

Report
of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation

Unlawful actions by the Kiev regime targeting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church
(UOC), its clergy and parishioners
(as of June, 2026)

Moscow, 2026

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Introduction

This nine-section Report is an updated Foreign Ministry's report titled "Illegal actions by the Kiev regime targeting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), its clergy and parishioners" of January 29, 2025. It contains information from different sources covering the period from March 2022 to June 2026 and documenting the Kiev regime's systematic and brazen violations of the Orthodox Christians' rights, political and legal arbitrariness, and the international community's response to these developments. The updated version includes a new section titled "Illegal mobilisation of UOC clergy."

Overview

Having seized power in 2014 through an unconstitutional armed coup, the Kiev nationalists have, throughout their rule in Ukraine, consistently built a multi-tier system to engage in harsh suppression of religious freedom, turning the spiritual sphere into a testing ground for experimenting with human dignity. The religious factor has become one of the state's principal instruments for managing social processes and is actively employed to falsify history, to legitimise and glorify Nazism, and to eliminate dissent, as well as secular and church opposition.

Mass violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms in Ukraine have become the defining feature of the Kiev regime's years in power.

Vladimir Zelensky and his inner circle have been fragmenting Ukraine's religious landscape and shaping their relations with religious organisations and believers according to the latter's tolerance levels for the murderous ideology imposed by the authorities. Sweeping administrative and legal measures have been implemented with an eye towards weakening the canonical UOC's role in public life to the greatest possible extent and ultimately dismantling its administrative bodies.

The extensive evidence of discrimination presented in this Report coupled with public statements by Ukrainian officials at various levels who openly declare the ultimate objectives of this campaign, attest to this policy. Those objectives include elimination of the country's largest religious organisation, compelling its clergy and congregation to transfer to the so-called Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which is controlled by the state authorities and stakeholder business circles, and the expropriation of UOC property, liturgical objects, and sacred treasures.

An objective understanding of the causes underlying the widespread and severe persecution of the clergy and congregation of the canonical church described in this report warrants a review of the methods behind the creation of the schismatic OCU in 2018 and the nature of its current activities.

What we have here is a carefully planned and highly sophisticated manipulation of the religious sphere by the Kiev regime, namely, the creation, through administrative and directive methods, of a political project endowed with the outward attributes of a local Orthodox Church but which, in reality, is not a Church. This make-believe entity is inseparable from the Ukrainian state apparatus and operates primarily in its interests, pursuing its own vested interests in the process.

The core of the OCU comprises individuals whom the UOC had previously deemed unfit for pastoral ministry because of conduct incompatible with the duties of the priesthood. Most of them maintain close ties with neo-Nazi paramilitary formations. While the issue of schism is primarily one of canon law, the schism in Ukraine has led to politically motivated mass-scale violations of human rights, open reprisals and persecution of the UOC by the Kiev regime. The OCU is the direct beneficiary of these actions. Relatedly, this situation is examined in this Report as well.

The controlled chaos within Ukrainian Orthodoxy created by the Kiev regime has, for many years, enabled the authorities, the OCU, and radical groups to forcibly seize monasteries and churches, to unlawfully re-register religious communities, and to cultivate the rhetoric of hatred, unprovoked aggression, and violence against the clergy and congregation of the canonical Church. The authorities strive to conceal

these crimes and mostly act indirectly. Members of radical nationalist groups are enlisted to carry out such attacks and are effectively guaranteed immunity from legal liability for violating the law. Ukraine has developed, and tacitly legitimised, an entire system of under-the-table arrangements that encourages violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the congregation and clergy.

Meanwhile, the Zelensky regime has continued to strengthen the legal basis for exerting pressure on the UOC. Ukrainian legislation is being brought into line with the decisions adopted by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (NSDC) on December 1, 2022, instructing the Cabinet of Ministers to draft legislation banning the UOC, ratcheting up pressure on it through the Ukrainian security services, and taking away its right to use the churches of the Kiev- Pechersk Lavra, the country's oldest and largest monastery.

Pursuant to these decisions, on August 20, 2024, the Verkhovnaya Rada of Ukraine adopted Law 3894-IX, On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of the Activities of Religious Organisations, establishing a legal mechanism for banning the UOC. Under this law, the canonical Church, whose congregation numbers in the millions, may be dissolved and its property seized if the authorities determine that it has ties to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Following a highly biased investigation conducted by the Ukrainian state apparatus that lacked transparency, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience (SSEFC) announced in 2025 that it had allegedly found evidence of the UOC's "affiliation" with the ROC and petitioned the courts to dissolve the UOC's administrative body, the legal entity known as the Kiev Metropolis.

In addition, the NSDC decisions adopted in 2022 provide for targeted pressure on members of the UOC episcopate, including the imposition of personal "sanctions," such as prohibiting them from engaging in any economic activity and confiscating their property in Ukraine. According to official figures released by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), as of November 10, 2025, over 200 criminal cases had been initiated against representatives of the UOC, of them 27 against bishops; and

78 notices of suspicion and 40 convictions had been issued. Nineteen clergy members, including the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Onufry (Berezovsky) of Kiev and All Ukraine, had their Ukrainian citizenship revoked for alleged “pro-Russian propaganda.” These figures may not fully reflect the actual state of affairs, since international monitoring mechanisms in the country are, in practice, largely non-operational.

Religious persecution has now evolved beyond mere intensification and has become fully systemic in nature, a fact acknowledged even by many Western politicians, public officials, journalists, and experts, including those providing military and political support to the Kiev regime.

The support provided by Western countries, above all the United States, to the Kiev regime’s religious policy is one of the reasons for the current disastrous situation facing Orthodox Christians in Ukraine. This issue is addressed in this Report as well.

Despite the vast body of documented evidence of persecution directed against the canonical Church and the clear breach by Ukraine of its earlier assumed international human rights obligations, these developments continue to receive insufficient attention in the documents of universal multilateral organisations, including the UN and its governing bodies. These institutions have refrained from issuing detailed reports on the matter or responding forcefully, limiting themselves instead to routine references to the problem.

This Report is intended once again to document the widespread violations of the right to freedom of religion, together with the related infringements of other human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine, to draw the international community’s attention to the situation, and to encourage its members to provide an objective assessment of the crimes committed by the Kiev regime against the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Section 1. Ukraine’s discriminatory laws targeting the UOC

The adoption by the Verkhovnaya Rada of Law No. 3894-IX of August 20, 2024, On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of Activities of Religious Organisations, was the culmination of a sustained effort to build a legal framework designed to discriminate against the UOC. Its proponents were open about their objectives: to curtail the rights of UOC communities and believers, to seize their property, to strip the Church of its historical and legal name, to prevent it from identifying as “Orthodox,” and ultimately to prohibit it from operating in any capacity within Ukrainian territory.

A key early measure was **Law No. 2662-VIII of December 20, 2018, On Amending Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations”** regarding “the name of religious organisations (associations) that are part of a religious organisation (association) with a directing centre (administration) located outside of Ukraine in a state legally recognised as having carried out military aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupied part of Ukrainian territory.” This law requires UOC communities to reflect in their full names their “affiliation with a religious organisation <...> outside Ukraine” – specifically, to include “the full statutory name” of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), “with the possible addition of the words ‘in Ukraine’.” In effect, it prohibits the UOC from using the appellation “Ukrainian,” despite the fact that it is the oldest extant Orthodox religious organisation in the country and counts millions of Ukrainian citizens among its adherents. In addition, the law imposes discriminatory “restrictions on UOC clergy, preachers and mentors, limiting their access to units and formations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military structures of Ukraine, as well as introducing “other restrictive measures.” Should a religious community fail to amend its charter accordingly, the charter will “cease to have effect insofar as it specifies the organisation’s full official name.”

In 2019, the **Ministry of Culture issued an order publishing a list of thousands of UOC religious organisations (including dioceses, monasteries and synodal**

institutions) that were required to change their names by April 26, 2019. That order was temporarily suspended by a ruling of the Kiev District Administrative Court, which granted interim relief in support of a UOC challenge against the Ministry. In May 2023, however, the case was transferred to the same court, which expedited its review within six days and dismissed the claim on May 15.

The UOC's legal department described the resumption of proceedings as "an attempt, through the courts, to lift the existing ban on register changes and name changes, and to push through a bill that would create the opportunity to illegally re-register not only religious communities but also other UOC institutions in favour of the OCU." On June 14, 2023, the Kiev Metropolis of the UOC lodged an appeal with the 6th Administrative Court of Appeal.

The compulsory renaming of canonical Orthodox communities not only strips them of their historical identity but also opens the door to administrative pressure from state bodies through enforced mass re-registration. Furthermore, depriving communities of their legal-entity status effectively amounts to their de facto liquidation and the expropriation of their property.

Law No. 2673-VIII of January 17, 2019 On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine (regarding the subordination of religious organisations and the procedure for state registration of religious organisations with legal entity status) overhauls the registration process for religious organisations, sets out a procedure for their transfer to another denomination, and requires such transitions to be carried out in line with its provisions.

Under the law, a decision to "change subordination" (that is, to move to another denomination or ecclesiastical jurisdiction) requires a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the religious community. However, the law does not provide clear criteria for determining membership, stating only that "membership in a religious community is based on the principles of free expression, as well as on the requirements of the charter (regulations) of the religious community."

In practice, within Ukraine's largest Christian denominations, membership for believers (parishioners) has not generally been formally recorded, owing to the sheer size of their congregations. The vague wording of the new law enables local authorities to orchestrate the seizure of UOC churches. The standard pattern of events is as follows:

- A purported vote is held, disguised as a decision of the religious community, but in fact conducted by the secular territorial community of a given locality (city or village). These proceedings often take place in the absence of most local residents, involve individuals of other faiths or outsiders, or rely on the collection of signatures whose authenticity cannot be verified. In some instances, the authorities have actively prevented UOC believers and clergy from attending such "referendums" of territorial communities.
- The results of these votes are then fictitiously recorded as decisions of the UOC religious community. Simultaneous resolutions passed by the parish assembly of the legitimate religious community to establish a formal membership roll and to decline conversion to the OCU are ignored, and any amendments to its statutory documents are left unregistered.
- The head of the regional administration issues an order for the legal registration of a newly formed OCU community under the legal name of the existing UOC community, thereby effectively winding up the latter. OCU supporters, with the backing of local authorities, then forcibly enter the church premises and hand them over for use by their own religious community. Protests and resistance by UOC believers are met with violent suppression, involving the police and radical organisations; law enforcement agencies routinely decline to record incidents of violence or other offences, and no pre-trial investigations are conducted.

The law further contains a number of provisions that impose undue burdens on the registration process for religious organisations and complicate it unnecessarily, while also conflicting with other provisions of current Ukrainian legislation and with

Ukraine's international commitments, including those undertaken within the OSCE, concerning freedom of religion or belief. The cumulative effect is to grant the authorities broad discretion to delay the registration and re-registration of UOC religious communities at will, thereby facilitating the seizure of their places of worship.

Law No. 3894-IX of August 20, 2024, On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of Activities of Religious Organisations

The Kiev regime had long been preparing the groundwork for the proscription of the UOC. On February 1, 2023, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience published the findings of a so-called “religious studies expert examination” of the statute governing the Church. Unsurprisingly, the document asserted that the Church retains a canonical ecclesiastical connection with the Russian Orthodox Church. According to the conclusion of that body, the conduct and omissions of the supreme organs of church authority and governance of the UOC demonstrate that it remains in a relationship of subordination to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church characterised these findings as “a gross manipulation and an attempt to violate the right to freedom of religion,” and, on July 27, 2023, launched legal proceedings to challenge the conclusions of the expert examination.

