percent “just an Orthodox believer”; 0.3 percent the UAOC; 0.2 percent Russian Orthodox Church (as distinct from the UOC-MP); and 1.9 percent undecided. In a separate Razumkov survey conducted in September after the government, UOC-KP, UAOC, and some bishops representing the UOC-MP petitioned the Ecumenical Patriarchate for autocephaly, the number of respondents self-identifying as UOC-KP increased to 45.2 percent, while 16.9 percent of respondents self-identified as UOC-MP, and 33.9 percent “just as an Orthodox believer.”

According to the Ministry of Culture, the UOC-KP has followers primarily in the central and western oblasts, with a smaller number in Zakarpattya Oblast. The UOC-MP is present in all regions of the country, but it has a smaller presence in Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv Oblasts in the western part of the country. Most UAOC adherents are in the western part of the country. According to the Ministry of Culture, the UOC-MP had 12,348 congregations throughout the country, compared with 12,328 in 2017, while the UOC-KP had 5,167, compared with 5,114 in 2017, and the UAOC had 1,167, compared with 1,195.

According to government statistics, followers of the UGCC reside primarily in the western oblasts of Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk. Most Roman Catholic Church congregations are in Lviv, Khmelnytsky, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, and Zakarpattya Oblasts in the western part of the country.

The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine is the largest Protestant community. Other Christian groups include Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Calvinists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ).

Government agencies and independent think tanks estimate the Muslim population at 500,000. Some Muslim leaders put the number at two million. According to government figures, 300,000 of these are Crimean Tatars.

The Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities (VAAD) states there are approximately 300,000 persons of Jewish ancestry in the country. According to VAAD, before the Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, approximately 30,000 Jewish persons lived in the Donbas region. Jewish groups estimate between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish residents lived in Crimea before Russia's attempted annexation. There are also Buddhists, practitioners of Falun Gong, Baha'is, and adherents of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and worship. By law, the government may restrict this right only in the "interests of protecting public order, the health and morality of the population, or protecting the rights and freedoms of other persons." The constitution provides for the separation of church and state and stipulates, "No religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory."

By law, the objective of religious policy is to “restore full-fledged dialogue between representatives of various social, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups to foster the creation of a tolerant society and provide for freedom of conscience and worship.”

The law requires a religious institution seeking official status as a legal entity to register both as a religious organization and as a nonprofit organization. Religious organizations include congregations, theological schools, monasteries, religious brotherhoods, missions, and religious associations consisting of religious organizations. To obtain official religious status, an organization must register either with the Ministry of Culture, the government agency responsible for religious affairs, or with regional government authorities, depending upon the nature of the organization. Religious centers, administrations, monasteries, religious brotherhoods, missions, and religious schools register with the Ministry of Culture. Religious congregations register with the regional authorities where they operate, either with the city government in Kyiv or the respective oblast government outside of Kyiv. While these religious congregations may form the constituent units of a nationwide religious organization, the nationwide organization does not register on a national basis and may not obtain recognition as a legal entity; rather, the constituent units register and obtain legal entity status.

To be eligible for registration, a religious congregation must have at least 10 adult members and must submit its statutes to the registration authorities. To obtain status as a nonprofit organization, a religious organization must register with the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for maintaining the government’s register of legal entities. This register lists all entities with this status, including religious ones. The law does not specify which of the two registration procedures must be undertaken first.

Without legal entity status, a religious group may not own property, conduct banking activities, or publish materials. Per the stipulation against national registration, only the registered constituent units of a nationwide religious organization may own property or conduct business activities, either for themselves or on behalf of the nationwide organization. The law grants property tax exemptions to religious organizations and considers them nonprofit organizations.

The law requires commanders of military units to allow their subordinates to participate in religious services but bans the creation of religious organizations in

military institutions and military units. The Ministry of Defense defines selection criteria for clerics to become chaplains, the status of chaplains in the chain of command, and their rights and duties in the armed forces, National Guard, and State Border Guard Service.

The law gives prison chaplains access to both pretrial detainees and sentenced inmates. It also protects the confidentiality of confession heard by prison chaplains, prohibits the use of information received during confession as evidence in legal proceedings, and does not allow the interrogation of clerics, interpreters, or other persons about matters associated with the confidentiality of confession.

According to the constitution, organizers must notify local authorities in advance of any type of planned public gathering, and authorities may challenge the legality of the planned event. According to a 2016 Constitutional Court decision, religious organizations need only inform local authorities of their intention to hold a public gathering, and need not apply for permission or notify authorities within a specific period in advance of the event.

The law allows religious groups to establish theological schools to train clergy and other religious workers, as well as seek state accreditation through the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance for their curriculum. The law states theological schools shall function based on their own statutes.

Government agencies authorized to monitor religious organizations include the Prosecutor General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and all other “central bodies of the executive government.”

Only registered religious groups may seek restitution of communal property confiscated by the Communist regime. Religious groups must apply to regional authorities for property restitution. The law states the authorities should complete their consideration of a restitution claim within a month.

The law prohibits religious instruction as part of the mandatory public school curriculum and states public school training “shall be free from interference by political parties, civic, and religious organizations.” Public schools include ethics of faith or similar faith-related courses as optional parts of the curriculum.

The law provides for antidiscrimination screening of draft legislation and government regulations, including based on religion. The law requires the legal department of each respective agency responsible for verifying the draft legislation

conduct the screening, in accordance with instructions developed by the Cabinet of Ministers, to ensure the draft legislation does not contain discriminatory language and to require changes if it does. Religious groups may participate in screening draft legislation at the invitation of the respective agency.

The law allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors. The law does not exempt the clergy from military mobilization.

The Office of the Parliamentary Human Rights Ombudsman is constitutionally required to release an annual report to parliament with a section on religious freedom.

The law restricts the activities of foreign-based religious groups and defines the permissible activities of noncitizen clergy, preachers, teachers, and other representatives of foreign-based religious organizations. By law, foreign religious workers may “preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities,” but they may do so only for the religious organization that invited them and with the approval of the government body that registered the statute of the organization. Missionary activity is included under permissible activities.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Since 2015, the government has exercised the right of derogation from its obligations under the ICCPR with regard to the portions of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts under the control of foreign forces, including the ICCPR provisions pertaining to religious freedom.

Government Practices

On December 26, President Petro Poroshenko signed amendments to a 1991 law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations. The objective of the amendments was to require religious organizations with a “governing center” in a country designated by law as a state that “committed military aggression against Ukraine and temporarily occupied Ukraine’s territory” to use the full title of the foreign religious organization in its name. In practice, this meant the UOC-MP was required to change its official title to reflect its affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate. The amendments also restricted access of clerics belonging to such organizations to the armed forces and other military organizations. President Poroshenko stated, “It is easier to make a choice when all things are called by their names, when there is enough information to make this choice voluntary. The

implementation of the law will give the citizens full information.” The UOC-MP criticized the bill as governmental interference in religious life.

On October 26, the Odesa Regional Administrative Court overturned a decision by the State Migration Service to deny refugee status to a young Jehovah’s Witness woman, an Iranian citizen, and allowed her to remain in the country.

On June 14, following intervention by the parliament’s Human Rights Ombudsman, the village council in Zvedenivka, Vinnytsya Oblast dropped its demand that local Jehovah’s Witnesses conduct their ministry “under control of village council members or police officers.”

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, between September 2017 and November 2018, its congregations reported 19 cases involving municipal officials or police officers demanding that they stop public missionary work, comparing it to commercial advertising. At times, the officials reportedly used abusing language and threats.

In his annual address to parliament on September 20, President Poroshenko noted that the creation of a united autocephalous Orthodox Church would help strengthen national unity. He said the state would not interfere in internal affairs of the church and would respect the choices of those who decide to remain with the Moscow Patriarchate.

