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Public council of the ministry of foreign affairs of Ukraine condemned the violations against believers in the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas

Religious Information Service of Ukraine (28.12.16) - <http://bit.ly/2iV0okr> - Public Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine condemned the violation of the rights of believers in the occupied territories of Ukraine at the Donbass and Crimea.

This was discussed during the meeting of December 22, 2016 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, reports the Institute of Religious Freedom.

The meeting drew attention to the violation of the rights of believers in temporarily occupied Crimea and in some territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions. In particular, the prohibition by the occupation authorities to worship in the Church of Evangelical Christians "Voice of Hope" in Bakhchisarai, and in house of worship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Horlivka Donetsk region.

About these and other violations of the rights of believers Institute for Religious Freedom reported during the OSCE international conference, which took place on 14 December in Vienna.

"The question of restoration of rights of believers in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine will constantly be raised at the international level (OSCE, UN, Council of Europe) until all churches and prayer houses in the Donbas and Crimea will not be returned to believers and relevant religious communities" - IRS chairman Alexander Zayets stressed during a meeting of the Public Council.

The members of the Public Council discussed the liberation of hostages, promoting chaplaincy as a form of cooperation between the State and the Church to support the Ukrainian soldiers who defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine from Russian aggression. Public Council at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs unanimously voted in support of the decision to pass the Law of Ukraine "On the military chaplaincy as soon as possible".

Kiev Orthodox and Greek-Catholics excluded from the Inter-religious Council of Crimea

The decision of the Russian authorities on Black Sea peninsula sparks debate. The Crimea is adapting to Russian legislation, which recognizes only 'traditional' Buddhism, Judaism, Orthodoxy and Islam.

AsiaNews.it (31.10.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2qxsAJV> - After a year and a half of discussions, the Russian authorities in Crimea – Ukrainian peninsula, annexed by Moscow in 2014, following a referendum not recognized by the international community - "have decided that not all religious organizations are equal in the eyes of the new administration".

This was revealed by Religiia v Ukraine website, republishing the news from Novocrimea.ru. The reference is to the decision to include only religious organizations "of historically traditional confessions, operating on the territory of the Crimea at least 100 years" in the Council for Interreligious Relations, led by the city of Simferopol.

The initiative thus excludes Greek-catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox Church representatives from the new Council as well as other religions present in the peninsula since the early twentieth century. The Crimea is adapting, in this way, to Russian legislation according to which, the "traditional" religions are Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. In Russian Federation, not even Catholics or Protestants are part of the Inter-religious Council, a public organization that since 1998 has united the leaders of four religious traditions of the country.

The decision of the Simferopol authorities of represents a change from what had been decided in February 2015. Then, Religiia v Ukraine notes, local authorities had established that in interfaith Council would include all "religious associations", without specifying " traditional religions". The detractors of the initiative claim that it was not officially explained why the "new" faiths were dropped and emphasize that it is not even proven that Buddhism was present in Crimea, already 100 years ago.

In December 2014, the Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea of the Kiev Patriarchate, Kliment, had complained in an interview that the concept of "traditional" and "non-traditional" Churches does not exist from the religious and legal perspective.

"It is the opinion of some officials - he said - We were told that the Patriarchate of Kiev is not traditional. What does this mean? From an administrative or spiritual point of view? If we talk of the Patriarchate as an administrative entity, then this confirms again that the current authorities are violating the Constitution of Crimea, and the orders of the same Putin over civil society. From the spiritual point of view, however, if they tell us that we are not traditional, then this means that the same Orthodoxy in Russia is not traditional and therefore it is also the Moscow Patriarchate. "

Both Greek-Catholics and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Kiev immediately opposed the annexation of the Crimea to Russia have criticized the aggressive policies of the Kremlin in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.

Concerns about respect for religious freedom in the peninsula on the Black Sea are also caused by the treatment of the minority community of the Muslim Tatars, historically present in these lands, and opposed both to the referendum and annexation. For the past two years there has been a real pressure campaign of kidnappings, prohibitions, searches and trails against their leaders, defined by many as politically motivated.