On May 15, 2023, the Kiev District Administrative Court ruled that the UOC had not severed its ties with the Russian Orthodox Church and remained a constituent part thereof, providing a potential legal basis for banning the organisation, should the decision be upheld by higher courts.

On June 26, 2023, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience published, on its official website, a list of clarifications that the UOC was compelled to provide as proof of its separation from the Moscow Patriarchate. Simultaneously, there was widespread discussion within expert circles concerning the overtly prejudiced nature of this process – no clarification could possibly result

in the lifting of restrictions or any mitigation of the pressure exerted by the Kiev regime on the UCU.

The law was personally championed by Vladimir Zelensky, who declared that its passage would “strengthen the spiritual independence” of Ukrainians and “deprive Moscow of its last opportunities to restrict their freedom.” Reports have also surfaced of blackmail being employed against Verkhovnaya Rada deputies to coerce them into supporting this contentious initiative. In June 2024, following the failure of the initial attempt to pass the law – owing to insufficient support – former President of Ukraine Petr Poroshenko initiated a renewed campaign for signatures to prompt its consideration. In July 2024, Verkhovnaya Rada deputy and active member of Poroshenko’s party, Irina Gerashchenko, threatened to publish the names of those unwilling to support the bill, denouncing them as “justifying Russian aggression.”

The law entered into force on September 23, 2024.

The preamble emphatically asserts that the support given by the Russian Orthodox Church to the “armed aggression of the Russian Federation” and the “numerous unlawful acts” perpetrated by religious organisations subordinate to it on Ukrainian territory constitute a threat to national and public security, as well as to the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Article 2.2 establishes a prohibition on the activities in Ukraine of “foreign religious organisations that simultaneously meet the following criteria:

- 1) are situated in a state recognised as having carried out or carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupying part of the territory of Ukraine;
- 2) directly or indirectly (including via public statements made by leaders or other governing bodies) support armed aggression against Ukraine. Foreign religious organisations located in a state recognised as having carried out or carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupying part of its territory

shall be deemed to include foreign religious organisations (including religious administrations, associations, centres) whose governing centre (administration) is situated outside Ukraine in the relevant aggressor state.”

Article 3.1 stipulates: “Given that the Russian Orthodox Church is an ideological extension of the regime of the aggressor state, an accomplice in war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the name of the Russian Federation and the ideology of the ‘Russian world’, the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine are prohibited.”

Article 3.2 establishes the following ban:

“The activities of religious organisations affiliated with a foreign religious organisation, whose activities in Ukraine are prohibited in accordance with Part 1 of this article, including directly or as part of another religious organisation, or where other indicia established by Article 51 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations’ are present, shall not be permitted, and such religious organisations shall be liquidated in accordance with the procedure established by law. The list of religious organisations in Ukraine affiliated (linked by one or more indicia as defined by Article 51 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations’) with a foreign religious organisation, whose activities in Ukraine are prohibited, shall be approved by an order of the central executive authority implementing state policy in the sphere of religion and shall be published on its official website. In the case established by law, the activities in Ukraine of a foreign religious organisation located in a state recognised as having carried out or carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupying part of the territory of Ukraine, whose activities in Ukraine are prohibited in accordance with this Law, shall cease from the date of entry into force of this Law or of the law introducing the relevant amendments to this Law.”

Thus, all religious administrations, monasteries, communities, parishes, and educational institutions that are separate legal entities will be compelled either to

transfer from the UCO to the OCU or to cease existence, should the relevant court decisions be issued.

As part of the implementation of the law, on September 25, 2024, the Ukrainian authorities resolved to conduct a nationwide audit of the property belonging to the religious communities of the UOC.

That the law adopted on August 20, 2024, is aimed at the absorption of the canonical Church by the OCU is also indirectly indicated by an appeal published a few days earlier, on August 15, 2024, by the head of the OCU, Sergey Dumenko (pseudo-metropolitan Epiphanius), to Metropolitan Onufry of the OCU, proposing the unification of the churches.

The support for the law expressed by the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations is likewise telling. In particular, the measure was endorsed by the head of the schismatic OCU, the head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC), a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chief Rabbi of Kiev and Ukraine. At the same time, this body disregarded its own charter, which stipulates that all of its decisions are to be taken exclusively on the basis of consensus and with the assent of the heads or authorised representatives of all member religious organisations. Representatives of the canonical Church that is a member of the council, were not invited to the session at which the aforementioned decision in favour of banning the UOC was adopted.

Meanwhile, prominent legal experts and international human rights organisations have repeatedly condemned this legislative act, citing violations of the rule of law, its selective application against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the introduction of collective responsibility for believers, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of “affiliation” in the context of religious organisations, and so forth. The fundamental conclusion remains that the law and its individual provisions are unlawful in nature.

On August 22, 2024, the **Statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church** was issued in connection with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine’s adoption of a bill aimed at the liquidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, unequivocally

condemning this law and outlining the official position of the Russian Orthodox Church on the prevailing situation. It was observed that its “initiators and supporters ... do not conceal that the bill is directed specifically against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; that the aim of this law is to liquidate it and all its communities or to forcibly transfer them to other religious organisations. Hundreds of monasteries, thousands of communities, millions of Orthodox believers in Ukraine will find themselves outside the legal framework, lose their property and place of prayer”, and furthermore, that “by its scale and centralised nature, this measure may surpass all previous historical repressions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including the persecutions of the time of the Union of Brest, and is comparable to such lamentable historical precedents as the persecutions in the Roman Empire under Nero and Diocletian, the so-called de-Christianisation of France during the French Revolution of the 18th century, the atheistic repressions in the Soviet Union, and the destruction of the Albanian Orthodox Church in the 1960s by Enver Hoxha’s regime.”

On August 24, 2024, **Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia** addressed messages to the primates of local Orthodox Churches, a number of religious leaders, and representatives of international organisations, setting out information regarding the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine’s adoption of a law whose actual intent is the prohibition of the UOC. They were called upon to raise their voices in defence of the persecuted faithful.

On October 18, 2024, **the Legal Department of the Moscow Patriarchy** issued a statement following the adoption of Law No. 3894-IX. The statement provided arguments as to why the legislative act is in breach of the principles of international law.

It was noted that the law primarily introduces an extrajudicial order of prohibiting a religious organisation. Furthermore, it violates Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which states that religious organisations are separated from the state. The law extends the Ukrainian Code of Administrative Court Proceedings with a

regulation that stipulates that, upon dissolution of a religious organisation affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church, the property in its ownership shall be transferred to the state. Article 9 of the Ukrainian law On the Lease of State and Communal Property was extended with a regulation that obliged state bodies to terminate gratuitous use or lease agreements before term if a religious organisation showed evidence of affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, the new law provided for nationalising the property of the religious organisations under the UOC if they refused to switch hierarchies.

It was stressed that the law-stipulated grounds for the elimination of religious organisations don't hold water. According to Article 5 of the law, a religious organisation is subject to elimination for the propaganda of "Russian world ideology" which is defined as "a Russian neocolonial doctrine" aimed at, among other things, "expanding the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church beyond the Russian Federation." Essentially, the dissemination of religious beliefs is considered grounds for the dissolution of a religious community. The State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, an executive body overseeing state policy in the field of religion, is in charge of applying the law. Pursuant to the new law, this body is not only capable of qualifying a religious organisation as affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church, but it is also authorised to coordinate "relations, links and communications" between the religious communities of Ukraine and the Moscow Patriarchate. This circumstance indicates degradation of the Ukrainian law on freedom of conscience.

The discussion and adoption of the law received a wider **international response** than in the past, which became possible thanks to the information provided by the Russian Foreign Ministry. During the consideration of the bill, the World Council of Churches declared that the bill violated international norms of religious freedom and could divide Ukrainian society. During the presentation of a report on Ukraine at the UN Human Rights Council on December 19, 2023, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk also qualified Ukrainian officials'

actions as a threat to the freedom of religion and noted that they went against international law.

International lawyers addressed US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, calling them to persuade Vladimir Zelensky against prohibiting the UOC. In his letter, American lawyer Robert Amsterdam of Amsterdam & Partners, who represents the UOC, described the upcoming prohibition of the UOC as a purely punitive attack that would seriously damage Orthodox Ukrainians. In May 2024, Robert Amsterdam sent a letter to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk listing violations of the UN Action Plan Against Religious Intolerance by Ukraine.

Following its adoption, the law was criticised by Christian church hierarchs, including the primates of the Albanian, Antiochian, Bulgarian, Jerusalem, Macedonian, Russian and Serbian Orthodox churches, the Orthodox Church in America, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and Pope Francis.

The 40th OHCHR quarterly report covering the period of June 1 to August 31, 2024, on the treatment of prisoners of war and the human rights situation in Ukraine, stated that references to national security considerations to justify the restriction of religious freedom were in breach of fundamental international human rights documents.

Even those undoubtedly partial to the Kiev regime – Human Rights Watch and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom – did not find it possible to maintain silence.

The application of Law No. 3894-IX On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of Activities of Religious Organisations

On August 27, 2025, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience announced that the Metropolinate of Kiev had been recognized as

“affiliated” with the Russian Orthodox Church, and filed a lawsuit seeking the liquidation of the Metropolis as a legal entity.

Furthermore, according to statements by representatives of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, regional administrations were notified about the Kiev Metropolis’s affiliation, which should push them to terminate their contracts for the use of historical churches and monasteries owned by the state. This could lead to the expropriation of up to 3,000 historical churches and monasteries of the UOC across Ukraine. Relevant procedures have been launched against some large convents and monasteries.

As part of this lawsuit, on April 6, 2026, the 6th Administrative Court of Appeal ruled, based on a counter-claim by the UOC, that the findings of “a religious expert assessment” of the UOC Management Charter, conducted by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience for the purpose of establishing church and canonical links with the Moscow Patriarchate, were invalid because the service did not consider a motion from the UOC Kiev Metropolis for the removal of four out of seven members from the expert group for their public anti-church statements. The respective actions by Viktor Yelensky, Director of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, were found unlawful.

However, on May 13, 2026, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience reapproved said findings. The conclusion remained the same: the UOC “remains in a relationship of subordination to the Russian Orthodox Church,” does not act as an independent church and does not declare autocephaly. *(This term refers to an area of church law and means independence of a local Orthodox Church from other local churches.)*

Section 2. Unlawful actions of Ukrainian special services and law enforcement agencies against the UOC

- The most outrageous examples of politically driven human rights violations as part of the investigation and court proceedings included several fabricated

criminal cases targeting senior hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Here are some of them:

- On February 20, 2023, Metropolitan Theodosius of Cherkassy and Kanev was charged under article titled “Violation of the equality of citizens based on their religious beliefs.” The only argument to back these charges consisted of a link to the website of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as his sermons. On April 12, 2023, the Sosnovsky District Court in Cherkassy ruled to place the metropolitan under house arrest with an electronic bracelet. Believers from this diocese filed over 1,500 requests asking the judiciary to refrain from enforcing this ruling, but their pleas were ignored. On June 2, 2023, the court extended the house arrest while rejecting the appeal to limit it to night hours. Metropolitan Feodosy said that the criminal charges against him were fabricated and constituted a political hit-job. He said that the materials on his case included seven volumes, which contained his public statements over the past ten years criticising the split.
- On February 6, 2026, the Pridneprovsky District Court in Cherkassy convicted Metropolitan Feodosy in a criminal case fabricated by the Security Service of Ukraine at the initiative of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by accusing the cleric of inciting ethnic, racial or religious strife and hatred. The court imposed a fine of 8,500 hryvnias and the duty to cover the costs of the would-be expert reviews carried out as part of the proceedings. What led to this conviction was a sermon delivered by the cleric on January 8, 2024. In it, he condemned the expulsion of nuns from the Nativity-Mother of God Convent in Cherkassy by a fighting squad of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The nuns were expelled from their monastic cells, while priests and parish goers suffered physical violence. This was the first of the four court proceedings against clerics to result in a conviction.