On October 10, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul stated it would proceed towards granting autocephalous status to a Ukrainian Orthodox Church after receiving a joint appeal from the Ukrainian government and bishops from the UOC-KP and UAOC and some UOC-MP bishops on April 20. The statement said the Holy and Sacred Synod in Istanbul also revoked the right of the Patriarch of Moscow to ordain the Metropolitan of Kyiv.

On November 3, Patriarch Bartholomew and President Poroshenko signed a Bilateral Agreement on Cooperation and Coordination “within the framework of granting autocephaly to the unified Orthodox Church in Ukraine.” On November 29, the Holy and Sacred Synod in Istanbul announced it had drafted the Constitutional Charter for an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Also on November 29, President Poroshenko announced publicly that the Ecumenical Patriarchate had approved the text of a decree that would grant autocephaly to a new Ukrainian Church.

In mid-December the UAOC and UOC-KP disbanded themselves to create a united Orthodox Church. On December 15, representatives of the UOC-KP, UAOC, and some UOC-MP representatives, including two metropolitans, formed the OCU and chose Metropolitan Epiphaniy of the former UOC-KP as its head at an Establishment Council in Kyiv. The UOC-MP declared the OCU as a “union of schismatics” that had “no relation” to the UOC-MP, and suspended the clerics who participated in the Establishment Council. At year’s end, administrative centers of the UOC-KP and UAOC continued to exist as legal entities pending state registration of the OCU administration.

The UOC-MP stated law enforcement gave far-right groups a “free hand” to pressure and intimidate UOC-MP parishioners to leave the Church, although some media reports stated the Russian government sought to spread trumped up charges of pressure on the UOC-MP.

On October 12, following UOC-MP allegations of possible attempts by radical groups to seize its major monasteries, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov issued a statement that religion-based violence and extremism were “unacceptable.” He called on political and public figures to refrain from provocations and attempts to destabilize the situation in the country. The minister promised a “tough” response to extremism and religious hatred. He repeated the pledge in an Interfax-Ukraine interview on December 29.

On November 22, the government hosted a meeting with Muslim community leaders, discussing ways to amend regulations that would allow Muslim women to wear head coverings for internal passport (passport for domestic use only) photographs.

On October 3, the Rivne Oblast State Administration registered a statute of a local Jehovah’s Witnesses organization pursuant to a court order overturning the 2017 refusal by the administration to approve the registration request. The court had rejected the administration’s 2017 claim that members of the organization were not allowed to preach or study the Bible outside Kingdom Halls because by law religious groups may preach outside their places of worship and there is no regulation banning missionary work.

On October 10, the Supreme Court upheld a petition by a Jehovah’s Witnesses congregation in Tetiyiv, Kyiv Oblast, against the local government’s attempts to fine the congregation for an alleged violation of zoning regulations during the recent construction of its Kingdom Hall.

Jehovah's Witnesses reported that from September 2017 to November 2018 local authorities in Myropil, Zhytomyr Oblast, Tetiyiv, Kyiv Oblast, Torun, Transcarpathia Oblast, and Kharkiv denied zoning permits or created other impediments to construction of Kingdom Halls. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, UOC-MP representatives campaigned against the construction of a Kingdom Hall in Myropil, Zhytomyr Oblast. On June 19, UOC-MP representatives reportedly prevented the Myropil town council from designating a Jehovah's Witnesses-owned plot of land for the construction project, advocating that other religious denominations should not be present in the town. On August 3 and November 2, the council rejected a resolution to designate the land for construction. On December 3, the Lviv District Administrative Court began examining a Jehovah's Witnesses' appeal against the council's inaction on their request.

On April 19, the government revived the Interagency Commission to Realize the Rights of Religious Organizations. Although inactive since 2012, the commission was established in 2008 to address complex restitution issues as well as promote dialogue between the government and religious groups. The commission discussed ways to streamline registration procedures for religious organizations, respond to what it characterized as massive violations of religious freedom in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and address religious property restitution.

The Pastoral Council for Religious Support of the Penitentiary System, an advisory interfaith board designed to promote prison chaplaincy established in 2017, worked with the Ministry of Justice to develop guidance for chaplains ministering to prisoners who faced torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

The UOC-MP said that on July 25, representatives of the Svoboda Party, which political observers describe as a nationalist party, threatened to burn the buses of local bus companies in Nizhyn, Chernihiv Oblast, if they provided transportation for local pilgrims planning to participate in the July 27 UOC-MP procession in Kyiv celebrating St. Volodymyr's Day.

On November 30, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) searched a country residence of Metropolitan Pavel, abbot of the UOC-MP Kyiv Pechersk Monastery, and the monastery farm office, calling the search an investigation into charges of incitement to religious hatred. On December 3, the metropolitan rejected the hate speech charges and condemned the searches as political pressure.

On December 5, following several days of searches at UOC-MP buildings in Kyiv and Zhytomyr Oblast, the SBU said it had identified an organized network that distributed materials inciting religious hatred. The SBU posted copies of several confiscated UOC-MP leaflets presenting the Church's view on Orthodox Church autocephaly, and labeling Jehovah's Witnesses as a "sect."

On November 5, officers of the SBU Rivne Oblast branch interrogated 12 UOC-MP priests as part of an investigation into cases of hate speech and high treason. The religious news website risu.org.ua and news website charivne.info said a local UOC-MP priest faced treason charges because the Russian media were using his commentaries about regional parish jurisdiction disputes in false reports about "religious war" in Ukraine. The UOC-MP denied the charges.

On March 6, according to the Umma Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine, approximately two dozen SBU and Kyiv City procuracy representatives conducted a search of the Kyiv Islamic Cultural Center. According to the search warrant, SBU officials were looking for materials promoting "violence, racial, interethnic or religious hatred." Members of the Umma said the law enforcement officials did not allow the cultural center's security guard to inform them by phone about the raid. According to the Umma representatives who witnessed the search, the law enforcement representatives planted and immediately "found" "extremist" materials in the library, school premises, and bookstore and also planted and "found" two "extremist" publications during a search in a librarian's apartment. The Kyiv City procuracy said authorities conducted the search "in strict accordance with the law." It described the search as part of SBU-initiated operations to stop distribution of materials promoting violence. In 2012, an Odesa court banned distribution of the books seized by the SBU.

Umma Administration leaders said the SBU did not follow legal protocols for search and seizure because it did not employ independent witnesses required to observe the search to prevent attempts to fabricate evidence. Instead, the law enforcement officers reportedly brought "their own" witnesses who were biased and paid no attention to SBU officers planting the publications. Umma representatives said this was the third search of congregations associated with Umma in less than a year in which they said law enforcement authorities planted the same books. In 2017, law enforcement authorities conducted searches at Islamic centers in Sumy and Zhytomyr.

Small religious groups stated local governments continued to discriminate with regard to allocating land for religious buildings in Chernivtsi, Mykolayiv, Odesa, and Ternopil Oblasts, and the city of Kyiv. Roman Catholics, UOC-KP members, UGCC members, the UAOC, and Muslims continued to report cases of discrimination. UGCC representatives said local authorities in Sumy and Odesa were still unwilling to allocate land for UGCC churches. UOC-MP representatives said local authorities in the Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts continued to refuse to allocate land for UOC-MP churches. UOC-KP representatives said the Haisyn District State Administration refused their request to build a church in the town. Roman Catholic Church leaders stated they continued to ask authorities to return former Church properties in the western part of the country and elsewhere. Roman Catholics stated the government continued to refuse to support the restitution of Odesa's Roman Catholic seminary building, which the Soviet regime had confiscated. Church of Jesus Christ representatives stated the Kyiv City government continued to fail to reinstate a lease, first revoked in 2015, on land to build a house of worship. The UAOC said the Chernivtsi City Council was unwilling to finalize allocation of land for a UAOC diocesan administration office in the city.

According to the UOC-MP, in February the village council in Stary Hvizdets, Ivano Frankivsk Oblast, illegally transferred ownership of the local UOC-MP Annunciation Church from the government to the UOC-KP. Local police reportedly opened an investigation.

On February 7, the Volyn Oblast Appellate Court rejected a petition by the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ) to remove a private industrial facility from the grounds of a Jewish cemetery near Toykut village in Volyn Oblast.