Head of Beleaguered Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Crimea detained after informing PACE of rights abuses

Khpg.org (20.10.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2gfQxCT> - Archbishop Kliment, the Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate in Crimea, was detained on Oct 19, on his return to Crimea under Russian occupation. No explanation was given, and although he was released after an hour, this is the second such occasion and bears ominous similarities to the treatment by the Russian occupation regime of Crimean Tatar leaders Mustafa Dzhemiliev and Refat Chubarov before they were banned from their homeland. Archbishop Kliment's voice has been vital in protesting against the mounting repression and politically motivated arrests under Russian occupation and this latest incident comes just a week after he addressed an urgent plea to international bodies to "take decisive measures to protect fundamental rights of Ukrainians in Crimea".

The Archbishop addressed the Autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [PACE] on October 11. He told them of the persecution which the Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate has been subjected to since Russia's annexation, and of the danger which the Ukrainian language was facing under Russian occupation. He called on the international community to help protect the national, cultural and religious rights of all Ukrainian citizens in Crimea.

In late August Archbishop Kliment addressed an appeal to Russian Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Supreme Mufti Sheikh ul-Islam asking them to do all in their power to secure the release of Crimean political prisoners.

Beginning with the famous words from the Talmud: "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world", he explained that it was the appalling use of punitive psychiatry against Crimean Tatar leader Ilmi Umerov that had prompted his letter. He had just visited Umerov, he explained, who was being forcibly held in a psychiatric hospital for supposed 'assessment'. 59-year-old Umerov is accused of 'public calls to action aimed at violating Russia's territorial integrity' for stating, as do all democratic countries, that Crimea is Ukrainian, and his health issues made the treatment he received a direct danger to his life.

Kliment called on the two religious leaders "to do everything to secure the release of Umerov, Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko & Oleksiy Chirniy; Oleksandr Kostenko; Akhtem Chiygoz and many other innocent Ukrainian citizens imprisoned for their convictions."

Pressure on the Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate and against the Archbishop began as soon as Russia annexed Crimea. While seemingly wary of provoking international protest by openly banning the Church, Russia has done everything to drive its clergy and believers away. The Archbishop reported back in January that the Church was in danger of being dissolved and destroyed because it does not recognize Russia's annexation and is not prepared to re-register under Russian legislation. The situation with re-registration is critical for many religious communities.

Russian legislation is more restrictive than Ukrainian with respect to believers, imposing far more onerous demands on bodies wishing to function as a legal entity. One of the requirements is that the religious organization adds words to its association papers that Crimea is part of Russia which many are not prepared to do. The lack of such registration means that the communities lose the right to use and dispose of their churches, mosques, places of worship or other buildings, and face numerous other restrictions.

The battle to seize control of the Cathedral of Vladimir and Olga in Simferopol also began in 2014. At that time, Kliment has since said, he was even offered 200 thousand dollars to give the Cathedral up. In January 2016, the Crimean Arbitration Court under occupation issued a ruling ordering the Church to vacate the building within the next 10 days, and to pay half a million roubles, supposedly for communal services. The appeal against that ruling was rejected in June this year.

In January 2016, Kliment said that the number of churches held by UOC KP had halved since annexation, and that of the 10 remaining churches, one in Yevpatoria had faced several arson attacks. The seizure of the Church of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God in the village of Perevalne came after a frightening armed attack on the church and believers.

There have also been threats on businesspeople supporting the Kyiv Patriarchate that they could lose their business if they continue to provide premises for places of worship.

The Archbishop has said that many of those who miss Ukraine come to their churches, although it is clear that they are very aware of being under observation.

"Russian-speakers also come here, and just people who never went to church, but whose heart lies with Ukraine and who miss Ukraine. They come just to talk, in Russian or in Ukrainian. We don't talk about politics, however, that's very dangerous. There were occasions when people in plain clothes came to church and sat at the back. Later they made comments on what needed to be removed from the service so that it didn't "jar". You mustn't say, for example, that the good times will return".

