

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **UKRAINE: Religious freedom and diversity doomed to disappear under Putin's rule**

**Religious freedom for non-Orthodox/  
Moscow Patriarchate doomed to  
disappear in Ukrainian lands under  
Putin's rule**

*Since the beginning of the occupation, the number of religious organizations in Crimea has been reduced by half, and that of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) parishes independent from Moscow Patriarchate decreased by six times. This is what to be*

***expected for any Ukrainian territory to be occupied or annexed by Putin. Moreover, all Jehovah's Witnesses communities will be banned.***

RISU (19.03.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3Iw0eX4> – After Crimea was occupied, the number of religious organizations has been reduced by half, and the number of parishes of the OCU decreased by more than six times.

Head of the State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience Olena Bohdan made this statement during an online press conference in Ukrinform a few days ago.

“According to official data, before the occupation, at least 2,220 religious organizations representing 43 denominations operated on the Crimean Peninsula. As of the end of 2020, the Russian Federation has reported 907 religious organizations representing about 20 denominations. It means the number of religious organizations and denominations decreased by more than twice,” Ms. Bohdan said.

She also noted the complicated situation with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine/ Patriarchate of Constantinople.

“Over the years of occupation, the activities of this church have become close to impossible. As of the beginning of 2014, the Crimean Diocese of the OCU consisted of 45 parishes, which were handled by 14 clergy members. However, at the beginning of 2022, the dioceses only had 7 parishes and 4 clergy members left. Thus, parishes decreased by more than 6 times, and clergymen by more than three times. In such conditions, the OCU is on the verge of disappearance and may be completely ousted from the temporarily occupied Crimea,” Ms. Bohdan said.

At the same time, she stressed that actions aimed at seizing or destroying OCU church buildings in Yevpatoria could be qualified as war crimes from the point of view of the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Bohdan added that such an organization as Jehovah's witnesses was banned in occupied Crimea as well. In 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation recognized it as extremist. At the end of January 2022, five people of this religious community were imprisoned in Crimea, and another nine were restricted in movement.

"The label of extremist activity is also put on the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people since Crimean Tatars are mostly Muslims. When arrests are made on charges of "illegal missionary activity", Muslims and the Crimean Tatar ethnic identity suffer. This is because the Crimean Tatar community has always been taking an active regarding the need to return Crimea to the control of the Government of Ukraine," the head of the State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience noted.

According to her, today, Baptists and Jews also fell under this article.

"Within the framework of such proceedings for the so-called "illegal missionary activity," in 2021, several resolutions were already adopted, and fines were collected in the amount of at least 370 thousand rubles. If we look at the entire period of occupation, the number of fines amounted to almost 2 million rubles," Ms. Bohdan said.

She recalled that one of the reasons for the persecution of Muslims is the fight against the political party Hizb ut-Tahrir, banned as an extremist organization, because this is a convenient way for propagandists to imprison someone who turned out to be inconvenient for Putin's rule.

**[Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website](#)**

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