Kyiv's Muslim community said the local government, which allocates land for cemeteries, had not acted on the community's request for additional free land in Kyiv for Islamic burials, which was their legal right. Muslim community leaders said they were running out of land for burials of their members.

All major religious organizations continued to appeal to the government to establish a transparent legal process to address property restitution claims. Most organizations said they experienced continued problems and delays in the restitution process to reclaim property seized by the Communist regime. They said the consideration of claims often took longer than the month prescribed by law. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim groups stated a number of factors continued to

complicate the restitution process, including intercommunity competition for particular properties, current use of some properties by state institutions, the designation of some properties as historic landmarks, local governments disputing jurisdictional boundaries, and previous transfers of some properties to private ownership. They continued to report local officials taking sides in property restitution disputes, such as the case of the Lviv city government continuing to deny Roman Catholic Church requests for restitution of several properties turned over to the UGCC.

Muslim community leaders expressed concern over the continued lack of resolution of restitution claims involving historic mosques in Mykolayiv.

The AUCCRO, a longstanding independent interfaith board representing more than 90 percent of all religious organizations in the country, continued to appeal to parliament to impose a moratorium on the privatization of previously confiscated religious buildings. Despite renewed government promises to address the issue, the government had taken no action by the end of the year.

The Jewish community expressed concern over the continued failure of national and local government authorities to protect historic religious properties, particularly historic synagogues in Lviv, Brody, Sokal, Stryi, Zhokva, Berezhany, Husyatyn, Pidhaytsi, and Dubno.

Jewish community leaders said they continued to experience difficulties with the Ternopil municipal and district governments with regard to property restitution. The Ternopil District Council continued to reject local Jewish community requests to return a prayer house confiscated during the Soviet regime. On October 25, local authorities in Chortkiv, Ternopil Oblast, transferred a former synagogue building that had been used as a warehouse to the Jewish community.

On July 25, the Dnipro City Council returned to the Muslim community a mosque confiscated by the Soviet government.

On February 5, the Ministry of Culture issued a statement saying that the UOC-MP had constructed Sts. Volodymyr and Olga Church in central Kyiv on the grounds of a state-run national museum. On February 9, the Municipal Development Commission of the Kyiv City Council upheld a petition to demolish the building. The government stated that in 2013, the UOC-MP built the church without legal permission. The building was still standing at year's end.

UOC-MP representatives continued to object to what they characterized was the central government's inadequate response to discrimination and intolerance toward its members by UOC-KP and UGCC representatives and high-ranking UOC-KP and UGCC supporters in some local governments. According to the UOC-MP, law enforcement agencies ignored its requests to bring to justice a Sokal District administration official who intimidated UOC-MP parishioners in Shpykolosy village, Lviv Oblast, over their refusal to join a newly created local UOC-KP congregation.

On December 11, the Lviv Oblast Council declared 2019 as the Year of Stepan Bandera and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The Council issued the decision to mark the 110th anniversary of Bandera's birth and the 90th anniversary of OUN's establishment. Jewish community representatives criticized the decision. In the 1940s, OUN led the nationalist partisan movement, some of whom were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews.

On December 18, the parliament adopted a resolution to mark a number of significant anniversary dates in 2019, including the 110th anniversary of the birth of Ivan Klymiv, one of the leaders of the OUN. Jewish community representatives criticized the decision due to his role in instigating anti-Semitic pogroms in Nazi-occupied Lviv in 1941.

On September 20, the Kyiv District Administrative Court reaffirmed its 2017 ruling against a proposal to rename a city street in honor of Roman Shukhevych, one of the OUN leaders and commander of the Nazi-controlled Nachtigall Battalion.

In an interview with the Insider news website published on June 25, Deputy Prosecutor General Anatoliy Matios suggested, "Jews seek to drown Ukraine in blood." He compared a Jew facing terrorism charges to Jewish communist Alexander Parvus. Matios said Parvus "who brought money to Lenin for the revolution that flooded Slavs with streams of blood" was also Jewish. "In this case, they want to do the same to Ukraine," he said. Eastern Europe Simon Wiesenthal Center Director Efraim Zuroff publicly condemned Matios' statements as "outrageous and false," and called for his dismissal.

On May 14, Ukrainian Jewish Committee Director Eduard Dolinsky filed a formal complaint to authorities regarding anti-Semitic remarks Skole mayor and Right Sector member Volodymyr Moskal reportedly made in 2017 that "the government of Moskovites and Yids" is running Ukraine and Jews seek to dominate the world,

treat all other nations as “subhumans” and destroy them. The local procuracy and police opened an investigation. There was no progress reported in the investigation by year’s end.

On May 2, Odesa Oblast Right Sector leader Tetyana Soykina said during a rally held by representatives of Svoboda, Right Sector, and National Militia in the city that “Ukraine will belong to Ukrainians, not to kikes, not to oligarchs!” On May 4, President Poroshenko condemned all manifestations of intolerance and anti-Semitism and pledged the government’s “swift” and “resolute” reaction to any attempt to sow enmity in society.

During a meeting with Kyiv Chief Rabbi Jonathan Markowitz on May 7, Interior Minister Avakov condemned the Odesa rally and all other manifestations of anti-Semitism as “unacceptable.” He added that the Russian government might have orchestrated some anti-Semitic acts in an effort to destabilize Ukraine. The Odesa police investigated the May 2 act as a criminal code violation of racial and ethnic equality.

According to media reports, on April 18, the Kostopil District State Administration, Rivne Oblast, urged law enforcement agencies to identify and bring to justice perpetrators who in mid-April painted a swastika on a Holocaust memorial near the town. Local college students removed the graffiti, and an investigation into the case continued at year’s end.

The AUCCRO continued to appeal to the government to adopt a draft bill entitled, “The Concept of Relations between the State and Religious Denominations,” which would shape cooperation between the government and religious groups and provide long-term basis for legislation on religious issues.

In an April 16 meeting with UOC-KP Patriarch Filaret and again during a July 4 meeting with the AUCCRO, Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman reaffirmed the government’s commitment to promoting religious freedom and dialogue with religious communities.

Abuses by Foreign Forces and Nonstate Actors

Russia-led forces in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts continued to detain and imprison members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as other religious leaders.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on November 30, representatives of the "Luhansk People's Republic" ("LPR") detained Jehovah's Witness Mykhailo Papeta as he was travelling to Luhansk through an "LPR" checkpoint. During a search of his vehicle, they found a business card containing a jw.org address. They told him that all Jehovah's Witnesses material and ministry had been banned. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, "LPR" representatives took the detainee to a police station, handcuffed, and beat him. While under detention, "LPR" personnel searched Papeta's home and confiscated some of his religious books. After several hours, they released Papeta, threatening to imprison him again in the future.

According to media, on September 26 the "Supreme Court" of the Russia-controlled "Donetsk People's Republic" ("DPR") upheld the "DPR's" acting prosecutor general's request to ban Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization. The "LPR" authorities introduced a similar ban earlier in the year.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the Russian government reportedly sent seven FSB (Federal Security Service) representatives to the "DPR" to intensify harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In October and November, "DPR" and "LPR" "law-enforcement agencies" reportedly received orders to identify and prosecute Jehovah's Witnesses who did not comply with the ban on their ministry. The authorities summoned several Jehovah's Witnesses for interrogation.

During home visits in Boykovske (formerly Telmanove), "DPR police" warned all local Jehovah's Witnesses about the ban on their activity and collected their signatures to acknowledge receipt of the warning.