It may be that the short detention on Oct 19 was 'mere' harassment because of the Archbishop's appeal to the PACE and the strong resolutions which the latter produced. Russia has, however, reverted to Soviet tactics by imprisoning those it can and exiling those whose arrest would cause too great a scandal.

Banning of the Majilis: Repression of nationality and belief

Crimea Reality (01.10.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2h5jwrk> - According to the US government agency USCIRF (US Commission on International Religious Freedom) all the Crimean religious associations registered by Ukraine on January 1st, 2016 will need to re-register in accordance with Russian regulations. As a result only 400 of the more than 1000 religious organizations were allowed by the Russian Government to re-register.

"In January 2015, the Crimean government, that was appointed by the Kremlin, created a plan to fight the ideology of the terrorism'. For this task, the police and other security forces received permission to persecute "non-traditional sects". As part of this plan, the Russian government will supervise religious education. Government officials authorized raids in many libraries, schools, and houses of Muslims and mosques... In October 2015, three Baptist from the Council of Churches, who had refused to pay fines for conducting public worship, were each sentenced to 20 hours of the community service, while another was also fined an amount equal to three-week earnings " according to a report by USCIRF.

According to the American Commission, at least five of the Crimean madrassas are still closed, as well as four of the five madrasah of the Crimean Muftiate. Priests, who do not have Russian citizenship, were forced to leave the Crimea, including Greek and Roman Catholic priests, Turkish Imams and religious teachers.

"In 2014, five of the ten priests of the Kiev Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were forced to leave Crimea; the Churches belonging to the Crimean Diocese of the Kyiv Patriarchate, consisting of about 200,000 adherents, suffered from vandalism and arson. The Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow, which, according to their statements, has 35 million members in Ukraine, officially considers the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate as a "divisive nationalist organization," - the document says. At the moment, we can assume that the amount of repression will increase again. (...)

According to the Ukrainian mufti, the Crimean government that was appointed by the Kremlin created organizations consisting of supporters who now act as representatives of the people: "Qırım" ("Crimea") and "Qırım Birligi" ("Crimean unity"), as well the religious organizations - the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea and Sevastopol and Taurida church.

The UGCC in annexed Crimea took the challenge and strives for registration

RISU (21.03.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1T4sMfE> - The patriarch of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church during the roundtable "Forcible liquidation of UGCC and its consequences: lessons and challenges for today" held in Kyiv told what is happening with the UGCC in the annexed Crimea.

In the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union self-liquidation was the key word to understand the fate of the churches. Tactics of the Russian authorities in Crimea, as stressed the patriarch, has not changed.

"After the annexation of Crimea all religious organizations were outlawed. This is due to certain judicial process, which established the requirement to all religious organizations without exception, go through the registration process. Apparently, the State Security Service of Russia doesn't have any imagination or creativity and use old tricks. Now the UGCC in Crimea is waiting for a decision to which category we are to be enrolled and what terminology we are to use, regulation or elimination," - said Patriarch Sviatoslav.

The Head of the UGCC stated that there is now a real danger for the Church in Crimea to undergo the same experience as 70 years ago during the liquidation of the UGCC by the Stalinist regime.

"In order not to give the propaganda any opportunity to speak about the self-liquidation of the UGCC in Crimea our communities wish to complete this registration", - said the patriarch. "We know that there is enormous pressure from the public authorities that refuse to keep the title "Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church." By all means we try to keep our position and not give anyone occasion to speak about the self-dissolution or self-liquidation.

Paying fines "would be to admit that they did something wrong"

Forum 18 (05.01.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1SAmHXi> - Three of eight Baptists from Saki in western Crimea who refused to pay fines for holding a public religious meeting were sentenced to 20 hours' community service each in October 2015. Two have already conducted the community service while the third is waiting to be assigned the work, church members told Forum 18 News Service from the town. A court bailiff also ordered

the fine of about six weeks' average local wages to be automatically deducted from the wages of another of the Baptists. She has identified items from the homes of four others for possible seizure.

By contrast, in late 2015 Crimea's Supreme Court overturned fines handed down to two Jehovah's Witnesses for offering religious literature on the streets of the capital Simferopol in July 2015 (see below).