- On June 10, 2026, the Sosnovsky District Court in Cherkassy extended the pre-trial restrictions against the metropolitan for another two months in the form of personal recognizance.
- On April 1, 2023, the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a search at the residence of Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, Abbot of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. On the same day, the Security Service of Ukraine said that he would be indicted under several articles of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. During the court proceedings, he faced accusations under articles titled “Violation of the equality of citizens based on their religious beliefs and justification of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.” These charges resulted from the opinions expressed by the defendant in a private conversation. In mid-July 2023, he was placed in a pre-trial detention facility and was freed on August 7, 2023, after posting bail of nearly \$1 million, which was raised with the help of over a thousand people. The criminal case against Metropolitan Pavel remains open. Instead of house arrest, the restrictions for Metropolitan Pavel include several formal requirements, including surrendering his international passport and appearing at the court’s first request, among others. According to Metropolitan Pavel, the investigative authorities have been pressuring him to side with the schismatics.
- On May 22, 2023, Metropolitan Longin of Bancheny, who is also the founder and head of an orphanage and holds the Hero of Ukraine title, was summoned for an interrogation at the Chernovtsy Police Department where he was charged under the article “Violation of citizens’ equality.” According to the press service of the Security Service of Ukraine, this indictment resulted from the sermons in which the defendant condemned the split in the Ukrainian church. During interrogation, several hundred believers and monks from the Bancheny Monastery held a prayer vigil near the police building. The Security Service of Ukraine tried pressuring the organisers and participants of this

campaign by distributing conscription notices. In September 2023, the case was referred to court. The metropolitan faces charges consisting of inciting religious strife based on what was called his derogative statements regarding the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. There were several searches at his monastery, as well as at the orphanage and clinic on the monastery's grounds in 2023–2026. While no violations have been exposed, the court banned Metropolitan Longin from taking orphans in his custody or taking part in running the orphanage.

- On August 7, 2023, Metropolitan Ionafan, the 75-year-old head of the Tulchin and Bratslav Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was sentenced to five years in prison with property confiscation for “public justification of the armed aggression against Ukraine.” Following negotiations, he was released on June 22, 2024, at the request of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, and sent to Moscow. The cleric suffered four heart attacks and underwent heart surgery during the investigation and his detention. Meanwhile, the Vinnitsa Court of Appeal upheld his sentence.
- On April 24, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine charged and arrested the Abbot of the Svyatogorsk Lavra of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Arseny (Yakovenko), for purportedly breaching Ukrainian law. He was arrested for two months without bail. During a liturgy, he allegedly divulged to the congregation the locations of Ukrainian military checkpoints. The restrictive measures imposed on the Metropolitan were excessive – he was detained and required to assist at every court sitting in person despite the fact that the pre-trial detention facility was far away from the court. The defendant had to be transported and kept in extremely challenging conditions for up to 20 hours without sustenance or water, which put his life in danger. On December 5, 2024, the court once again ignored the arguments of members of the Verkhovna Rada, religious organisations, and legal representatives, aligning itself with the prosecution. When he left the pre-trial detention

facility on October 28, 2025, on a bail of 1.51 million hryvnias, officers from the Security Service of Ukraine immediately detained Metropolitan Arseny under new charges and went on to obtain a medical opinion proving that he was in good health despite the fact that following the Metropolitan's visit to a hospital on September 30 a doctor established that the patient needed heart surgery. On November 3, 2025, the court once again sent the Metropolitan to pre-trial detention by accusing him of crimes against the peace, denying Russia's armed aggression, accusing the Armed Forces of Ukraine of the death of clerics and nuns, as well as calling for destroying church buildings in his public statements in May and June 2022. On February 25, 2026, considering the Metropolitan's deteriorating health and the pressure coming from around the world, the preventive measure against the defendant was changed to house arrest. On March 18, 2026, he was hospitalised and underwent an emergency heart surgery.

- On April 15, 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) conducted a search of the private office and reception room of the senior administrative officer Metropolitan Antony of Borispol and Brovary, and the administrative office of the Metropolinate of Kiev.
- Since May 2022, the SBU, in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies, has conducted more than 1,000 searches of UOC monasteries, churches, and diocesan administrative buildings throughout Ukraine under the pretext of “counterintelligence measures.” For example:
- On November 22, 2022, the SBU announced the “conduct of counterintelligence measures” on the premises of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra “as part of the SBU’s systematic efforts to counter the subversive activities of Russian intelligence services in Ukraine.” Searches and document checks were also carried out at the Kiev Zverinets Monastery of the UOC, with three security cordons established around the monastery and specialists with service dogs deployed.

- On November 25, 2022, the SBU announced that it had carried out “counterintelligence measures” at the offices and cathedral of the Chernovtsy-Bukovina Diocese of the UOC. According to Metropolitan Melety of Chernovtsy and Bukovina, the search was conducted with numerous procedural violations (including the absence of witnesses, denial of access to a lawyer, and others). All digital storage devices, computers, and mobile phones were seized; a number of “pieces of evidence” were fabricated or planted by SBU officers during the search. The victims of the “search” were forced to undress and were photographed, after which the images were published on social media accompanied by insulting and defamatory accusations and comments.
- On November 26, 2022, the SBU conducted a search at the residence of Archbishop Job of Shumsk, Rector of the Pochayev Theological Seminary, and on November 27 carried out searches at the administrative offices and cathedral of the Ivano-Frankovsk Diocese of the UOC.
- On November 30, 2022, in the village of Drachino, Mukachevo District, Transcarpathia Region, SBU officers conducted a search at the St Cyril and Methodius Monastery of the Mukachevo Diocese of the UOC.
- From December 2 to December 20, 2022, the SBU reported conducting “counterintelligence measures” (searches) at UOC dioceses and monasteries in the Kharkov, Lvov, Transcarpathia, Chernovtsy, Rovno, Volyn, Nikolayev, Sumy, Lvov, Zhitomir, Kherson, and Odessa regions. These included the Annunciation Cathedral of the Kharkov Diocese; the Kharkov Intersession Monastery; a number of churches of the Kharkov Diocese in Kharkov and the Kharkov Region; the Ascension Cathedral of the Izyum Diocese; the St George Cathedral of the Lvov Diocese of the UOC; the Holy Trinity Church in Lvov; the Intercession Church in Borislav, Lvov Region; the Holy Cross Exaltation Cathedral in Uzhgorod of the Mukachevo Diocese; the Zimne Stavropegical Convent; the Holy Spirit Cathedral of the Romny Diocese; the

Korosten Nativity Cathedral (Ovruch Diocese); the Transfiguration Cathedral and administrative offices of the Ovruch Diocese; the Kazan Church in the urban-type settlement of Chernobayevka, Kherson Diocese; and the Feodosievsky Monastery and administrative offices of the Balta Diocese.

- On December 29, 2022, the SBU announced that it had conducted “counterintelligence measures” at “UOC facilities” in the Krivoy Rog Region. The facilities mentioned included the administration of the Krivoy Rog Diocese, the Krivoy Rog Transfiguration Cathedral, the Krivoy Rog Vladimir Monastery, and the St Nicholas and Iveron churches in Krivoy Rog. Searches were also reported in the Khmelnytsky Region, including the administration of the Shepetovka Diocese and St Michael’s Cathedral in Shepetovka; the Nativity of the Mother of God Monastery in the village of Gorodishche, Shepetovka District; the Convent of Righteous Anna in Slavuta; the Nativity of the Mother of God Church in Slavuta; the Church of the Martyrs Faith, Hope, Love and their mother Sophia in Shepetovka; the Cathedral in honour of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Unburnt Bush” in Netishin; and the Resurrection Church in the urban-type settlement of Vinkovtsy.
- On January 6, 2023, the SBU reported conducting “counterintelligence measures at UOC facilities” in the Kherson, Kirovograd, Dnepropetrovsk, and Rovno regions, including at the Church of St John of Kronstadt in the urban-type settlement of Belozyorka, Kherson Region (Kherson Diocese); the Holy Trinity Mezhirichi Monastery of the Rovno Diocese; and the administrative offices of the Dnepropetrovsk Diocese. The SBU claimed to have discovered “libraries containing pro-Kremlin literature,” “propaganda leaflets,” and “pro-Russian insignia.”
- On November 23, 2022, during a search at the Korets Monastery, SBU officers presented allegedly discovered leaflets containing fragments of sermons by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia taken out of context and selected in a provocative manner in order to create the impression of a call to renounce

Ukraine's sovereignty. According to eyewitness accounts, "the leaflets were allegedly found in a damp, unheated attic. Everything kept there – books or paper – immediately becomes damp and covered with mould, whereas these leaflets were brand new and dry."

- On June 24, 2025, a second search was conducted at the Korets Convent. Accompanied by 30 riflemen, SBU personnel seized mobile phones and computers belonging to the nuns and employees. According to their reports, they were pressured into changing their ecclesiastical jurisdiction.
- On October 8, 2025, SBU officers conducted a search at the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra (Ternopol Region). It was reported that the purpose of the investigative action was to locate documents that might relate to the alleged "unlawful registration" in 2018 of the All Saints' Church located on the monastery grounds, which has the status of an architectural monument.
- Despite the large-scale nature of the searches, which affected all UOC dioceses, the evidence presented to the public consisted primarily of theological, liturgical, and historical literature in Russian, or fabricated propaganda leaflets. In some cases, materials were reportedly planted in the presence of the victims.
- The Rector of the Uzhgorod Cathedral, Archpriest Dimitry Sidor, described the details of a search conducted by SBU representatives in December 2022. According to him, the investigative measures were carried out under the pretext that the church had allegedly been mined. As a result, the officers found nothing and promised to mention this fact in the official report. Nevertheless, they seized two books published in Moscow and St Petersburg, as well as several books criticising the idea of Ukrainian autocephaly (published in Greece), which were classified as "illegal literature."
- Later, in April 2023, the Uzhgorod City District Court imposed a preventive measure on Archpriest Dimitry in the form of the seizure of his foreign

passport and a ban on leaving the city. The grounds cited were his religious sermons delivered in the church. Archpriest Dimitry is accused of “stoking religious hatred.” Archpriest Dimitry denies the charges. The trial is going on.

- In his 2022 report, Metropolitan Antony of Borispol and Brovary, the Chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, observed that “searches are being conducted in diocesan administrations, churches and monasteries of our Church, as well as in the homes of bishops and clergy, yielding leaflets that never existed, or symbols that could discredit the religious organisation.”
- In early June 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine wrote to all diocesan bishops of the UOC, requiring the hierarchs to provide comprehensive information on all churches and property falling under the jurisdiction of their diocesan administrations, as well as the personal details of all individuals responsible for their upkeep. They were also ordered to supply a full list of religious organisations within their dioceses.
- On June 4, 2024, the SBU announced that it had disrupted the distribution of what it framed as “anti-Ukrainian literature” in church shops belonging to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in four cities across the country: Uzhhorod, Zhitomir, Nikolayev and Kiev. Among the items confiscated were publications alleged to promote religious intolerance and to justify the special military operation.
- In the wake of these unlawful measures, and in order to remove obstacles to the seizure of the UOC’s most sacred sites, the authorities have subjected the abbots and rectors of these institutions, along with other hierarchs and clergy of the canonical Church, to repression on fabricated and politically motivated grounds.
- On December 9, 2022, the SBU brought charges against Archbishop Job of Shumsk, Rector of the Pochayev Theological Seminary, under Article 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (“Violation of the equality of citizens on

grounds of race, ethnicity, or religious belief”). Archbishop Job was compelled to enter into a plea bargain, resulting in a fine being imposed by the Kremenets District Court for incitement of interfaith hatred.