On February 2, the Russia-controlled "LPR People's Council" adopted the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. The law requires all religious organizations except for the UOC-MP to undergo "state religious expert evaluation" and reregister by August 2. The council later extended the deadline to October 15. In October the Ukraine-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Institute of Religious Freedom quoted Protestant leaders as saying that the "LPR" had denied reregistration applications of Baptist and Pentecostal churches and Seventh-day Adventists, citing negative results of the "evaluation." The leaders described the refusal as a complete ban on their religious activities, including prohibiting religious ceremonies held by believers at their homes. According to "LPR" proxy authorities, to be eligible for registration a "local religious

organization” must have at least 30 adult members, while a “centralized religious organization” must be composed of at least five such local organizations. These requirements effectively outlawed some smaller religious associations. The law requires Christian Orthodox congregations to register as part of a “diocese recognized by the Orthodox Churches around the world within the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate,” putting at risk the further existence of several remaining UOC-KP parishes.

On April 13, the Russia-controlled “DPR People’s Council” amended the 2016 Law on the Freedom of Worship and Religious Associations banning all religious organizations that do not meet a March 1, 2019, registration deadline. The revised law gave the “DPR’s Ministry of Culture” additional powers to monitor the registration of religious associations in the region and to abolish them on various grounds. The requirement remained for a “religious group,” a newly created religious association not seeking legal entity status, to submit written notification to authorities about its function, location, administration, and the names and home addresses of its members. The “DPR” authorities had 10 days to either put the group on the Register of Religious Groups or cancel the group’s legal status. The “DPR” authorities had a month to examine the application documents of “religious organization,” a religious association seeking legal status. In either case, the “DPR” authorities could conduct a “state religious expert evaluation” of the documents, which could take up to six months, or deny a registration request on a number of grounds, such as missing required information or if authorities had banned the registration of the religious entity that was applying. All religious organizations and religious groups had to notify authorities about their continued existence annually. The law required the UOC-MP to undergo a simplified “legalization” procedure without reregistration and “state religious expert evaluation.”

According to Muslim community and Ukrainian media reports, in late June the “Ministry of State Security of the DPR” raided Al-Amal Mosque in Donetsk, seizing prayer books and other religious materials. The proxy authorities interrogated the mosque’s imam and congregation members. Subsequently, the “DPR” proxy authorities closed the mosque based on what the Muslim community and some Ukrainian media reports called fabricated extremism charges.

According to the All-Ukraine Baptist Union, on June 3, the “LPR State Security Ministry” raided a Baptist church when its members convened for a religious service at a private apartment in Luhansk. The authorities confiscated religious literature and sealed the entrance to the apartment. All-Ukraine Baptist Union

sources said that on August 2, proxy authorities ordered the head of the congregation to pay a fine of 8,000 Russian rubles (\$110). Following the raid, in July the “LPR State Security Ministry” labeled the All-Ukraine Baptist Union as an “extremist” religious organization. The “LPR” proxy authorities accused the Baptists of “evading mandatory state registration,” promoting the “violent assault of the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” and using “psychotropic substances” to put psychological pressure on members of the congregation.

As of August 29, Jehovah’s Witnesses representatives reported “DPR” and “LPR” representatives had seized 16 of their buildings in Debaltseve, Donetsk, Horlivka, Perevalsk, Khrustalny (former Krasny Luch), Boykovske (former Telmanove), Yenakieve, Holubivka (former Kirovsk), Alchevsk, Sorokyne (former Krasnodon), Bryanka, Vyhlehirsk, Luhansk, and Kadiyivka (former Stakhanov), and searched two.

On May 30, a fire destroyed a Kingdom Hall seized by the “LPR” in Luhansk in August 2017. No additional information on the arson was available.

On January 22, the “LPR” authorities closed down a Kingdom Hall in Antratsyt. No additional information on the closure was available.

According to NGO reports, Russia-led forces continued to use previously seized places of worship as military facilities. Jehovah’s Witnesses representatives stated Russia-led forces used some places of worship as barracks.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, since June “DPR” and “LPR” authorities had collected information about their congregations in Donetsk, Torez, Snizhne, Shakhtarsk, Yenakieve, Makiyivka, Bryanka and others, and took some congregation members for questioning.

The “DPR” continued to label materials distributed by the Jehovah Witnesses as “extremist.” From July 2017 to March 2018, the “Supreme Court” of the “DPR” issued four “rulings” declaring seven of their publications “extremist.” The “court” did not notify Jehovah’s Witnesses about its “hearings.” Jehovah’s Witnesses representatives said that as a result, they could neither defend themselves against the charges nor appeal the “rulings.”

On August 22, the “DPR Supreme Court” upheld a request by the “DPR Acting Prosecutor General” to declare Jehovah’s Witnesses website as “extremist”. On September 5, the “DPR Ministry of Communications” instructed

telecommunications providers to ban internet access to the website pursuant to the “court’s” order.

On March 15, the “DPR Supreme Court” and “Ministry of Justice” posted a Republican List of Extremist Materials on their websites. The list included the four latest issues of The Watchtower.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On September 6, the chief of the National Police described the explosion that injured a Jewish boy in Uman in 2017 as a terrorist act orchestrated by a foreign state’s intelligence service to incite interethnic and religious confrontation. He said he had confirmed earlier police reports alleging that in previous years the same individuals as those responsible for the terrorist acts painted anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of synagogues in Lviv and Odesa, and desecrated a synagogue near the grave of Rabbi Nachman, founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement, in Uman.

Jehovah’s Witnesses reported three cases of physical assaults during the year, compared with 18 in 2017. They said one of the attackers had physically and verbally assaulted them on at least 15 previous occasions. On May 27, he beat up and threw stones at Jehovah Witnesses in Korchivtsi village, Chernivtsi Oblast, injuring one of them and damaging the victims’ car. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, police ignored their complaints and “mildly reprimanded” the attacker. On June 13, police began to investigate the May 27 assault as a hate crime after the Jehovah’s Witnesses took the case to court. The investigation continued at year’s end.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, on June 7, an individual attacked several Jehovah’s Witnesses with a wooden stick in Zhytomyr. He reportedly threw their missionary materials to the ground and punched one of the Jehovah’s Witnesses several times. During the 20-minute assault, the attacker demanded that the Jehovah’s Witnesses make the sign of the cross. Police categorized the assault as personal animosity between the attacker and his victims and forwarded the case to court.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, on May 14, an unidentified man in Mykolayiv demanded that a Jehovah’s Witness stop his public ministry and then broke a beer bottle on the victim’s head. The attacker fled before police arrived at the scene.

A court in Zhytomyr continued hearings on a criminal case against four individuals arrested for allegedly attacking Chabad Rabbi Mendel Deitsch at the city's train station in 2016. Deitsch subsequently died from his injuries.

Authorities dropped the investigation of a 2016 case involving a teenager who reportedly shoved a rabbi and used anti-Semitic insults, including "Kikes out of here," after the teenager apologized to the Jewish community.

On May 31, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction of a UOC-MP priest who in 2014 physically and verbally assaulted a Jehovah's Witness in Berezhonka village, Chernivtsi Oblast. The victim sustained a concussion and was hospitalized.

On May 16, the Baranivka District Court, Zhytomyr Oblast sentenced Oleg Nikitchyn to 160 hours of community work for verbal and physical assault on Jehovah's Witness Yuriy Vorobei in June 2017. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the court based its "lenient" sentence on the assailant's statement, disregarding what they called verifiable signs of a hate crime. The court rejected Vorobei's demand that the attacker cover the cost of his medical treatment.

On May 8, Kyiv's Sviatoshyn District Court found R.V. Prokopenko guilty of hooliganism and ordered him to pay a fine of 8500 hryvnias (\$310) for insulting and injuring two Jehovah's Witnesses, and damaging their mobile display of missionary materials in December 2017. During the pretrial investigation, Prokopenko apologized to the victims and compensated them for damages.

On July 27, the UOC-MP celebrated St. Volodymyr's feast day with a procession in Kyiv. Police estimated that 20,000 persons participated in the event. The UOC-MP put the number at 250,000. Police detained three individuals linked to the Bratstvo group, which had reportedly intended to disrupt the procession. Observers of the group described it as a pseudo-nationalist group with a history of provocations in support of pro-Russian causes. During the march, Bratstvo streamed a live "interview" with one of its members posing as an anti-Ukrainian UOC-MP monk.