Meanwhile, the extended deadline for all religious communities - which had state registration under Ukrainian law before the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and who wished to retain it - to re-register with the Russian Justice Ministry expired on 1 January 2016.

Only about 400 religious organisations have been able to gain re-registration in the Republic of Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol (an administratively separate territory) since the annexation. Forum 18 notes that more than 1,100 religious communities which had legal status under Ukrainian law are thus no longer recognised as legal entities under Russian law (see below).

Because of public holidays in Crimea (and in Russia's capital Moscow) between New Year and Christmas (marked on 7 January), Forum 18 was unable to seek comment from officials.

Fined for outdoor religious meeting

Nine Council of Churches Baptists travelled from their home town of Saki to conduct an outdoor religious meeting in the village of Maryanovka in Krasnogvardeiskoe District of central Crimea on 10 May 2015. District Police detained "and subjected them to protracted interrogation", fellow Baptists complained. "Then records of an offence were drawn up against them, they were fingerprinted and photographed, and their vehicle, literature and equipment were examined".

Eight of the nine Baptists were found guilty in hearings at Krasnogvardeiskoe District Court between 19 May and 24 June 2015 of violating Russia's Code of Administrative Offences' Article 20.2 ("Violation of the established procedure for organising or conducting a gathering, meeting, demonstration, procession or picket").

The Baptist's leader, Sergey Shokha, was fined 20,000 Russian Roubles. This represents about six weeks' average local wage, according to Crimean residents. The others - Anatoly Gerasimenko, Semyon Vinnikov, his brother Denis Vinnikov, Mark Dombrovsky, Yelena Kuskova, Galina Romanovich and Kristina Matafonova - were each fined 10,000 Russian Roubles.

No formal court hearings before five Baptists fined

In the six cases decided on 19 May 2015, only in the case of Semyon Vinnikov did a hearing take place, Baptists complained to Forum 18. In the cases of the five others punished that day, Judge Irina Shevchenko simply came out into the corridor where the five Baptists were waiting, asked them if they rejected the charges as Semyon Vinnikov had done and then returned after an hour with the guilty verdicts in all six cases. Judge Shevchenko handed a written decision only to Semyon Vinnikov.

In separate hearings between 16 July and 25 August 2015, judges of Crimea's Supreme Court rejected all eight appeals.

Council of Churches Baptists have a policy of civil disobedience, refusing to pay fines imposed to punish them for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief. "They

didn't pay the fines as to do so would be to admit that they did something wrong," a church member told Forum 18.

Bailiff and court punish failure to pay fines

On 20 October 2015, Saki's court bailiff Yuliya Chubko ordered part of Shokha's wages to be deducted at source from November 2015 to begin paying off his fine, church members told Forum 18. Chubko identified property owned by four others – including those not given a formal court hearing - for possible seizure: an acoustic guitar and wardrobe from Semyon Vinnikov; a violin, accordion and music centre from Denis Vinnikov; a table, bed and floor lamp from Dombrovsky; and a computer and camera from Matafonova.

Cases were also brought to Saki District Court to punish the Baptists under Article 20.25, Part 1 of the Russian Administrative Code. This punishes "failure to pay an administrative fine in the period specified by the current [Administrative] Code" with a fine of double the previous fine (with a 1,000 Russian Rouble minimum), up to 15 days' imprisonment, or up to 50 hours' community service.

Between 7 October and 2 December 2015, different Judges found all eight Baptists guilty. Three – Dombrovsky and the Vinnikov brothers - were punished by Judge Yevgeniya Glukhova in separate hearings on 12 October with 20 hours' community service each, according to the court decisions seen by Forum 18. Dombrovsky and Denis Vinnikov have already completed their community service. Semyon Vinnikov is awaiting work to be assigned.

"The court bailiff has not yet seized any items, but has checked to see they are still there," a church member told Forum 18. "She said they will soon be taken and put up for sale. The punishments handed down recently do not release the church members from the earlier fines."

Because of the public holidays, the telephone at the Saki Bailiffs' Office went unanswered on 4 and 5 January.