- In January 2023, Metropolitan Ioasaf (Guben) of Kirovograd and Novomirgorod, together with Archpriest Roman Kondratyuk, Secretary of the Kirovograd Diocese, were charged with “violating the equality of citizens on grounds of religious affiliation.” The charges arose from the publication of theological and historical material critical of church schism. Both were placed under 24-hour house arrest. In May 2023, Metropolitan Ioasaf and Archpriest Roman Kondratyuk were each sentenced to three years’ imprisonment, suspended for two years, on charges of “inciting religious hatred.” They were also barred from holding leadership positions for one year and were pressured into admitting guilt in order to secure a plea agreement.
- On June 1, 2023, the SBU announced that Metropolitan Vissarion of Ovruch and Korosten had been charged with “inciting interfaith hatred.” As evidence, the Zhitomir prosecutor’s office submitted photographs of old leaflets and propaganda materials defending the Orthodox faith and denouncing the OCU. According to the prosecution, Metropolitan Vissarion and the secretary of the diocesan administration had allegedly “been producing and distributing leaflets inciting religious hatred and hostility towards OCU believers since 2017.”
- On July 7, 2023, Archpriest Viktor Talko, Rector of the Church of the Holy Archangel Michael in Borodyanka, Kiev Region, was detained on suspicion of “collaborationist activity.” He is accused of assisting in the evacuation of local residents to Belarus. He faces a possible sentence of five years’ imprisonment. No information on the progress of his trial is available in open sources.
- On January 12, 2024, the SBU charged Metropolitan Vasily (Povoroznyuk) of Lugansk and Alchevsk of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in absentia, on the

grounds that he had “attended the signing ceremony at the Kremlin for the treaties on the accession of the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics, and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions, to Russia.”

- In February 2024, Archdeacon Pavel (Muzychuk) of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra was targeted with false charges of “justifying Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine” and was placed in pre-trial detention. Later that month, the Solomensky District Court of Kiev released him on bail of 121,000 hryvnias, subject to the mandatory wearing of an electronic monitoring bracelet. Archdeacon Pavel is a well-known advocate of canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine and has been outspoken in his opposition to the unlawful denial of believers’ right to use the churches of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra and the eviction of monks from the monastery.
- In April 2024, Metropolitan Feodosy (Snegiryov) was arrested on charges of inciting interfaith hatred (Article 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). He was subsequently indicted on four further counts, including discrimination on religious grounds. Prior to the next hearing in his case in Cherkassy, Ukrainian activists staged a deplorable and offensive demonstration: they spread a Russian flag bearing a printed portrait of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on the ground in the narrow approach to the courthouse. Metropolitan Feodosy declined to walk over it and requested that the flag be removed. However, under pressure from nationalists, he was eventually forced to proceed into the courthouse. On July 8, 2024, he suffered a heart attack. His family and associates are convinced that this was a direct consequence of the sustained pressure exerted on him by the SBU.
- On April 12, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a search and reported that archpriest Nikolay Danilevich, Chair of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was suspected of breaking the law. He was accused of “justifying Russia’s armed aggression” because he had allegedly suggested praying for Russians.

- On May 1, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a search at the residence of Metropolitan Luka (Kovalenko) of Zaporozhye and Melitopol, on suspicion of “inciting religious hatred.” Allegedly, messages with prayers for Moscow were found in his phone. On May 7, 2024, the court ruled to impose a night house arrest on the defendant and obliged him to wear a monitoring device.
- On August 1, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine reported the detention of the rector of a Kharkov cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on suspicion of “adjusting strikes at critical infrastructure.”
- On September 19, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine reported that an archimandrite of the Vvedensky Monastery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Kiev was suspected of breaking the law due to his social media posts. He faced five years in prison and seizure of his property for “justifying and denying the Russian aggression.” There is no public information available on the developments in this case.
- In addition to multiple arrests of the bishops and clerics of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, there have been cases of disappearance and kidnapping among the clergy, evidence of torture and beatings, as well as unexplained deaths.
- On March 9, 2022, the Dukonsky Monastery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Verkhovina, Ivano-Frankovsk Region, was raided and forced to shut down by an armed group. The elderly vice rector of the monastery, archimandrite Tit (Drachuk), was beaten up, kidnapped and held hostage for several days. Local authorities transferred the monastery into the use by clerics of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Archimandrite Tit was subsequently transported by unidentified individuals to the woods in the neighbouring region, released and ordered never to return to the Ivano-Frankovsk Region under threat of death.

- On March 16, 2022, armed people wearing masks publicly assaulted and kidnapped archimandrite Lavr (Berezovsky) in the Zhitomir Region. His whereabouts remain unknown. There is a high chance that he was murdered.
- On April 10, 2022, authorities and an armed group raided a cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on a private territory in the town of Verkhnyaya Yablunka, Lvov Region, during a service. The rector was dragged outside using force; it was demanded that the cathedral be shut down. The parishioners were informed that their home addresses were known and that within the next week, they were to appear at services of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church of Ukraine; otherwise, they would be subjected to “special measures.” The believers reported the incident to the local police and the Security Service of Ukraine but their reports were dismissed. The same night, armed militants of the Security Service of Ukraine kidnapped the cathedral’s rector, protopriest Iliya Urusky putting a bag over his head, and released him after an interrogation that lasted almost 24 hours.
- On April 10, 2023, an unidentified individual punched Bishop Nikita of Ivano-Frankovsk and Kolomiya multiple times outside the eparchial department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Chernovtsy. The perpetrator knocked the bishop down on the ground and also assaulted an underage assistant deacon. The police patrol refused to report a crime. Eyewitnesses said that the unidentified individual openly claimed links to the Security Service of Ukraine during his conversation with the police.
- On May 6, 2023, in his divine liturgy sermon at the Cathedral of Agapetus of Pechersk of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Metropolitan Antony of Borispol and Brovary spoke about his unlawful detention earlier that morning at a checkpoint outside Kiev. The police seized his passport and refused to let his car through for an hour and a half, on the grounds that Metropolitan Antony was listed in the database of the Mirotvorets extremist website. He was also told that a security service officer was coming “to have a talk”. Only after

calling police patrol and reporting unlawful detention, Metropolitan Antony received his ID back and was released. Subsequently, his visit to a service at the Gorodnitsy Stavropegical Monastery of the Zhitomir Diocese had to be cancelled, and the Metropolitan returned to the Lavra.

- Journalists covering the Kiev regime's lawless actions against the canonical Orthodox Church have also been subject to persecution.
- In February 2023, journalist, blogger and advocate for the canonical orthodox faith in Ukraine Dmitry Skvortsov was detained for "justifying the Russian aggression."
- On March 12, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine searched the editorial office of the Union of Orthodox Journalists and charged 14 employees with various wrongdoings under the Criminal Code of Ukraine (treason, collaboration, establishing and participating in a criminal organisation, and inciting religious hatred by an organised group) and detained four: Andrey Ovcharenko, Valery Stupnitsky, Vladimir Bobechko and protopriest Sergey Chertilin. In August 2024, Sergey Chertilin was released on bail from the Kiev Detention Centre. In September, Vladimir Bobechko was released, and in November Ovcharenko and Stupnitsky.
- On September 12, 2024, the State Service for Special Communication and Information Protection of Ukraine issued an order to block websites covering the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (<https://raskolam.net>, <https://www.dialogtut.org>, <https://spzh.live>). No reasons for the blocking were cited in the order.

Section 3. Illegal mobilisation of UOC clergy

In 2025, the Ukrainian authorities further intensified their discriminatory policy towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by expanding the practice of the illegal mobilisation of UOC clergy. On June 6, 2025, following amendments to

Ukraine's mobilisation legislation, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience published a list of religious organisations whose clergy members are exempt from military mobilisation. More than 10,000 UOC communities were not included in this document. The publication stated that the possibility of adding UOC organisations to the list would be considered only after the completion of an "affiliation study" regarding their alleged links with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The detailed Clarification of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience Regarding the Reservation of Military-Liable Clergy Leaders, issued on June 16, 2025, states that organisations not included on the list may submit documents for inclusion only through "religious centres registered in Ukraine." This provision creates an additional obstacle for UOC communities in the event of the liquidation of their "registered governing body" – the Metropolis of Kiev – which the State Service is seeking under discriminatory Law No. 3894-IX.

According to Ukrainian media reports, mobilisation notices are being issued to UOC clergy across various regions through a centralised process coordinated from Kiev, bypassing regional recruitment centres. The distribution of notices is reportedly overseen by Colonel Larisa Polyanskaya, Head of the Chaplaincy Service of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, who maintains friendly ties with the head of the schismatic Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), Sergey Dumenko (self-styled Metropolitan Epiphanius), and has repeatedly received awards from him. If a UOC cleric fails to appear at a Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support (TCR), he is immediately placed on a wanted list. Such removal of parish priests, in turn, facilitates the seizure of UOC parishes.

During forced mobilisation, UOC clergy members are subjected to pressure from TCR personnel, including confiscation of mobile phones, beatings, deprivation of food and water, forced hard labour, and extortion of large sums of money. Documents confirming lawful grounds for deferment, such as disability, large-

family status, or responsibility for dependent persons with disabilities, are ignored or even destroyed by TCR personnel.

In recent years, dozens of UOC clergy members have been forcibly mobilised and compelled to perform military service against their religious convictions. Documented cases of forced mobilisation or attempted forced mobilisation include the following:

- Archpriest Ioann Rozman – cleric of the Khust Diocese; detained by Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) officers in the Zakarpatye Region on March 14, 2024, and forcibly mobilised;
- Archimandrite Varlaam (Didenko) – Abbot of the Transfiguration Monastery in the village of Tereblya, Tyachev District, Zakarpatye Region; forcibly mobilised on August 31, 2024;
- Father Ioann Polischuk – detained on October 1, 2024, in Kremenets, Ternopol Region. Physical force and psychological pressure were used against him, after which he was sent to the Uzhgorod training area;
- Father Ioann Krys – detained in Kiev on October 8, 2024, and forcibly mobilised;
- Father Pyotr Cholak – Dean of the Novovolynsk District of the Vladimir-Volyn Diocese; detained in Lutsk on October 25, 2024, and forcibly mobilised;
- Archpriest Oleg Melnik – detained in the Ternopol Region on November 2, 2024. He was held at a TCR facility for more than 24 hours without food and subjected to beatings. After his release, he was diagnosed with a fractured rib;
- Archpriest Pavel Kushnirchuk – cleric of the Ovruch Diocese; detained in the Zhitomir Region on February 19, 2025. Pressure was exerted on him to persuade him to join the Orthodox Church of Ukraine; he was beaten and released several days later;

- Protodeacon Andrey Batsula – cleric of the Holy Trinity Kitayev Monastery; detained in Kiev on February 20, 2025, and forcibly mobilised;
- Archpriest Roman Garkavenko – Head of the Legal Department of the Cherkassy Diocese; detained in February 2025 after a court hearing in one of the criminal cases involving Metropolitan Feodosy and released only after the incident became public;
- Archpriest Vladislav Batyuk – cleric of the Rovno Diocese; detained in the Ternopol Region on May 22, 2025, during a pilgrimage to the Pochayev Lavra and forcibly mobilised;
- Archpriest Alexander Moskovchuk – cleric of the Odessa Diocese; detained in the Odessa Region on June 10, 2025, and subsequently released;
- Protodeacon Andrey Mankevich – cleric of St Nicholas Cathedral in Khmelnytsky; detained in the Khmelnytsky Region on June 11, 2025, and subsequently released;
- Archimandrite Paphnutius (Tselik) – Abbot of the Holy Spirit Skete of the Pochayev Lavra; detained in the Ternopol Region on June 13, 2025, and forcibly mobilised;
- Deacon Maksim Guzenko – cleric of the Sarny Diocese; detained in Sarny, Rovno Region, on June 14, 2025, and forcibly mobilised;
- Priest Rostislav Kalinovsky – cleric of the Kamensk Diocese; detained twice in the Dnepropetrovsk Region in June 2025 and forcibly mobilised despite being legally entitled to a deferment and having two dependent persons with disabilities.
- Archpriest Ioann Koval – cleric of the Ternopol Diocese (detained whilst en route to a service on June 22, 2025, in the town of Shumsk, Ternopol Region, and forcibly mobilised);