On September 16, private Israeli media outlet Mako posted a video appearing to show an allegedly Jewish man setting fire to a large outdoor crucifix located in Uman, Cherkasy Oblast, as Hasidic pilgrims came to a local river to perform a religious ritual. According to media, the alleged arson provoked a subsequent altercation between some local residents and pilgrims; there were no reports of

injuries. Uman Jewish community leaders condemned the attack. Law enforcement authorities opened an investigation.

The AUCRA, established in 2017 by a number of mainly smaller religious groups and churches, met on March 20 to discuss ways to promote interfaith dialogue. The group reiterated its commitment to dialogue and to building partnerships between religious organizations and the government.

According to the UOC-MP, local authorities continued to transfer parish jurisdictions from the UOC-MP to the UOC-KP against the will of the parishioners. Ternopil Oblast authorities reportedly refused to renew state registration of the UOC-MP parishes whose church buildings in Butyn and Kynakhivtsi villages were transferred to the UOC-KP in 2014 and 2017 following a split within the two congregations.

On April 3, several dozen members of the C14, which observers describe as a far-right group, arrived at the Kyiv Lavra Monastery compound and armed with sticks to “search” for pro-Russian separatists. They held two monastery guards to cut sleeve patches off the guards’ uniform. C14 left the monastery upon arrival of a police patrol. Law enforcement authorities did not press charges against them. C14 streamed the incident live on its Facebook page.

In a YouTube video posted on April 18, Bratstvo representatives urged Ukrainians to “seize” UOC-MP churches and ignore UOC-KP calls to refrain from violence against the UOC-MP. Media and civil society characterized Bratstvo as a group of “paid thugs” notorious for their involvement in violent provocations orchestrated by Kremlin-linked political forces since 2004.

Posts on the Right Sector website continued to repeat previous statements by the group stating that, at the request of the UOC-KP, it would continue to visit sites disputed between the UOC-MP and UOC-KP to “facilitate” a change of jurisdiction.

Following the UOC-MP and Right Sector statements, UOC-KP Patriarch Filaret repeated previous UOC-KP statements in an August 2 interview with the UOC-KP press center, rejecting accusations that the UOC-KP was involved in the seizures of UOC-MP churches. Patriarch Filaret repeated that these were legitimate transfers to UOC-KP jurisdiction initiated by parishioners. The UOC-KP stated it would continue to act according to the law, but also would continue to accept into its jurisdiction any UOC-MP clergy and laity requesting affiliation with UOC-KP

(and after the December 15 Establishment Council, with the OCU). Following the autocephaly petition from the government and Orthodox bishops to the Ecumenical Patriarchate on April 20, the UOC-KP repeatedly stressed that transition of UOC-MP congregations to a future united Ukrainian Orthodox Church must be voluntary, and free from coercion and violence.

The Jewish community continued to express its concern about the continuing operation of the Krakivskiy Market on the grounds of an ancient Jewish cemetery in Lviv. The UCSJ urged the government to halt permanently the construction of a multistory building on the cemetery grounds that was initially ordered suspended in 2017. The UCSJ and civic activists continued to express concern over the possible continuation of construction of a high-rise building at the site of the World War II Jewish ghetto in Lviv. In 2016, a court suspended the project after human remains were reportedly found and removed from the soil at the construction site. As of year's end, the remains had not been returned to the site.

According to UGCC representatives, on July 13, a group of local residents tried to prevent construction vehicles from entering a site designated by the local government for construction of the Nativity of Christ Church in Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Oblast. One of the local residents reportedly held a hand grenade and threatened to detonate it. Police detained the protester and brought administrative charges against him. On August 17, dozens of individuals who UGCC said were “hired” destroyed a fence surrounding the construction site. Police reportedly detained the suspects and released them after questioning. The authorities opened an investigation. On August 20, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the incident and urging law enforcement agencies to bring the perpetrators to justice.

According to media, on July 25, supporters of Svoboda physically assaulted Chief Editor of *Visti Borznyanshchyny* newspaper Serhiy Blyznyuk for publishing a positive report on a children's summer camp organized by a local UOC-MP diocese. Svoboda supporters described the article as “anti-Ukrainian.” Under Svoboda's pressure, the Borzna District State Administration in Chernihiv Oblast reportedly forced Blyznyuk to resign.

According to the UOC-MP, Svoboda supporters verbally abused Borzna District State Administration Deputy Chairman Oleksandr Maksymov and staffers Olena Taran and Yevhen Tarnovsky and forced them to write resignation letters for allowing the UOC-MP to host the camp in the district. Earlier local Svoboda activists threatened Archbishop Klyment, head of the local UOC-MP diocese, for

organizing the camp. The UOC-MP representatives said on July 21, a group of drunk Svoboda supporters visited the camp but the site was empty because the children had left the day before.

According to the UOC-MP, on November 27, unidentified individuals splashed red paint at the entrance to UOC-MP diocesan office in Rivne and defaced its wall with graffiti, saying, “Our Sailors’ Blood is on Your Hands.” The graffiti was an apparent reference to Russia’s seizure of three Ukrainian naval vessels and 24 crewmembers near the Kerch Strait.

According to police reports, on November 15, two men threw Molotov cocktails at the door of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s St. Andrew’s Church in Kyiv. The Molotov cocktails did not ignite and caused no damage. The attackers fled, using pepper spray against security guards who confronted them. According to the UOC-KP, the arsonists injured a UOC-KP priest. The attack occurred after the government gave permission for the Ecumenical Patriarchate to open a representative mission in the historic building. On November 27, police detained one of suspected arsonists and found flammable liquid in his apartment in Kyiv.

According to the UAOC, on August 30, unidentified individuals burned and destroyed the interior and roof of the Nativity of the Theotokos Church in Hanychi Village, Transcarpathia Oblast. No suspects were detained.

According to the UOC-MP, on March 14, unidentified individuals set fire to an auxiliary building near the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God *Joy of All Who Sorrow* in Kyiv. The fire destroyed the roof and stored construction materials. Shortly before the fire, two individuals reportedly asked the church’s security guard about the church’s affiliation. Police could not identify the perpetrators. There have been six previous arson attacks on the church since 2014.

According to the UOC-MP, on March 10, unidentified individuals set fire to its Transfiguration Church in Kyiv, causing serious damage to the building. Police opened an investigation; however, no one was detained by year’s end.

According to media sources, on January 25, individuals who self-identified as members of C14 and others, tore down an information board near the UOC-MP Sts. Volodymyr and Olga Church in central Kyiv. They posted leaflets on church doors describing congregation members as Russian FSB agents. The individuals fled when police arrived. C14 then posted footage of the occurrence on its Facebook page.

According to police, on the night of January 25, individuals doused the UOC-MP Sts. Volodymyr and Olga Church with flammable liquid and ignited it, causing minor damage to the building. They insulted and spit at UOC-MP clerics who arrived at the scene. Police detained two suspects and found several canisters with flammable liquid near the church. The detainees said the attack was in retaliation for what they characterized as the Moscow Patriarchate's endorsement of Russian aggression against Ukraine. On January 27, Kyiv's Shevchenkivsky District Court ordered the detention of the suspects for 60 days. Parliament member Ihor Lutsenko condemned the Shevchenkivsky District Court's decision to detain the suspects, describing members of the monastic congregation of the church as "FSB agents." The Kyiv Appellate Court released the suspects on bail on February 5, following petitions from parliamentarians and a UOC-MP request to mitigate punishment for the suspects. During the court hearing, the suspects pleaded guilty. They described the arson attempt as their protest against UOC-MP clerics, saying they were "FSB agents," and against the "unlawful" construction of the church building at a protected historical heritage site. On February 6, UOC-KP Patriarch Filaret condemned the arson attack.