Fines for offering religious literature overturned

Two Jehovah's Witnesses have finally succeeded in overturning fines handed down to punish them for offering religious literature outdoors. On 7 September 2015, Simferopol's Zheleznodorozhny District Court found Valentina Markova guilty and fined her 10,000 Roubles, about three weeks' average local wage. The following day the same court found Svetlana Donskova guilty and fined her the same amount. Both were punished under Administrative Code Article 20.2, Part 1 ("Violation of the established procedure for organising or conducting a gathering, meeting, demonstration, procession or picket").

However, on 26 October 2015, Judge Natalya Mostovenko of Crimea's Supreme Court overturned the fine on Markova, finding that she had committed no offence, according to the decision seen by Forum 18. On 9 November 2015, Judge Natalya Cherevatenko at the same court issued a similar finding in relation to Donskova, according to the decision seen by Forum 18.

The two women were among eight Jehovah's Witnesses stopped by police as they offered religious literature to passers-by from mobile stands on the streets of Simferopol on 2 July 2015. Officers claimed they were violating Russia's June 2004 Demonstrations Law. Although Markova and Donskova were initially found guilty and fined, Judges found that the others had not committed any offence and acquitted them.

Other cases for offering religious literature dropped

Cases under Administrative Code Article 20.2 against three other Jehovah's Witnesses in the towns of Feodosiya and Sevastopol for offering religious literature to others on the streets were dropped in autumn 2015, Jehovah's Witnesses told Forum 18.

They welcomed the decisions to drop these and the earlier Simferopol cases. "These decisions testify to the fact that the judges considering the cases took their decisions without prejudice in relation to Jehovah's Witnesses, while also having examined closely in the light of the Demonstrations Law the essence of the religious service the Witnesses were conducting," they told Forum 18. Fines under Russia's Demonstrations Law are imposed under the linked Administrative Code Article 20.2.

Earlier legal status annulled for more than 1,100 communities

Following the March 2014 Russian annexation, the Russian authorities insisted that all religious communities that had legal status needed to re-register with the Russian Justice Ministry if they wished to retain such legal status.

Religious communities needed to submit applications to the Justice Department in the regional capital Simferopol. Religious organisations that operated in more than one Russian region (such as both in the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol), as well as autonomous religious communities and ones about which the Justice Department had questions, also need to undergo a Religious Studies "Expert" Analysis arranged by the Justice Ministry in Moscow.

The deadline for such re-registration was twice extended. It finally expired on 1 January 2016, after which the legal status any community had under Ukrainian law was no longer recognised under Russian law.

As of 5 January 2016, Russia's Federal Tax Service listed 332 religious organisations registered in the Republic of Crimea. It listed 67 registered in Sevastopol. (The Russian Justice Ministry website's figures, as of 30 December 2015, were slightly lower: 303 in the Republic of Crimea and 60 in Sevastopol.) These figures do not appear to include centralised religious organisations which function in both these territories, such as the Crimean Muftiate, the three Crimean-based Russian Orthodox dioceses and the Roman Catholic Pastoral District of Crimea.

Among the communities re-registered are Russian Orthodox, Muslims from the Crimean Muftiate and autonomous communities, Protestants of a range of affiliations, Roman Catholics, Jews of a range of affiliations, Karaites, Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishna communities.

This means that the legal status of more than 1,100 religious organisations automatically ended on 1 January 2016, Forum 18 notes. Because of the holiday period, Forum 18 was unable to find out from the Justice Department in Simferopol how many religious communities are still waiting for re-registration and why, how many have been rejected, how many chose not to seek re-registration and how many had already ceased to exist before the Russian annexation.

As of 1 January 2014, Ukraine's Culture Ministry noted that 1,409 religious communities in the then Crimean Autonomous Republic had state registration. Of these, 602 were Orthodox, 410 Muslim, 283 Protestant, 22 Catholic, 13 Jewish, and 79 others. A further 674 communities (the vast majority of them belonging to the Muftiate) functioned without registration.