- Archpriest Georgy Priymak – cleric of the Ternopol Diocese (detained during a service on June 23, 2025, in the community of Vishnevets, Ternopol Region, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Alexander Shimanovich – cleric of the Zaporozhye Diocese (detained on August 2, 2025, in the city of Zaporozhye, despite holding a lawful deferment from mobilisation; and subsequently released following widespread publicity regarding his case);
- Archpriest Yury Naboka – cleric of the Kharkov Diocese (detained whilst travelling to a service on August 2, 2025, in the city of Kharkov, and subsequently transported to Dnepropetrovsk, with his subsequent fate remaining unknown);
- Archpriest Sergey Shimailo – cleric of the Vladimir-Volynsky Diocese (detained on August 4, 2025, in the town of Kremenets, Ternopol Region, during a cross procession to the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Grigory Bakunets – Rector of the Holy Spirit Church in the village of Mokvinskiye Khutora, and Archpriest Alexander Soltys – the rector of the Intercession Church in the village of Peskov, the Sarny Diocese (both detained on August 4, 2025, in the village of Mokvinskiye Khutora, with their subsequent fates unknown);
- Archpriests Sergey Kit and Vitaly Kit – clergymen of the Kharkov Diocese (summoned for questioning by the Security Service of Ukraine in Kharkov on August 8, 2025, and, following interrogation, detained by territorial recruitment centre officers, despite holding lawful deferments; and subsequently released after the matter received publicity);
- Father Fyodor Gnitetsky and Deacon Ivan Dmitruk – clergymen of the Chernovtsy Diocese (detained on August 12, 2025, in the Chernovtsy

Region; the fate of the former remains unknown, whilst the latter was subsequently released);

- Archpriest Bogdan Matveyev – cleric of the Kremenchug Diocese (detained on August 25, 2025, during a traditional cross procession from the town of Kamenets-Podolsky to the town of Pochaev, Ternopol Region, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Vladimir Glavatsky (detained on August 29, 2025, in the village of Piryatin, Dubno District, Rovno Region; seized from a cemetery during the funeral service of an AFU soldier, with his fate remaining unknown);
- Deacon Vasily Marko – cleric of the Cathedral of the Holy Martyrs Vera, Nadezhda, Lyubov and their mother Sophia (detained on September 3, 2025, in the city of Ternopol, his subsequent fate unknown);
- Hieromonk Agafon of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra (detained on September 9, 2025, in the city of Kiev, and forcibly mobilised);
- Father Vadim Olyanitsky – Rector of the St George Church-Chapel (detained on September 12, 2025, in the town of Belaya Tserkov, released);
- Archpriest Nikolay Gubka – Rector of a persecuted community in the village of Malyatintsy, Chernovtsy Region, whose church was seized in 2025; despite this, the community survived and continued its services (detained in September 2025 in the Chernovtsy Region, released after the case received publicity);
- Archpriest Vitaly Popka – cleric of the Pochaev Church of the Icon of the Mother of God (detained on October 16, 2025, in the town of Kovel, Volyn Region, near his own residence, with his fate unknown);
- Protodeacon Andrey Kizyun (detained on October 16, 2025, in the city of Kiev, and forcibly mobilised);

- Protodeacon Valentin Makovsky – cleric of the Vvedensky Monastery (detained on October 25, 2025, in the city of Chernovtsy, his subsequent fate unknown);
- Father Alexey Lukash – Rector of the Church of the New Martyrs of Cherkassy (detained on November 6, 2025, in the town of Smela, Cherkassy Region, his subsequent fate unknown);
- Priest Valery Floresku – cleric of the Chernovtsy Diocese (detained on November 7, 2025, in the Chernovtsy Region, and forcibly mobilised);
- Priest Konstantin Volovoy – cleric of the Cherkassy Diocese (detained on November 17, 2025, in the Cherkassy Region, notwithstanding a lawful deferment due to having five minor children; released following public attention to the case);
- Archpriest Alexander Istraty – cleric of the Chernovtsy Diocese (detained on November 19, 2025, in the Chernovtsy Region, his subsequent fate unknown);
- Archpriest Vitaly Agafonov – cleric of the Krivoy Rog Diocese (detained in November 2025 in the town of Nikopol, Dnepropetrovsk Region, and forcibly mobilised as a “sniper rifleman;” having refused to perform military service and left his unit without authorisation, he was arrested and a criminal case for desertion was initiated; on March 6, 2026, he was released on substantial bail raised by the faithful);
- Priest Andrey Panasyuk – cleric of the Rovno Diocese, Rector of St Michael’s Church in the village of Bushcha (detained in the Rovno Region on November 19, 2025, and forcibly mobilised);
- Father Orest Cherny (mobilised in November 2025 and sent for basic combined arms training to the 82nd Separate Air Assault Bukovina Brigade, where he died on November 29, 2025);

- Archpriest Sergey Saviyevsky – Rector of the parishes in the villages of Silnoye and Gupaly, Vladimir-Volynsky Diocese (detained on December 2, 2025, in the Volyn Region, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Vasily Dragun – cleric of the Mukachevo Diocese (detained on December 27, 2025, at the Uzhgorod Regional Polyclinic, where he was undergoing inpatient treatment, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Nikolay Sinyuk – cleric of the Vvedensky Monastery of the Chernovtsy Diocese (detained after the Christmas service on January 7, 2026, in the Chernovtsy Region, his subsequent fate unknown);
- Priest Vyacheslav Kalinichenko – cleric of the Izyum Diocese (detained on January 8, 2026, in the town of Chuguev, Kharkov Region, and conveyed to a training unit in Dnepr; territorial recruitment centre officers sought access to his smartphone, exerted intense pressure, and threatened to fabricate a criminal case under Article 153 of the Criminal Code (“sexual violence”); his subsequent fate remains unknown);
- Priest Andrey Ilman – cleric of the Holy Spirit Monastery of the Dnepropetrovsk Diocese (detained on January 17, 2025, in the city of Dnepropetrovsk, and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Maxim Moskalchuk – Rector of the Intercession Church in the village of Redvintsy, Khmelnytsky Diocese (detained on January 28, 2026, in the city of Khmelnytsky, released the following day after public attention was drawn to the matter);
- Archpriest Vitaly Chaban – Rector of the Church of the Intercession in the village of Torgovishche (in January 2026, the priest reported to the Turiysk Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre (TRSC) upon receiving a summons to update his military registration details. Despite his official status as being of limited fitness for military service on health grounds, he was sent to Lutsk to undergo a military medical examination, which

confirmed his previously established diagnosis and limited fitness status. Despite this, after completing the medical examination, Archpriest Vitaly was taken away to an unknown location. It was later reported that the priest was being shipped to a military training ground in Starichi, Lvov Region);

- Archpriest Alexander Itsenko – cleric of the Kiev St Cyril Monastery (detained on January 28, 2026, in Kiev; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archpriest Maxim Moskalchuk – Rector of the Church of the Holy Intercession in the village of Redvintsy, Khmelnytsky District (detained on January 28, 2026, and forcibly mobilised. The archpriest agreed to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine, but refused to take up arms, as this is prohibited by his priestly rank. He was subsequently placed on a bus and taken to an unknown location);
- Archpriest Ioann Chirik – cleric of the Vladimir-Volyn Diocese (detained on February 3, 2026, in Volyn Region and forcibly mobilised);
- Archimandrite German Kulakevich – cleric of the Varvarovsky Skete in the village of Stary Korets (detained on February 3, 2026, in Rovno; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archpriest Alexander Chernyadyev – Rector of the Holy Trinity Church in Nikopol, Krivoy Rog Diocese (detained on February 5, 2026, on the premises of his church; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archpriest Anatoly Chernenko – Rector of St Michael's Church in Gorodishche (detained on February 21, 2026, in Cherkassy Region and forcibly mobilised);
- Archpriest Yaroslav Kruglenko – Rector of the St Alexander Nevsky Church in Kiev (detained on February 24, 2026; later transferred by TRSC officers to Dnepropetrovsk; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);

- Priest Igor Kovalyuk – lecturer at the Pochayev Theological Seminary (detained on March 23, 2026, in Ternopol; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archimandrite Filaret (Olivinsky) – cleric of the Vinnitsa Diocese (detained on April 7, 2026, in Vinnitsa; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archpriest Alexander Okruzhko – Rector of the Nativity of the Mother of God Church in Kamenets-Podolsky (detained on April 8, 2026, and placed in the barracks of a military unit in the city; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Archpriest Bogdan Gulyaka – cleric of the Sumy Diocese (detained on April 16, 2026, in the Akhtyrka District, town of Trostyanets; later he was released);
- Archimandrite Sergy – Dean of the Holy Ascension Banchensky Monastery (detained on April 24, 2026, in Chernovtsy Region; released following pressure from believers who gathered outside the recruitment centre);
- Archimandrite Rufin – resident monk of the Holy Dormition Odessa Monastery (detained on April 24, 2026, in Odessa; subsequently found at a training centre near Kharkov);
- Archimandrite Feofil (Koshovenko) – resident monk of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra (detained on May 1, 2026, in Kiev; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);
- Hieromonk Ilya – Rector of the Church of the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God (detained with the use of pepper spray on May 2, 2026, in Zhitomir Region and forcibly mobilised);
- Hierodeacon Yevlogy – resident monk of the Pochayev Lavra (detained on May 5, 2026, near the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown);

- Archpriest Andrey Chorny – Rector of the Church dedicated to the Holy Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of the Khmelnytsky Diocese in the village of Lysogorka (detained on June 4, 2026, in Khmelnytsky; after undergoing a military medical examination, he was taken away to an unknown location);
- Archpriest Bogdan Katsevich – Rector of the Transfiguration Church (forcibly mobilised on June 6, 2026, while returning home from hospital with his pregnant wife);
- Protodeacon Nikolai Mazurets – cleric of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Odessa (detained on June 6, 2026, and forcibly mobilised);
- Igor Golubchik, lawyer of the Cherkassy Diocese (detained on November 4, 2025, in Cherkassy following a court hearing in the criminal case against Metropolitan Feodosy; his subsequent whereabouts are unknown).

The incidents listed above represent only a small portion of the centralised campaign by the Kiev regime to remove clergy and civilian personnel working in dioceses from their church service. They are merely the cases that have become publicly known. According to experts, the number of UOC priests who have been abducted, forcibly mobilised, or are serving in the military may number in the hundreds. In addition, there have been reports of intimidation and beatings of mobilised clergy and those already delivered to military units who attempted to defend their rights through courts and international human rights organisations.