The Jehovah's Witnesses reported 25 cases of vandalism against Kingdom Halls during the year, compared with 30 acts of vandalism in 2017. The incidents included an arson attack that destroyed a Kingdom Hall in Radomyshl, Zhytomyr Oblast, on March 25. Police continued to investigate the arson at year's end.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on May 19, unidentified individuals broke windows of a Kingdom Hall in Smila, Cherkasy Oblast. Police made no progress in investigating this occurrence or two previous acts of vandalism against the building committed in 2017.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, on May 2, unidentified individuals defaced a wall of a Kingdom Hall in Kharkiv with graffiti saying "sect." Police did not open a criminal investigation of the act, reportedly describing it as a minor case that did not meet the threshold for an investigation.

The National Minority Rights Monitoring Group reported 12 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism during the year, compared with 24 in 2017 and 19 in 2016.

The Jewish community continued to express concern over the local government's inability to relocate a cross that self-described nationalist activists placed in the old Jewish cemetery in Kolomyia in 2017. On September 6, the Kolomyia City

Council upheld the activists' request to declare the cemetery a memorial park. The Jewish community filed a lawsuit against the decision, saying that the new legal status of the areas would make it impossible to seek relocation of the cross. The hearing continued at the Ivano-Frankivsk District Administrative Court at year's end.

The case against three suspects who vandalized a local synagogue and cemetery and attempted to set fire to the *ohel*, a structure covering the grave of Chief Rabbi Gillel Boruch Liechtenstein, continued in Kolomyia, Ivano Frankivsk Oblast.

According to the Jewish community and police reports, Holocaust memorials and Jewish religious monuments were vandalized in various locations, including in Cherkasy, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytsky, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Poltava, Rivne, and Ternopil Oblasts and Vinnystya City. Police investigations into these acts continued at year's end; according to police, there was no progress on these case or similar cases from 2017.

Jewish community representatives reported systematic desecration of a Holocaust mass grave in Sosonky near Rivne. On July 21, police detained one of two alleged perpetrators who dug up the mass grave in search of gold. The second vandal fled the scene. The detainee reportedly claimed he was only a driver for his associate and was soon released; the case remained under investigation at year's end. In April police detained two individuals who dug a tunnel through the Holocaust mass grave in Nemyriv, Vinnytsya Oblast, and removed human remains. The individuals said they were looking for gold from the grave.

In mid-November unidentified individuals in Kyiv posted leaflets announcing a rally to topple the government to "hand over power to the people." Authors of the leaflet featuring a crossed-out Menorah, the president's photo, and a satanic pentagram, urged the government's opponents to stop tolerating "genocide." According to media reports, on November 18, approximately 300 individuals participated in the announced gathering in central Kyiv. Its anonymous organizer, wearing a balaclava, and other speakers blamed "Yids" for "seizing power" in the country. One speaker demanded that Jews be "destroyed." The crowd helped the man in a balaclava escape from police, who tried to detain him because of his statements. After the scuffle, police briefly detained a suspect allegedly involved in the gathering.

On October 29, during a protest against increasing utility tariffs in Vinnytsya, protesters Yuriy Kysil and Mykhailo Siranchuk stated Jews had "seized power" in

the country. On November 23, in response to an inquiry by Member of Parliament Oleksandr Feldman, the Vinnytsya police department said the statements did not constitute hate speech because the activists “had noted they did not mean to fuel ethnic, racial, or religious hatred.”

On February 2, Maryana Polyanska, editor of the *Chortkivsky Visnyk* newspaper in Ternopil Oblast, published an article titled “Yids or Jews?” stating Jews profited at the expense of Ukrainians and dominated the government. The regional police and procuracy investigated the article as an attempt to incite interethnic hatred. The local government condemned the publication. On February 9, the Independent Media Trade Union condemned Polyanska’s article as an expression of “religious and ethnic discrimination” and terminated her union membership.

According to the *Vechirniy Kamyanets* news website, on October 14, unidentified individuals painted swastikas on a Holocaust memorial in Kamyanets-Podilsky, Khmelnytsky Oblast.

According to media reports, on April 27-28, unidentified individuals smashed windows and scattered prayer books at the *ohel* over at the grave of renowned 17th century Rabbi Shmuel Eidels, in Ostroh, Rivne Oblast. Police opened an investigation but did not report any developments by year’s end.

According to media sources, in mid-April unidentified individuals painted neo-Nazi graffiti on a Holocaust monument in Poltava. Police said they had not made progress in the investigation by year’s end.

On March 22, the SBU announced the detention of several individuals accused of painting anti-Semitic graffiti on a Jewish community center in Sumy in December 2017. According to the SBU, Russian intelligence agencies had ordered the group to commit anti-Semitic vandalism.

According to media reports, on January 29, a masked individual ran into a Lviv bookstore hosting a Holocaust history lecture and threw a smoke bomb. The attacker fled after a participant in the event confronted him. The Lviv mayor’s office condemned the attack, calling on the law enforcement agencies to investigate it. Police opened an investigation but did not identify the attacker.

According to the Jewish community, police had yet to identify the arsonists who in 2017 damaged parts of the Jewish cemetery in Kolomiya.

Police continued to investigate 2017 acts of vandalism against Holocaust memorials in Lviv, Kyiv, Odesa, Svalyava, Ternopil and Uzhhorod. Authorities also continued to investigate 2016 acts of vandalism against the Israeli flag in Babyn Yar in Kyiv, the *ohel* on the grave of Rabbi Aryeh Leib in Shpola, and desecration of the Holocaust monument in Uzhhorod, all reportedly without progress.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador, embassy officials, and other U.S. government officials continued to meet with the Administration of the President, the Ministries of Culture, Interior, Justice, and Foreign Affairs, members of parliament, political parties, and local officials to engage on issues of religious freedom. They discussed the importance of fair and transparent treatment of religious groups during the establishment of the new OCU, preservation of religious heritage sites, support for religious minorities, and increasing manifestations of anti-Semitism. In meetings with government officials at both the national and local levels, the Ambassador called for unequivocal condemnation and swift prosecution of anti-Semitic acts. The Ambassador also urged government officials to increase their efforts to ensure the preservation of historic religious sites.

The embassy issued several public statements condemning religiously motivated acts of violence and calling for tolerance and restraint to ensure a peaceful transition period around autocephaly. The embassy also used social media to amplify U.S. government support for religious freedom, including the rights of religious minorities.

The U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met with government officials, religious leaders, and activists in September to promote religious freedom. The Ambassador urged government officials to condemn anti-Semitism and called for the government to protect the right of all religious groups to govern their religion according to their beliefs and practice their faiths freely. He met with religious activists and former prisoners of war to discuss religious freedom abuses in the “DPR,” “LPR,” and occupied Crimea.

Embassy officials continued their meetings with internally displaced Muslims from Crimea to discuss their abuse by occupation authorities, including regular searches and detentions, a continuing inability to practice their religion freely or express

dissent, a lack of restitution of their religious properties, and other continuing problems they faced with the Crimean occupation authorities.

Embassy officials met with religious leaders to discuss religious freedom abuses in the “DPR” and “LPR,” including banning of certain religious groups, registration requirements, and a lack of restitution of their religious properties.

The Ambassador hosted an interfaith iftar in June during Ramadan. Religious leaders from across faiths, government officials, and members of the diplomatic community attended. The Ambassador and other embassy officials participated in Hanukkah, Christmas, Holocaust commemoration, and other religious events during which they emphasized the importance of religious dialogue and equality and encouraged efforts to combat anti-Semitism and preserve cultural heritage.

The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to urge the peaceful resolution of property and jurisdiction disputes in meetings with leaders of prominent Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious groups in Kyiv and Lviv. In particular, the embassy continued to encourage religious groups involved in the dispute related to the location of parts of Lviv’s Krakivskiy Market on the former site of the city’s Old Jewish Cemetery to resolve the dispute through constructive dialogue. Embassy officials also discussed other issues affecting religious communities, such as registration procedures for religious groups, desecration of monuments, and the government’s procedures for religious property restitution.

