

# UKRAINE: Report on infringement of religious liberty under Ukrainian rebels

*Terror in occupied territories: Rights advocates publish instances of persecution of churches*

*Read the report here.*



RISU (24.10.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2Dh8I94> (en) / <https://bit.ly/2ETCa6U> (ru) – The Institute for Religious Liberty presented a report, “Freedom of religious confession in the crosshairs: Russian terror in occupied territories of eastern Ukraine.”

In it the rights advocates cite numerous instances of religious persecutions in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which are committed by Russian-supported militants.

The presentation of the report was held on 24 October 2018 in the press center of Ukrinform in Kiev, with the participation of representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Ukrainian Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith, the Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church, the Association of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine, and the Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Ukraine.

The role of the international community is key in putting a stop to current persecutions against believers and churches, which are being committed by the occupying authority in the east of Ukraine. This was why on the eve of the press conference, religious leaders and experts of the IRL conducted a separate presentation of the report for representatives of diplomatic representations and foreign missions.

“There are no doubts of the fact that the religious factor was used as one of the instruments of the hybrid war by Russia against Ukraine, in which an essential role is being played by false propaganda and destabilization of society on the basis of religious, national, and linguistic identity. With the help of provocations of schisms and social rifts, Russian authorities have prepared the ground for further military intervention and occupation,” the authors of the report conclude.

Evangelical Christians, Orthodox parishes of the Kiev patriarchate, Greek Catholics, and Jehovah’s Witnesses are the main targets of religious persecution on the part of

occupation authorities who are supported by Russia.

At the same time, so-called "laws" of the self-proclaimed republics in the sphere of religious activity and combating extremism actually are being exploited for concealing under a cover of "legality" those religiously motivated crimes that militants are committing against the civilian population. Thus in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the occupation authorities are implementing the same religious policy as is also in Russia itself.

Participants of the presentation noted that the response of the international community to religious persecutions, which the occupation authority in the east of Ukraine is exercising, should be a comprehensive and impartial international monitoring of freedom of religious confession. And also, as a consequence, there should be the documentation and public disclosure of violations and crimes on the grounds of religion in the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government, including instances of requiring religious societies to reregister and the subsequent religious persecutions for activity "without registration," and also baseless accusations of extremist activity.

The authors of the report also recommend to the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights that it prepare a separate report on the basis of results of the work of the Monitoring Mission of the U.N. regarding the situation concerning the right to freedom of religion or convictions in the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government.

**The full text of the report is available in English at:**

<http://www.irf.in.ua/files/publications/2018.10.24-IRF-Report-ENG.pdf>

**Russian version:**

<http://irf.in.ua/files/publications/2018.10.24-IRF-Report-RUS.pdf>

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