There have also been detentions and attempts to mobilise key figures in the UOC diocesan administration:

- On June 15, 2025, Metropolitan Bogolep of Alexandria and Svetlovodsk was detained in the Kirovograd Region (released after the incident became publicly known);

- On June 2, 2025, Bishop Serafim of Novovorontsovka was detained and forcibly mobilised in the Rovno Region; together with him, Hieromonk Gavriil (Kinashchuk), a cleric of the Alexandria Diocese, was also detained;
- On November 25, 2025, Archbishop Andrey of Petropavlovsk was detained in Dnepropetrovsk after another court hearing in the new criminal case against Metropolitan Arseny of Svyatogorsk (released only after the incident became publicly known, and protests by believers);
- On February 11, 2026, in Chernovtsy, TCR officers, supported by two police patrol units, attempted to forcibly abduct Bishop Nikita of Ivano-Frankovsk;
- On May 7, 2026, TCR officers stopped a vehicle carrying Metropolitan Vladimir of Vladimir-Volyn and Kovel and Archpriest Alexander Kobenko. The bishop was pulled out of the vehicle, while his passenger was sprayed with pepper spray, beaten up, forced into a TCR vehicle and taken away. The police did not intervene. The clergy members were later dropped off near the place where they had been abducted. The bishop was hospitalised with a heart attack, while the archpriest suffered an allergic shock.

Section 4. Actions of Ukrainian local authorities and self-government bodies against the UOC

Local authorities have been issuing recommendations or demands that communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) transfer to other denominations. Instances of self-government bodies – regional and city councils – appealing to the country’s leadership with calls to ban the UOC are widespread. In a number of local communities in Western Ukraine, local authorities have forcibly closed churches, prevented the faithful from attending services, and imposed local “bans on the activities” of the UOC. For example:

- The Mayor of Konotop, Sumy Region, Artyom Semenikhin, issued an order dated May 3, 2022, prohibiting the activities of the UOC within the city limits “as posing a threat to the national security of Ukraine and stated on social media: “There is no difference between the enemy and his agent. And in the case of the Moscow Patriarchate, it is two in one. I therefore took the decision to ban the activities of this FSB agent network on the territory of my city.”
- In May 2022, the Mayor of the regional centre Khmelnytsky, Alexander Simchishin, instructed that an order be prepared to terminate the right to use land plots by “hostile religious organisations”, with the aim of transferring the plots upon which UOC churches stand to the use of the OCU. In September 2022, the Khmelnytsky Regional Council appealed to the leadership of Ukraine with a demand to legislatively ban the activities of the canonical Orthodox Church and to “revoke” its Statute.
- On August 26, 2022, the Ternopol Regional Council adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC throughout the region.
- On September 1, 2022, the city council of Volochynsk, Khmelnytsky Region, adopted a decision banning the activities of UOC communities within the city limits. Mass events were prohibited, and communities were “recommended” to transfer to the OCU. Should such events be held, communities are required to indicate their “affiliation with the Russian Church” in their statutes.
- The city council of Borispil, Kiev Region, acting on a proposal from the mayor, adopted a decision to “suspend the activities” of the UOC. Churches of the canonical Orthodox Church have been placed under guard and shifted to a “special operating regime”. Mass events, cross processions, and Sunday school classes have been prohibited.
- On September 29, 2022, the Lutsk District Council supported an appeal by the head of the Volyn Regional Military Administration to the leadership of

Ukraine, calling for the UOC to be banned, for an investigation into its “collaborationist activities” to be initiated, and for the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra and the Pochaev Lavra to be “transferred” to the “Ukrainian people”. It also called on the leadership of the regional military administration to cancel the registration of communities of the canonical Orthodox Church.

- On November 22, 2022, the city council of Gorodishche, Cherkassy Region, adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC within the municipality, which allegedly “poses a threat to the national security of Ukraine”. Communities of the canonical Orthodox Church were urged to “change jurisdiction and begin a unification process with the OCU.”
- On November 25, 2022, the Vinnitsa Regional Council adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC throughout the region.
- On December 7, 2022, the Zhitomir Regional Council adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC throughout the region and called on local self-government bodies to “facilitate” the transfer of communities of the canonical Orthodox Church to the OCU.
- On December 7, 2022, the city council of Uman, Cherkassy Region, adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC within the municipality and appealed to the Verkhovna Rada with a call to “ban the Russian Orthodox Church and all its structural subdivisions throughout Ukraine”.
- In March 2023, the Kiev City Council adopted a decision to restrict the holding of “any events of a religious nature outside religious buildings” in the capital for “religious organisations ... having canonical and prayerful links with religious organisations of the aggressor state”. The decision amounts to a de facto ban on cross processions being held in the city by communities of the canonical Orthodox Church. The relevant departments of the mayor’s office were instructed to carry out an inventory of land plots

and communal property transferred on lease or for use to religious organisations of the UOC.

- On April 4, 2023, the Khmelnytsky Regional Council adopted a decision banning the activities of the UOC throughout the region. Local self-government bodies were advised to carry out an inventory of land plots owned by the canonical Orthodox Church, with the subsequent termination of usage rights.
- On April 10, 2023, the Rovno Regional Council, on April 11, 2023, the Volyn Regional Council, on April 19, 2023, the city council of Sambor, Lvov Region, and on April 27, 2023, the Zhitomir Regional Council, adopted decisions banning the activities of the UOC throughout their respective regions.
- In April 2024, local self-government bodies in the Kiev Region conducted “legality checks on the siting” of UOC churches, which could be followed by the closure or even demolition of UOC churches, as demonstrated in the case of the demolition of the church of the Desyatynny Monastery on May 16, 2024.
- The activities of the UOC have been “banned” in a major city such as Lvov; there have been repeated arson attacks, forced closures, and seizures of churches belonging to the canonical Orthodox Church.
- In November 2024, the authorities in the Lvov Region declared that not a single registered religious community of the UOC remained within its jurisdiction.

In certain regions and local communities, contracts with UOC communities for the use of historical churches or monasteries are being unlawfully terminated. Land plots on which churches and cathedrals have already been built are being illegally seized from the communities, with the subsequent seizure of those

buildings or obstruction of the performance of services. Consequently, since the beginning of 2023, the following instances have occurred:

- In February 2023, the “Chernigov Starodavny” National Architectural and Historical Reserve sent a letter to Metropolitan Amvrosy of Chernigov and Novgorod-Seversky notifying him of the termination of contracts for the use of the complex of ancient churches within the reserve: the Trinity Monastery (17th–18th centuries), the Eletsy Monastery (12th–17th centuries), and the Transfiguration Cathedral (11th century), due to the expiry in 2021 of the contracts for the use of the buildings. A demand was issued “to return the property of the reserve by March 27, 2023, inclusive”.
- In February 2023, the Rovno District Administrative Court, following a lawsuit filed by a local “cleric” of the OCU, rendered a decision to cancel the state registration of the land underlying the Trinity Gorodoksky Convent of the Rovno diocese of the UOC.
- In March 2023, the press service of the Ternopol diocese of the UOC, in a commentary published on its website, stated that there had been attempts by the Kremenets-Pochaev Historical and Architectural Reserve to deprive the UOC community of the right to use the historic St Nicholas Cathedral in the town of Kremenets. The parish is being prevented from extending the contract. A procedure for “returning the cathedral” to state use has been launched, a “commission for the return of property” has been established, and a meeting on the handover and acceptance of property has been held. However, the rector refused to sign the relevant act. As early as February 8, 2023, the diocese approached the Ministry of Culture regarding this issue, but received no response.
- On April 4, 2023, the Khmelnytsky City Council unanimously ruled to seize 13 plots of land in use by the UOC, including the land around the cathedral and the Directorate of the Khmelnytsky Diocese of the canonical Orthodox Church, as well as St John the Baptist Monastery. Mayor Alexander

Simchishin claimed that the land would be transferred into the use by the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. If the Ukrainian Orthodox Church community transfers to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the agreements with them would be renewed. On May 24, 2023, the Khmelnytsky City Council ruled to hand over five plots seized from the use of the canonical Orthodox Church, to other organisations. The plots of the Intercession Cathedral, Kazan Cathedral and the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Mother of God of the UOC were to be transferred to “the religious communities that joined the OCU”; the land of the cathedral of the UOC was to be divided and partly handed over to a newly established community of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. One of the two plots of St George’s Cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was to be transferred to a military unit and another to a OCU community. In June, the mayor once again demanded that the “Moscow Patriarchy units vacate the land because they are using it illegally.” He claimed that the right to use the 13 plots housing UOC churches in the city had been revoked. One of the plots was to be turned into a public garden while “it is extremely important to build a new kindergarten” on another.

- On April 4, 2023, the Kamenets-Podolsky City Council, Khmelnytsky Region, issued several decisions against the canonical orthodox church: an address to Vladimir Zelensky, Verkhovna Rada, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Khmelnytsky Regional Administration, calling for the prohibition of the UOC in Ukraine; as well as an appeal to Metropolitan Theodore of Kamenets-Podolsky and Gorodok calling for the withdrawal of diocese “from the Russian church”; an address to Vladimir Zelensky and the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the termination of lease or use agreements with the UOC for the church buildings owned by the state. The deputies also voted for 20 draft resolutions to cease the use or lease of land by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including those under its primary cathedral, the diocese department, churches and chapels.

- On April 10, 2023, the Rovno City Council ruled to cease the right of use of land in the city by UOC communities. Deputies addressed the leadership of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine, calling for the prohibition of the canonical Orthodox Church.
- On April 17, 2023, the Ternopol City Council adopted a decision to seize the city cathedral's land plot from the UOC.
- On April 26, 2023, the Lutsk City Council ruled to conduct an immediate inventory of land plots and buildings used by the UOC and to draft resolutions on the termination of the right to use them, to be considered at the next session. The deputies also called on the Verkhovnaya Rada to "ban the UOC without delay" and appealed to Vladimir Zelensky asking for draft bills banning the canonical Orthodox Church, proposed by Nikolay Knyazhitsky (No. 8221) and Prime Minister Denis Shmygal (No. 8371), to be considered by the Verkhovna Rada out of turn.
- On April 26, 2023, the Sumy City Council ruled to deprive the UOC of the right to use municipal community land plots.
- On April 27, 2023, the Chernovtsy City Council adopted a decision to seize 22 UOC cathedral and church land plots in the city. Explaining the move, Chernovtsy Mayor Roman Klichuk said they could be divided and partially used for "building children's playgrounds, a garden, a public park, or a parking lot," adding that the UOC communities would not be allowed to build or repair facilities in the city.
- On April 27, 2023, the Brovary City Council, Kiev Region, terminated the agreements on the permanent use of four land plots where five UOC churches had been built.
- On April 27, 2023, the Belaya Tserkov City Council, Kiev Region, terminated the agreements on the use of land plots under 10 churches of the

UOC Belaya Tserkov Diocese and transferred its Transfiguration Cathedral to communal ownership. The diocese is challenging the decision in court.

- On April 27, 2023, the Zhitomir Regional Council banned the UOC in the region and appealed to the Verkhovna Rada to promptly consider the draft bills proposed by Nikolay Knyazhitsky and Denis Shmygal on banning the canonical Orthodox Church in the country. The council also revoked the decision on the transfer of a land plot to the Athos Icon of the Mother of God Convent, which was returned to communal ownership.
- On May 16, 2023, the Chernovtsy Regional Council banned religious organisations that were proved to “have religious and church ties with the aggressor country.” It was recommended that local communities terminate land and real estate lease contracts with such organisations.
- On May 24, 2023, the Mirgorod City Council, Poltava Region, banned the UOC and deprived its communities of the right to use their land plots in the city. Five land plots owned by the canonical Orthodox Church were seized, including the land under the city cathedral.
- On May 30, 2023, the Kovel City Council, Volyn Region, terminated the UOC’s right to use land plots, with 14 church plots in Kovel and neighbouring villages to be seized.
- Overnight into May 17, 2024, the Kiev authorities tore down the Sts Vladimir and Olga Church of the Tithes Monastery of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God of the UOC, which was built on the foundation of the Tithes Church, the first orthodox stone church in Russia, that had been destroyed in the 13th century by the Batu Khan’s army.
- On June 28, 2024, the Court of Appeal in Ternopol terminated the UOC’s right to use land plot under the Cathedral of the Holy Martyrs Vera, Nadezhda, Lyubov and their mother Sophia. The local orthodox community was subsequently prohibited from using the church as well.