CRIMEA

Executive Summary

In February 2014, armed forces of the Russian Federation seized and occupied Crimea. In March 2014, Russia announced Crimea had become part of the Russian Federation. A UN General Assembly resolution declared continued international recognition of Crimea’s inclusion within Ukraine’s international borders. The U.S. government continues not to recognize the purported annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and recognizes that Crimea continues to be part of Ukraine. Occupation forces continue to impose the de facto implementation of the laws of the Russian Federation in the territory of Crimea.

In a joint 2014-2018 report for the UN Committee against Torture, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, Regional Center for Human Rights, and Media Initiative for Human Rights reported religious activists were among victims of

torture. According to the report, despite the health problems of Arsen Dzhapparov and Uzeir Abdullayev, detained by the FSB on suspicion of involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir, occupation authorities denied medical assistance to them.

The Russian government reported there were 831 religious communities registered in Crimea, compared with 812 in 2017, a number that dropped by over 1,000 since occupation began in 2014, the last year for which Ukrainian government figures were available. According to religious activists, human rights groups, and media reports, Russian authorities in occupied Crimea continued to persecute and intimidate minority religious congregations, Jehovah's Witnesses, UOC-KP members, and Muslim Crimean Tatars. Occupation authorities continued to subject Muslim Crimean Tatars to imprisonment and detentions, especially if the authorities purportedly suspected the individuals of involvement in the Muslim political organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is legal in Ukraine.

Due to the close links between religion and ethnicity, it was sometimes difficult for human rights groups to categorize incidents as solely based on religious identity.

According to Forum 18, an international religious freedom NGO, administrative court hearings under Russian law imposed on Crimea for "missionary activity" doubled in Crimea compared to the previous year. There were 23 prosecutions for such activity, most of which ended in convictions with some type of monetary fine.

Greek Catholic leaders said they continued to have difficulty staffing their parishes because of the policies of occupation authorities. The UGCC said it continued to have to operate under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Church. The UOC-KP reported continued seizures of its churches. Crimean Tatars reported police continued to be slow to investigate attacks on Islamic religious properties or refused to investigate them at all.

Religious and human rights groups continued to report Russian media efforts to create suspicion and fear among certain religious groups, especially targeting Crimean Tatar Muslims, whom media repeatedly accused of links to Islamist groups designated by Russia as terrorist groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. Russian media also portrayed Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremists."

The U.S. government continued to condemn the intimidation of Christian and Muslim religious groups by Russian occupation authorities in Crimea and to call international attention to the religious abuses committed by Russian forces. U.S. government officials remained unable to visit the peninsula following its

occupation by the Russian Federation. Embassy officials, however, continued to meet in other parts of Ukraine with Crimean Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders to discuss their concerns over actions taken against their congregations by the occupation authorities, and to demonstrate continued U.S. support for their right to practice their religious beliefs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The Crimean peninsula consists of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and the City of Sevastopol. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2014 estimates, the total population of the peninsula is 2,353,000. There are no recent independent surveys with data on the religious affiliation of the population, but media outlets estimate the number of Crimean Tatars, who are overwhelmingly Muslim, at 300,000, or 13 percent of the population.

According to the information provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture in 2014 (the most recent year available), the UOC-MP remains the largest Christian denomination. Smaller Christian denominations include the UOC-KP, the Roman Catholic Church, UAOC, UGCC, and Jehovah's Witnesses, along with Protestant groups, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Lutherans. Adherents of the UOC-MP, Protestants, and Muslims are the largest religious groups in Sevastopol.

There are several Jewish congregations, mostly in Sevastopol and Simferopol. Jewish groups estimate between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish residents lived in Crimea before the Russian occupation began.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

Pursuant to international recognition of the continued inclusion of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within Ukraine's international borders, Crimea continues to be officially subject to the constitution and laws of Ukraine. In the aftermath of Russia's occupation, however, occupation authorities continue their de facto implementation of the laws of the Russian Federation in the territory.

Government Practices

On December 22, the UN General Assembly issued a resolution condemning Russian occupation authorities for “the ongoing pressure exerted upon religious minority communities, including through frequent police raids, threats against and persecution of those belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Protestant Church, mosques and Muslim religious schools, Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics and Jehovah’s Witnesses.” The UN also condemned the “baseless prosecution of dozens of peaceful Muslims for allegedly belonging to Islamic organizations.” Such prosecutions were primarily of Muslims occupation authorities claimed were members of the Islamic group Hizb-ut-Tahrir, banned in Russia, but legal in Ukraine.

In a joint 2014-2018 report for the UN Committee against Torture, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, Regional Center for Human Rights, and Media Initiative for Human Rights reported religious activists were among victims of torture. According to the report, despite the health problems of Arsen Dzhapparov and Uzeir Abdullayev, detained by the FSB on suspicion of involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir, occupation authorities denied medical assistance to them.

Forced psychiatric examinations of Crimean Tatar Muslim prisoners continued throughout the year. The Crimean Human Rights Group (CHRG) said on December 13, Server Mustafayev was placed in a psychiatric institution for a month-long forced examination.

On June 30, the NGO Krymska Solidarnist quoted human rights attorney Emil Kurbedinov as saying the occupation authorities had subjected Muslim activist Neriman Memedeminov to forced psychiatric examination.

According to media, from June 26 to July 18, Muslim detainee Emir-Huseyn Kuku was on a hunger strike to show his solidarity with other political prisoners and to call attention to their treatment. On August 26, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld the Ukrainian government’s petition to require Russia to share information about Kuku’s state of health and the medical care provided to him. According to a September 6 BBC News Ukraine report, the ECHR press service quoted the Russian government as saying that Kuku was receiving proper medical care and was not on a hunger strike at that time.

According to the CHRG, in December the number of Crimean Tatars charged in connection with their Hizb ut-Tahrir membership totaled 29, including Ruslan Zeytullayev, Rustem Vaitov, Nuri Primov and Ferat Sayfullayev, who were

serving their prison sentences in Russia. These four were arrested in Sevastopol in 2015 and charged with participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Additionally, defendants in the Yalta Hizb ut-Tahrir case (Enver Bekirov, Vadim Siruk, Muslim Aliyev, Emir Usein Kuku, Refat Alimov, and Arsen Dzhepparov) and the Bakhchisarai Hizb ut-Tahrir case (Enver Mamutov, Remzi Memetov, Zevri Abseitov and Rustem Abiltarov) were in a detention center in Rostov while their trials continued.

Prisoners in the Bakhchisarai Hizb ut-Tahrir case (Ernes Ametov, Marlen Asanov, Seyran Saliyev, Memet Belialov, Timur Ibragimov, Server Zakiryayev, Server Mustafayev and Edem Smailov), Simferopol Hizb ut-Tahrir case (Teymur Abdullayev, Rustem Ismailov, Ayder Saledinov, Uzeir Abdullayev, Emil Djemadenov), and Sevastopol Hizb ut-Tahrir case (Enver Seytosmanov), and activist of Krymska Solidarnist Nariman Memedeminov were held in pretrial detention in Simferopol. Server Mustafayev, Edem Smailov and Nariman Memedeminov were held in pretrial detention in Simferopol.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on March 22, FSB officers detained blogger Nariman Memedeminov following a search at his home in Kholmovka village in Bakhchisarai District. The NGO linked the arrest to his reporting on the human rights situation in Crimea. On March 23, the Kyivsky District Court in Simferopol sanctioned his arrest on terrorist charges, citing his involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on December 24, Roman Plisko, judge of the North Caucasus District Court in Rostov, sentenced Enver Mamutov to 17 years in a maximum-security prison. Ruslan Abiltarov, Remzi Memetov, and Zevri Abseitov each received nine-year maximum-security prison sentences. They were arrested in Bakhchisarai in 2016 and charged with participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir.

According to the Krym Realii news website, on December 6-7, the Kyivsky District Court in Simferopol prolonged until March 9, 2019, the detentions of Seyran Saliyev, Memet Belyalov and Timur Ibragimov, Marlen Asanov, Server Zekiryayev, and Ernes Ametov for their suspected involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bakhchisarai.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on December 3, Russia's Rostov District Military Court extended until February 27, 2019, the detentions of Ayder Saledinov, Teymur Abdullayev, Uzair Abdullayev, Emil Dzhemadenov, and

Rustem Ismailov, whom the FSB had detained on suspicion of involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in Simferopol.

