



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 10

### Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 May 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **The Situation of People of Faith in Ukraine and the Russian Federation During the 2022 Incursion**

Jubilee Campaign would like to raise to the Council's attention the specific atrocities communities of faith in Ukraine have been suffering since the Russian Federation's February 2022 incursion, most notably the targeting of houses of worship and other religious buildings and infrastructure by Russian forces.

### **Targeting of Ukrainian People of Faith and Their Infrastructure**

Since Russian forces invaded Ukraine in late February 2022, we have read countless statistics regarding civilian casualties and damage to community infrastructure. This crisis similarly extends to faith-based communities and their houses of worship. Just one month following the start of the incursion, BBC identified no fewer than 60 religious sites whose buildings have been wholly destroyed by Russian shelling, whose few unshattered windows show hundreds of bullet holes, and whose ceilings have caved in. Despite the Russian Federation's repeated assertions that its forces are refraining from striking "civilian targets", houses of worship have been targeted for attack as they are known to be sheltering numerous civilians and operating as aid distribution facilities.[1] The State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience has recorded even more damaged buildings of religious significance as of 7 May 2022, including 78 buildings (e.g. churches, monasteries, temples, theological seminaries, cathedrals) associated with the Ukraine Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP); 14 buildings (churches, theological seminaries) associated with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine; 14 buildings (churches, prayer houses, theological seminaries) associated with various Protestant communities; 3 buildings (diocese center, theological seminary, church) associated with the Roman Catholic Church; 3 buildings (mosques, Islamic cultural centers) associated with Muslim communities; 4 buildings (synagogues, student organization branch, yeshivas) associated with Jewish communities; and 1 building (office) associated with the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church.[2]

When Russian forces reached Irpin, designated the "Evangelical Hub of Ukraine", in early March 2022, it became clear that many of the civilian and infrastructure casualties in this city would be from the faith community; regrettably, many casualties ensued during the evacuation itself. 26-year-old Christian husband and father, Anatoly, died when the bridge he assisting a family – a mother and her two young children – in crossing collapsed due to Russian shelling; all four were killed, and the bridge which operated as a humanitarian corridor was destroyed.[3] In early April, Mission Eurasia's Field Ministries Headquarters in Irpin was completely destroyed and Russian troops had burnt all of the building's religious literature. Eric Mock of the Slavic Gospel Association (SGA) explained that civilians had flocked to the SGA seminary building for shelter but that after a first round of mortars which set fire to the building, Russian forces returned the following day, launching a second round of mortars which obliterated the entire building and caused casualties.[4]

Numerous noteworthy faith leaders have tragically been targeted for attack as well or have otherwise passed as a result of civilian targeting by Russian forces. In late March, it was reported that the Ukrainian security service notified the Church Council of Ukraine that the names of numerous church leaders were found on the "death list", and that Putin had referred to Protestants as "scum, traitors, and insects that the Russian people will spit out of their mouths".[5]

In late February, Russian troops shot and killed Orthodox priest and military chaplain of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Maksym Anatolyovych Kozachyn, while he was attempting to leave a village in Kyiv's Ivano-Frankivsk district.[6] In March, it was reported that when village Priest Rostyslav Dudarenko was operating a Yasnohorodka vehicle checkpoint and saw incoming Russian vehicles and decided to raise his cross necklace above his head, he was subsequently shot at multiple times and killed in the street.[7] Earlier, in March, Dean Vitaly Volodymyrovich Vinogradov was attempting to trek ten miles to Kyiv and fleeing occupation forces in Bucha but was shot dead by Russian troops, his body left on a street to be identified an entire month later.[8]