- On August 23, 2024, the Chernovtsy authorities terminated the UOC's rights to the Three Holy Hierarchs Church in the city cemetery, the first Romanian parish of the UOC in Ukraine, which also serves as the tomb of Romanian Orthodox bishops from Bukovina. The church was sealed and turned over to the schismatic OCU. On September 4, 2024, the Romanian Orthodox Church has criticised these actions of the Kiev regime and called on the Romanian authorities to intervene.
- Since the adoption of Law No. 3894-IX On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of the Activities of Religious Organisations, the intensity of church persecution by local officials has slowed down as Kiev now coordinates the restrictions against the UOC under the guidance from the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience.

Section 5. Seizures of UOC churches and illegal re-registration of communities

Ukrainian authorities have persisted in conducting raiding attacks on churches and the redistribution of property belonging to the UOC. This is accompanied by physical violence against its clergy and parishioners, desecration of holy sites, and other unlawful actions that remain unpunished.

This has become a permanent trend. According to UOC senior clergy, 129 churches were seized in 2022 in the regions of Ivano-Frankovsk, Lvov, Volyn, Rovno, Zhitomir, Khmelnytsky, Vinnitsa, Chernovtsy, Chernigov, Kiev, and others, with only 31 cases involving voluntary transitions of congregations. In 2023–2025, the effort to seize churches by force and destroy them continued gathering momentum.

The so-called transitions of churches belonging to the UOC do not result from an expression of popular will or democratic procedures at the local level, as

claimed by Ukrainian authorities, but rather from the illegal actions by local governments and officials. Most seizures are concentrated in towns, villages, and districts where authorities overtly exhibit hostility towards the canonical Orthodox Church. In several regions and communities, local authorities and officials openly initiate, organise, and often participate in person in these seizures.

Such seizures are typically preceded by the illegal and coercive procedure by state registrars to change the affiliation of congregations belonging to the UOC to the OCU. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine officially lays claim to the churches and monasteries of the canonical Orthodox Church nationwide. This effort to change the affiliation relies on sham votes by local residents, including non-believers or adherents of other faiths and occasionally non-resident individuals. Documents for executing minutes of these assemblies and the resulting resolutions for changing the affiliation are frequently falsified, often overriding communities' lawful, documented decisions adopted at parish meetings to retain affiliation with the UOC.

Ukrainian sources report that over 1,500 communities have transitioned under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in the four years since former President of Ukraine Petr Poroshenko received the Tomos of Autocephaly on January 6, 2019.

The use of firearms during church seizures has become pervasive. These actions are facilitated not only by the militarised formations of the so-called Territorial Defence but also by local authorities and law enforcement agencies, with active involvement from representatives of other religious organisations. Numerous would-be independent marauders and rioters justify their raids as an ideological struggle against those whom they call occupiers and their spiritual proxies. Footage of these operations is circulated across Ukrainian social media platforms to encourage emulation.

Outlined below are examples of seizures, including those involving particularly egregious acts of violence and vandalism against congregations of the UOC:

- During 2022–2023, all churches and monasteries belonging to the UOC in the Ivano-Frankovsk Region were either seized or closed. In several instances, seizures involved the beating of clergy, believers, and monastics, accompanied by intimidation and armed abductions of the clergy. On March 28, 2023, supporters of the OCU stormed into the cathedral of the UOC’s Ivano-Frankovsk Diocese: approximately 200 individuals, including masked fighters and Territorial Defence members, breached the gates, forced open side doors, and discharged tear gas inside, forcing the cathedral’s defenders to evacuate. Law enforcement officers present at the scene refrained from intervening. Despite offering no resistance, followers of the UOC were assaulted: Bishop Nikita of Ivano-Frankovsk and Kolomyia had his skouphos knocked off, while an accompanying videographer livestreaming the events was beaten, which prevented him from continuing the live stream. Several clerics required medical treatment for chemical burns to their corneas. The diocesan administration secretary lost consciousness due to gas exposure and was hospitalised in critical condition. Ivano-Frankovsk Mayor Ruslan Martsinkiv had called for seizing the cathedral and publicly endorsed the action.
- On June 29, 2022, in Fastov, Kiev Region, clergy and supporters of the OCU seized the Church of the Intercession of the UOC by breaking its locks, forcibly displacing Orthodox worshippers, and physically blocking the rector from accessing the premises. Armed militants dispatched by authorities intimidated parishioners, while police assisted the perpetrators. During a prior attempt to seize the same site, a would-be cleric from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine kicked the UOC community’s rector, Archpriest Anatoly Kirichenko-Kiriakidis, in the abdomen, knocking him to the ground. Police closed the assault case “for absence of elements of crime in the act.”

- On July 24, 2022, in Pirogovtsy, Khmelnytsky Region, supporters of the OCU led by the local district council chairman attempted to storm a church belonging to the UOC during Sunday liturgy, breaking the door lock, verbally abusing worshippers, and assaulting the rector and parishioners – including women – after the service. The community rector, Archpriest Alexander Kravets, was thrown down the steps, had his pectoral cross smashed, and was repeatedly kicked while prone. One female parishioner was rendered unconscious after being slammed headfirst into a brick wall. The district council chairman participated in the violence; police officers present did not intervene.
- On September 22, 2022, in the village of Popelnya, Zhitomir Region, 100 supporters of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and armed fighters from the local Territorial Defence renewed efforts to seize a church belonging to the UOC by encircling it and forcing open its exterior and interior doors. Physical force was used against believers defending the site, while police again refused to intervene. Parishioners assert the seizure followed the falsification of the congregation's documentation.
- On November 5, 2022, supporters of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine attempted to seize the Sts Boris and Gleb Church of the UOC in the town of Pereyaslav, Kiev Region, with the assistance of the city mayor and local Territorial Defence units. They broke the locks and replaced them with new ones. Father Superior Priest Oleg Rodionov was thrown to the ground and brutally kicked; his wife was also beaten and forced to delete the video of the crime from her phone. Both victims were told they would be “slaughtered and their bodies would be found a week later.”
- On November 4 and 5, 2022, members of a local criminal group made two attempts to break into a church belonging to the UOC in the village of Demyantsy, Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky District, Kiev Region. They beat up the deacon of the church and his wife, and the head of the village council

threatened the clerics of the UOC that they would be “cut into pieces and taken away from the premises in suitcases.”

- On November 19, 2022, in Pukhovtsy, Brovary District, Kiev Region, an attempt was made to seize the local UOC church following the illegal “re-registration” of its community. Militants from the so-called Territorial Defence and OCU activists forced the locks, pushed believers out, assaulted women, and attempted to destroy a journalist’s camera.
- On January 21, 2023, in Tarasovka, Boyarka District, Kiev Region, OCU supporters seized a church belonging to the Borispol Diocese of the UOC. A group of armed “Territorial Defence” militants, led by a local government representative, broke into the building, forced the locks, and barricaded themselves inside. A security guard employed by the UOC community who attempted to resist was beaten and sprayed with CS gas.
- In February 2023, in the town of Strelnsk, Sarny District, Rovno Region, OCU supporters led by a local deputy attempted to seize a church of the Sarny Diocese of the UOC. During the ensuing mass clashes, women and elderly people were beaten. Police intervened only at the height of the confrontation, deploying tear gas. The church was sealed pending a court ruling.
- On February 25, 2023, in Blistavitsa, Bucha District, Kiev Region, OCU supporters staged a simulated night-time burglary of a UOC church (tearing down the gates and damaging the door) and then attempted to enter under the pretext of a property inspection. A deputy and an official of the Bucha City Council, along with militants from the local Territorial Defence, took part in the attempted seizure. Parishioners prevented the takeover; during the scuffle, one of the militants struck the wife of the church’s rector in the face.
- On April 5, 2023, OCU supporters and right-wing radicals seized St George Cathedral of the Lvov Diocese of the UOC. The congregation offered little resistance but was forced out of the building. A sham “referendum” on transfer to the OCU was subsequently organised on the premises with the

participation of outsiders, and a staged “inventory” of property was conducted. Metropolitan Filaret of Lvov and Galicia is reportedly being pressured either to transfer immediately to the OCU or to “transfer all property” to it.

- On April 5, 2023, a UOC church was seized in Zadubrovka, Zastanovka District, Chernovtsy Region. Under the pretext of conducting a funeral service for an OCU parishioner killed in combat, clergy of the schismatic church and more than 40 masked radicals entered the church grounds and then stormed inside, breaking down the locks and assaulting the canonical Orthodox faithful. The attack occurred during the funeral service for the deceased.
- Between April 8 and 12, 2023, in Kamenets-Podolsky, Khmelnytsky Region, local authorities organised mass demonstrations of OCU supporters on the grounds of St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral of the UOC. Employees of state institutions, school and university students were reportedly compelled to participate. Published video footage shows that open adherents of Satanist cults, neo-pagans and Greek Catholics were present among the rallies, and that some participants exchanged Nazi salutes. There were repeated attempts to storm the cathedral, and provocations were attempted against believers.
- On April 24, 2023, in Brody, Zolochiv District, Lvov Region, the mayor and the chairman of the local district council announced the closure of St Vladimir Cathedral of the UOC, its sealing, and the commencement of proceedings for “transition” to the OCU. The church is privately owned, but according to officials, the rector himself “consented to its closure” by signing a relevant document. On the same day, in the city of Zolochiv, Lvov Region, by order of the chairman of the district council, a temporary church – a construction trailer, also privately owned and situated on private land – was confiscated from the canonical Orthodox community “for the needs of military personnel.”
- On April 22, 2023, in Trebukhov, Brovary District, Kiev Region, OCU supporters, with the backing of “Territorial Defence” militants, seized a

church belonging to the UOC community. The doors of the church were broken down, and believers were beaten. One OCU activist demonstratively burned Bibles and prayer books in Russian, describing them as “rubbish.”

- On May 6, 2023, in Boyarka, Kiev Region, unknown individuals in military uniform and masks, with the assistance of the police, seized St Michael Church of the UOC. Its large congregation resisted; pepper spray and brute force were used against the faithful, gates and doors were broken down, the rector was beaten, and his wife was hospitalised with a broken arm and leg. The UOC community continued to worship: on May 7, more than 130 people gathered for the Sunday liturgy at the gates of the seized church. At the same time, only about 15 OCU followers were present inside.
- On May 13, 2023, in Petropavlovskoye, Borispol District, Kiev Region, individuals in military uniform and masks, with the support of local authorities, seized a church of the Borispol Diocese of the UOC. Several parishioners of the canonical Orthodox Church were injured during the clashes; one of them sustained serious bodily injuries (believed to be a traumatic brain injury). The UOC community’s legal challenge against the illegal re-registration of the church is currently before the courts.
- On May 20, 2023, a UOC church was seized in Ryngach, Novoselitsa District, Chernovtsy Region. The seizure was carried out by 40 armed militants, who identified themselves as a “private security company.” The gates and doors of the building were broken down, and windows were smashed. The attackers assaulted the rector (slapping him in the face, throwing him to the ground and kicking him), smashed his phone, and removed the hard drive from the surveillance system recording the incident.
- On June 2, 2023, in Medzhibozh, Khmelnytsky District, Khmelnytsky Region, OCU supporters seized St Nicholas Church of the UOC. Brute force was used against believers; in particular, a local council member who participated in the seizure snatched a mobile phone from the hands of a parishioner who was filming. The police did not intervene. At the end of March 2023, the UOC

community had voted at a parish meeting to remain within the canonical Orthodox Church, and the relevant minutes had been submitted to the authorities.