In addition, the Ukrainian Culture Ministry noted that 137 religious communities in Sevastopol (an administratively separate city) had state registration. Of these, 73 were

Orthodox, 37 Protestant, 8 Muslim, 4 Catholic, 2 Jewish, and 13 others. The Ministry recorded no unregistered communities in the city.

Without registration under Russian law, religious communities can meet for religious purposes. However, they cannot enjoy the rights that legal entities have, including to enter into contracts to rent property, employ people or invite foreigners for religious activity.

One Protestant community which had registration under Ukrainian law told Forum 18 that it had chosen not to seek re-registration under Russian law. It told the Justice Department that it would continue to operate as a "religious group", which requires Justice Department notification (with a list of all its members) and does not confer legal status. "Life is continuing for our church – we haven't faced any problems meeting," a church member told Forum 18 on 5 January.

Changes in 2015 to Russia's Religion Law mean that "religious groups" now have to provide local Justice Departments with a list of all their members, whereas registered religious organisations only have to provide a list of their founders. Russian Baptists have equated the notification requirement for groups to "mandatory registration", which "makes a citizen's right to freedom of worship and assembly arbitrary", conditional upon informing the authorities.

Re-registration struggles

Members of a variety of religious communities complained – usually asking not to be identified – of the time, effort and expense of preparing re-registration applications and seeing the process through with the Justice Department.

For religious communities that required an "Expert Analysis" from the Justice Ministry in Moscow, several were required to wait for months, while some were required to change their structures to gain approval. The Crimean Muftiate had to cut its ties to the Crimean Tatar Mejlis (a political organisation). The nine Catholic parishes had to formally cut ties with their Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol in southern Ukraine. Yalta's Augsburg Lutheran congregation had to remove a reference to pilgrimages in its statute.

Re-registration refused or still waiting?

Of the 33 religious organisations for whom the Justice Ministry conducted an "Expert" Analysis in 2015, three appear not to have received re-registration: the Tavrida Muftiate, St Peter's (earlier St Martin's) Lutheran Church in Krasnoperekopsk, and the Seventh-day Adventist Reformed Church in Yevpatoriya. For each of these the "Expert Analysis" included "observations" (such as failure to supply full information) which could allow officials to choose not to re-register them.

"We have still not been re-registered," a member of the Tavrida Muftiate told Forum 18 on 5 January. "We don't know why, as we have not been refused. We're just waiting and waiting."

One of Crimea's Deputy Chairs of the Council of Ministers, Ruslan Balbek, declared on 25 March 2015 that all mosques in Crimea would be handed to the Crimean Muftiate, a much larger rival Muslim body to the Tavrida Muftiate. However, despite these fears, the Justice Department in 2015 re-registered at least 10 Muslim organisations which function independently. All 10 were among the 33 religious organisations which underwent an "Expert Analysis" at the Justice Ministry in Moscow in 2015.

Nine Roman Catholic parishes were re-registered in 2015. The Catholic Pastoral District was registered on 26 August 2015, but none of the five Greek Catholic parishes which

applied for re-registration have yet received it. "We were promised re-registration by New Year, but it hasn't yet happened," a Greek Catholic clergyman told Forum 18 on 5 January. "The parishes' documents are still in Moscow for an 'expert analysis'."

The Greek Catholic Church would like to register as many as 11 or 12 parishes in Crimea, and also intends to seek registration for its Crimean Exarchate to oversee the parishes once they get registration, the clergyman told Forum 18.

Lack of registration under Russian law makes the presence of their current four priests in Crimea (one of them married, the other three monks) precarious. "They must be registered for work, but without legal status the parishes can't apply for residence permits for them." The Greek Catholics would like to be able to have more priests in Crimea.

None of the Armenian Apostolic parishes in Crimea appear to have gained re-registration, according to official records.

One community which chose not to apply for legal status are parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kiev Patriarchate. The diocesan head, Archbishop Kliment (Kushch) of Simferopol and Crimea, told journalists on 17 December 2015 that, even if the Church could overcome the difficulties in the documentation required for re-registration, "there is no guarantee" that re-registration would allow his churches to continue to exist.