## Members and Leaders of Faith Communities in the Russian Federation Targeted for Pacifism

We have, fortunately, seen the tremendous work of faith leaders within the Russian Federation who have condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and who have called for peace. Regrettably, however, these faithful pacifists have been targeted by Russian authorities and deemed as traitors to Putin’s cause. In March 2022, Russian Orthodox Priest Ioann Burdin of the Resurrection Church in Kostroma was arrested after delivering a sermon critical of the incursion in Ukraine and for publishing the link to an anti-war petition on his parish’s website.[9] Father Burdin faces charges on account that he, “while in a public place, on the premises of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ, during a religious service was he was conducting in the presence of about ten parishioners, carried out public actions aimed at discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation”.[10] Also in March, it was reported that a woman was arrested after holding a sign stating “The 6th Commandment. Thou shalt not kill” outside of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

On the contrary, the Russian Federation has been calling on faith leaders to support the invasion as an act of loyalty to the nation. Patriarch Kirill, Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch of Moscow, who is a close friend and ally to the Russian government – even going so far as to deem Putin a “miracle of God”[11] – has been a vocal supporter of the invasion. Throughout March and April, Patriarch Kirill has delivered sermons declaring the invasion a necessary “metaphysical struggle against a godless international order”, an order composed of “excess consumption” and “visible freedom” to nations that holds “a gay parade” [Ukraine’s Kyiv hosts an annual gay pride celebration].[12] Patriarch Kirill also stated “let this image [of enemies] inspire young soldiers who take the oath, who embark on the path of defending the fatherland”.[13]

## Recommendations

Jubilee Campaign urges members and observer states of the Human Rights Council to:

1. Unequivocally condemn the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine.
2. Level stronger, coordinated, multilateral sanctions upon the Russian Federation to cripple its financial and technological base propping up its incursion into Ukraine.
3. Continue providing financial and humanitarian support to all communities in Ukraine, including those who remain in their homes, those who have been internally displaced, and those who have had to flee the nation into neighboring countries.
4. Offer assistance in rebuilding cultural and religious sites, including churches and temples, and other related buildings which have operated as shelters for civilians and which can operate as regional aid distributors.
5. Mandate a Commission of Inquiry to collect and preserve evidence of potential war atrocities and crimes against humanity for future investigation.

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[1] Jack Hunter, “In pictures: The Ukrainian religious sites ruined by fighting”, BBC News, 31 March 2022.

[2] State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, “At least 116 spiritual sites ruined in Ukraine by Russian attacks: an interactive map”, 7 May 2022.

[3] Jayson Casper, “Ministries Evacuate as Russians Reach Irpin, the Evangelical Hub of Ukraine”, Christianity Today, 7 March 2022.

[4] Kevin Zeller, “Russian invasion destroys ministry centers in Irpin”, 1 April 2022.

[5] CNE News, “Several church leaders in Ukraine received a severe warning: they are on Russia’s death list.”, 25 March 2022.

- [6] Aleteia Premium, “Breaking: Russian soldiers kill Ukrainian priest in Kyiv region”, 28 February 2022.
- [7] Viktoriia Zhuhan, “Ukraine war: The priest shot at a checkpoint”, BBC News, 25 March 2022.
- [8] The Alabama Baptist, “Ukrainian seminary professor killed while trying to walk to safety, friend says”, 7 April 2022.
- [9] Isabel Van Brugen, “Russian Priest Arrested for Delivering Sermon Against Ukraine War”, Newsweek, 7 March 2022.
- [10] Victoria Arnold, “RUSSIA: Patriarchate priest fined for condemning war in Ukraine”, Forum 18, 11 March 2022.
- [11] Michael Binyon, “Patriarch Kirill has said Putin is a ‘miracle of God’ but the realities of war and politics might yet find him out”, The Tablet, 21 April 2022.
- [12] Grayson Quay, “War in Ukraine is a ‘metaphysical’ battle against a civilization built on ‘gay parades’, Russian Orthodox leader says”, The Week, 7 March 2022.
- [13] Jeanne Whalen, “Russian Orthodox leader backs war in Ukraine, divides faith”, The Washington Post, 18 April 2022.