According to Krymska Solidarnist, on November 22, the Rostov District Military Court prolonged the detentions of Muslims Aliyev, Emir-Useyin Kuku, Vadym Siruk, Enver Bekirov, Arsen Dzhepparov and Refat Alimov until February 28, 2019. The court cited their suspected involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in Yalta.

According to an OHCHR quarterly report issued in September, since the beginning of the Russian occupation, at least 33 Crimean residents were arrested for alleged ties with radical Muslim groups. OHCHR reported four of them were convicted in the absence of “any credible evidence that the defendants called for the use of force, violated public order, or engaged in any unlawful activity in Crimea.”

According to CHRG, on December 24, Inna Semenets, magistrate of the Evpatoriya Judicial District, fined the Karaite religious community for failing to place an identifying sign on the building of a religious organization. In December the Crimean magistrates reviewed at least five cases pertaining to “illegal missionary activity.” During the year, 30 of these cases were reviewed, and the magistrates imposed an administrative penalty, fines of 5,000-30,000 Russian rubles (\$72-430) and a warning in at least 18 cases.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses and Forum 18, on November 14, the Russian FSB opened the first criminal case in occupied Crimea against a Jehovah’s Witness, Sergei Filatov, on extremism-related charges. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, Filatov is a former head of their Sivash community in Dzhankoy. Jehovah’s Witnesses stated that on November 16, 200 FSB officers raided Filatov’s home and the homes of seven other Jehovah’s Witnesses in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoy. During the raid, officers reportedly pinned 79-year-old Oleksandr Ursu to a wall, forced him to the ground, and handcuffed him. Ursu spent his childhood years with his family in Soviet exile in Siberia. Later the authorities rehabilitated him as a victim of Soviet political repression. According to JW.org and Forum 18, two Jehovah’s Witness members were hospitalized for high blood pressure, and 22-year-old Zhanna Lungu suffered a miscarriage following the raid.

The investigation of Ervin Ibragimov’s 2016 kidnapping continued with no new information on his whereabouts at year’s end. According to media sources, in March Simferopol’s Kyiv District Court dismissed a complaint by his family’s lawyer about lack of police response to attorney inquiries regarding the

investigation of the case. In May 2016, unidentified uniformed men kidnapped Ibragimov, a Muslim and member of the Bakhchisarai Mejlis and of the Coordinating Council of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars, after stopping his car on the side of the road.

According to Forum 18, administrative court hearings under Russian law imposed on Crimea for “missionary activity” doubled in Crimea compared to the previous year. There were 23 prosecutions for such activity, 19 of which ended with some type of punishment. Many of those prosecuted had been sharing their faith on the street or holding worship at unapproved venues. According to Forum 18, 12 Russian citizens were fined approximately 10 days’ average local wages. Six Ukrainian citizens were given higher fines of up to nearly two months’ average local wages. Forum 18 stated these six cases, in addition to the case of another Ukrainian who was prosecuted, appear to be the first use in Crimea of a Russian Administrative Code on “foreigners conducting missionary activity” that is “specifically aimed at non-Russians.”

According to Forum 18, occupation authorities brought an additional 17 cases against individuals and religious communities for failing to use the full legal name of a registered religious community. The punishments generally involved fines of approximately 10 days’ wages, according to Forum 18. Occupation authorities brought an additional 14 cases against individuals and religious communities for failing to use the full legal name of a registered religious community.

According to Forum 18, local authorities maintained a ban on the Tablighi Jamaat Muslim missionary movement in Crimea under the 2009 ruling by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. Forum 18 reported on its website on November 28 that the trial of four alleged members of the Tablighi Jamaat Muslim missionary movement on extremism-related charges was imminent at the Crimea “Supreme Court” in Simferopol. The four men, all members of the Tatar minority, were arrested in October 2017.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, local authorities maintained a ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses in Crimea under the 2017 ruling by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

According to the Ministry of Justice of Russia, 831 religious organizations were registered in Crimea, including 69 in Sevastopol, as of year’s end. These included the two largest religious organizations – the Christian Orthodox UOC-MP and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea (SAMC) – as well as various

Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholic communities, among other religious groups.

According to data collected by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture in 2014 (the most recent year available), there were 2,083 religious organizations (a term including parishes, congregations, theological schools, monasteries, and other constituent parts of a church or religious group) in the ARC and 137 in Sevastopol. The numbers included organizations both with and without legal entity status. Muslim religious organizations constituted the largest number of religious organizations in the ARC, most of which were affiliated with the SAMC, Ukraine's largest Muslim group.

The OHCHR report on the most recent number of registered religious communities indicated more than 1,000 religious communities recognized under Ukrainian law had not reregistered. According to the OHCHR, stringent legal requirements under Russian legislation continued to prevent or discourage reregistration of many religious communities.

According to human rights groups, occupation authorities continued to restrict the rights of Crimean Tatars, who are predominantly Muslim, following the 2016 designation of the Mejlis, recognized under Ukrainian law as the democratically elected representative council of the Crimean Tatars, as an "extremist organization."

Human rights groups reported occupation authorities continued to require imams at Crimean Tatar mosques to inform them each time they transferred from one mosque to another.

The Roman Catholic Church reported it continued to operate in the territory as a pastoral district directly under the authority of the Vatican. Polish and Ukrainian Roman Catholic Church priests were permitted to stay in the territory for only 90 days at a time and then were required to remain out of Crimea for 90 days before returning.

According to the UGCC, it could still only operate as a part of the pastoral district of the Roman Catholic Church.

According to the UOC-KP, Russian occupation authorities continued to pressure the UOC-KP Crimean diocese in a bid to force the UOC-KP to leave the region. Only five of the 15 UOC-KP churches located in Crimea prior to the Russian

occupation remained functioning at the end of the year, compared with eight in 2017.

On June 3, the “Government of Sevastopol” returned to the Roman Catholic Church the vacant former Church of St. Clement. According to the media, “Governor of Sevastopol” Dmitry Ovsyannikov called the decision a “restoration of historical justice.”

According to media sources, Russian authorities ordered the relocation of human remains from an ancient Muslim cemetery near Bakhchisaray due to road construction through the cemetery.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Following an October 17 mass shooting in a Kerch college, Russian media widely discussed a claim that the shooter’s mother was a member of Jehovah’s Witnesses “sect.”

On July 18, local authorities in Kerch said they had identified a group of teenagers who during that month had destroyed 15 tombstones in a Muslim cemetery in Bagerove. Local government representatives said the suspects would face administrative penalties.

According to Krym Realii news website, on the night of June 18-19, unidentified individuals painted neo-Nazi graffiti on a fence surrounding a mosque in Bilohirsk.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. government continued its efforts to focus international attention on the religious freedom-related abuses committed by Russian forces and occupation authorities in Crimea, especially on actions taken by those forces and authorities against Christians and Muslims. U.S. government and embassy officials condemned the continuing intimidation of minority religious congregations, including Christians and Muslim Crimean Tatars. On December 20, among the frequent public statements and tweets to amplify U.S. government support for religious freedom, including the rights of religious minorities, the Ambassador stated, “Tolerance, restraint, and understanding are decisive factors that provide an opportunity for people with different religious beliefs to live and flourish peacefully together.”

Although embassy and other U.S. government officials remained unable to visit Crimea following the Russian occupation, embassy officials continued to meet in other parts of Ukraine with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders. The leaders discussed their concerns over actions taken against congregations by the occupation authorities and reassured the religious leaders of continued U.S. support for the right of all to practice their religious beliefs. Embassy officials told religious leaders the United States would continue to support religious freedom in Crimea and press the occupation authorities to return confiscated property and release prisoners incarcerated for their religious or political beliefs.