- On August 22, 2023, the Khmelnytsky Diocese of the UOC reported that OCU activists had seized two canonical Church institutions in the Khmelnytsky Region – St Nicholas Church in Mytintsy and St John the Theologian Church in Volitsa. The expressed will of the rectors and active parishioners – members of the UOC religious communities – to remain under the jurisdiction of the UOC was unable to prevent the seizures.
- On September 4, 2023, police raided the Holy Epiphany Convent in the Ternopol Region. The stated pretext was the expiry of the lease term. As expected, the regional authorities declined to renew the contract and ordered the convent closed and the nuns evicted.
- In early January 2024, the Kazan Cathedral of the UOC in Ladyzhin, Vinnitsa Region, was forcibly seized. During the attack, raiders from among the OCU followers beat the priest and congregation.
- In the early hours of January 10, 2024, individuals cut the locks and seized the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour in the village of Lesniki, Kiev Region.
- On January 10, 2024, supporters of the OCU seized a historic 1801 Ukrainian Orthodox Church dedicated to the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in the village of Pishcha, Volyn Region. The church is a nationally significant architectural monument. During the takeover, the perpetrators forced open the door of the church.
- On January 14, 2024, representatives of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, with the assistance of the authorities, seized the Holy Protection Church of the UOC in the village of Chepelevka, Khmelnytsky Region. In addition to men described as being of “athletic build”, the participants in the incident included

a deputy of the Khmelnytsky Regional Council Alexander Cherniyevich and deputies of the Krasilov City Council.

- On January 22 and 23, 2024, attempts were recorded to seize the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in the town of Kamen-Kashirsky, Volyn Region. The UOC believers managed to defend the shrine.
- On January 27, 2024, following a service at a UOC church in the village of Pecheskoye, Khmelnytsky Region, local OCU supporters seized the church, while police officers failed to intervene. They forced out the rector of the church, Archpriest Mikhail Furman, and the dean of the Krasilov District, Archpriest Vitaly Dunets.
- On March 14, 2024, OCU activists broke into the UOC Church of St George in the village of Kotsyubinskoye, Kiev Region, during a service after forcing open the door. They expelled the church rector and, despite resistance from parishioners, installed a cleric of the schismatic OCU.
- On May 8, 2024, OCU supporters seized the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in the village of Chernoguz, Chernovtsy Region. Parishioners attempting to defend their place of worship were beaten, and tear gas was used against them.
- On May 15, 2024, representatives of the local administration, accompanied by police officers, broke down the doors of the UOC-owned Holy Protection Church in the village of Sutkovtsy, Khmelnytsky Region. The church is a unique monument of medieval religious and military architecture dating back to the 15th–16th centuries. The officials stated that the building was being transferred into their ownership.
- On May 26, 2024, supporters of the schismatic OCU, with police assistance, seized the UOC Church of St Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the village of Berezov, Khmelnytsky Region. Law enforcement officers pushed UOC

parishioners away from the entrance while representatives of the OCU broke down the doors and entered the building.

- On May 31, 2024, the UOC-owned Cathedral of the Saviour Not Made by Hands was seized in the town of Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi, Cherkassy Region, led by one of the heads of the local branch of the Security Service of Ukraine.
- On June 20, 2024, OCU supporters seized the UOC Church of St George in the town of Irpen, Kiev Region. They cut through the church doors, broke into the building and, with the assistance of police officers, prevented parishioners of the canonical church from entering.
- On July 11, 2024, the schismatics despoiled the believers of the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in the village of Rudnya, Kiev Region, away from its parishioners, contrary to the wishes of the local Orthodox community.
- On July 16, 2024, deputies of the Khmelnytsky Regional Council, the village head and OCU schismatics forcibly seized the UOC Church of St Nicholas in the village of Pilipy, Khmelnytsky Region. The entire local religious community, together with its rector, remained loyal to the canonical Church.
- On August 5, 2024, in Zastavki, Khmelnytsky Region, OCU supporters, alongside the village headman, seized the Holy Trinity Church of the UOC.
- On August 31, 2024, a group of raiders in camouflage cut off the locks and forced entry into the grounds of the Church of the Great Martyr George the Victorious of the UOC in the village of Priyutovka, Kirovograd Region. Tear gas and fire extinguishers were deployed against Orthodox Christians.
- On September 2, 2024, the Holy Dormition Cathedral of the UOC in Zolotonosha, Cherkassy Diocese, was seized. OCU cleric Roman Lychak re-registered the UOC parish under his name, appointing himself as its director. The UOC religious community, led by the church's rector, maintained allegiance to the canonical Church.

- On September 4, 2024, the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God of the UOC in Zaremlya, Baranov District, Zhitomir Region, was subjected to arson. The church was entirely gutted internally and externally.
- On September 7, 2024, OCU representatives, with active support from police and nationalist volunteer formations, attempted to seize the Intercession Church of the UOC in Boyarka, Kiev Region. Schismatics blockaded all entrances to the church, barred parishioners from entry, and deployed tear gas against them.
- On September 10, 2024, OCU supporters seized the Archangel Michael Church of the UOC located in Zelenov, Chernovitsy Region.
- On September 19, 2024, in Irpen, Kiev Region, a group of OCU raiders, backed by the city mayor and police, seized St Nicholas Church and the Chapel of the Resurrection of Christ – the last remaining UOC church in the city.
- On September 19, 2024, in the village of Kalita, Brovary District, Kiev Region, nationalists wearing balaclavas and military uniforms replaced locks on St Nicholas Church, which was illegally transferred to the OCU in April 2024.
- On September 26, 2024, nationalists set fire to a UOC church under construction in honour of the Intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God in the village of Starye Koshary, Volyn Region. This church was being built to replace the previous Church of the Apostle John the Theologian, seized by schismatics.
- On October 6, 2024, a group of OCU raiders seized the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God of the UOC in the village of Novoselki, Kiev Region.
- On October 17, 2024, an attempted raider seizure of the Holy Dormition Cathedral of the UOC in Kremenchug, Poltava Region, occurred. During evening service, unidentified youths wearing balaclavas aggressively stormed

the church, provoking parishioners. The assailants used angle grinders and crowbars to cut door locks and replace the central entrance lock. Although UOC parishioners successfully defended the cathedral, the building was later closed and sealed by police.

- On October 17, 2024, approximately 100 individuals in camouflage and balaclavas – later identified as OCU activists, military personnel, and local municipal officials – forcibly breached the grounds of the Archangel Michael Cathedral of the UOC in Cherkassy during a night-time liturgy. They assaulted Metropolitan Theodosius of Cherkassy and Kanev, along with believers, deploying tear gas and non-lethal weapons. The Metropolitan sustained a concussion, first-degree corneal burns in both eyes, and skin burns. Over 30 laypersons were injured, with 12 hospitalised with severe wounds. The attackers looted the cathedral, stealing the treasury, documents, computers, icons, and all decorative items that appeared to be made of gold or silver. The desecration of the holy site lasted six hours. On November 29, 2025, Metropolitan Theodosius was urgently hospitalised due to severe intoxication. According to Ukrainian media reports, he was poisoned with an as-yet unidentified substance.
- On November 1, 2024, in the Transfiguration Cathedral of Chernigov, previously forcibly taken from the UOC, radicals removed and transported all icons, repurposing the site for film screenings.
- On November 10, 2024, OCU supporters held a “meeting” in the village of Seyantsy, Rovno Region, following which they sealed St George Church of the UOC.
- On December 18, 2024, OCU radicals, accompanied by police, cut off the locks on the Holy Trinity Church of the UOC in Pasechnaya, Kiev Region, and seized it.
- On December 27, 2024, in Kremenchug, Poltava Region, OCU representatives, led by “Archimandrite” Theodosius Ovcharuk, cut off the

locks and entered the UOC Holy Dormition Cathedral, breaking down the Royal Doors of the iconostasis allegedly to conduct a property inventory.

- On January 19, 2025, OCU supporters, ignoring the objections of the local Orthodox community, used an illegal gathering of activists to fabricate a transfer of the UOC Holy Dormition Cathedral in Komarovtsy, Vinnitsa Region, to their control. Prior to this, on January 17, 2025, schismatics had provoked a confrontation with the Orthodox priests of the church under the pretext of conducting a funeral service for a deceased Ukrainian Armed Forces militant.
- On January 21, 2025, OCU representatives, accompanied by police, cut off the locks on the Archangel Michael Church of the UOC in Cherkassy. This church had already been seized in favour of the OCU on May 19, 2024, on the basis of a fabricated “decision” by persons unconnected with the parish.
- On January 25, 2025, as a result of a fabricated decision by the territorial community, with the participation of local authorities and contrary to the objections of the local Orthodox community, the Holy Dormition Church of the UOC in Novokostantinov, Khmelnytsky Region, was illegally transferred to the control of the OCU.
- On February 2, 2025, OCU representatives and associated radicals held an illegal meeting in the village of Verkhniye Stanovtsy with a view to transferring St Nicholas Church of the UOC to the control of the schismatics.
- On February 11, 2025, police and OCU raiders cut off the police seals and locks on the doors of the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Vendichany, Vinnitsa Region, which belonged to the UOC and had been re-registered in favour of the schismatics.
- On February 16, 2025, OCU supporters held a pseudo-meeting to transfer the Holy Spirit Cathedral, St Nicholas Cathedral and St Peter and Paul Church of the UOC in Chernovtsy to their control, ignoring the position of the local Orthodox community of the Chernovtsy-Bukovina Diocese of the UOC, which at the same time held its own votes in favour of keeping the churches

within the canonical Church. In this instance, the radicals used signatures fraudulently collected from local residents in advance under the guise of a sociological survey. On February 26, 2025, the church was re-registered in the name of OCU “Bishop” Yaroslav Bodoryak. This forgery was carried out, according to Ukrainian media reports, by Solomiya Gryniv from Lvov, holder of a certificate “For Services to the OCU,” who had conducted similar “re-registrations” in relation to other UOC churches seized by authority-encouraged raiders. In peaceful protest, the canonical Church community organised a religious procession around the Holy Spirit Cathedral on March 9, 2025, with approximately 4,000 believers taking part.

- On March 1, 2025, radicals from the OCU used sham meetings and forged documents to transfer to their control two Orthodox churches in the village of Kelmentsy, Chernovtsy Region, dedicated to the Archangel Michael and the Pochayev Icon of the Mother of God.
- On March 6, 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine carried out searches at the home of 62-year-old Archpriest Vasily Kovalchuk of the UOC in Storozhinets District, Bukovina. Reportedly, this act of intimidation by the authorities caused the priest to complain of heart problems, and he was admitted to an intensive care unit in a pre-infarction condition. Taking advantage of his hospitalisation, representatives of the OCU, assisted by the police, seized the Holy Dormition Church of the UOC in the village of Komarovtsy, Vinnitsa Region.
- On March 11, 2025, OCU radicals replaced the locks on the UOC Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the village of Peregonovka, Kirovograd Diocese.
- On March 18, 2025, representatives of the schismatics, accompanied by the police, occupied the UOC Church in honour of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Unburnt Bush” in Cherkassy, located on the grounds of the Chernobyl Heroes Cherkassy Institute of Fire Safety. The church had been unlawfully re-registered on February 28, 2025.

- On March 21, 2025, OCU raiders cut off the locks and seized the St Nicholas Church of the UOC in the village of Maliatintsy, Bukovina. The unlawful meeting approving its transfer had been held on February 2, 2025.
- Also on March 21, 2025, OCU schismatics, in the presence of police officers and relying on forged documents, broke the locks and took control of St Panteleimon Church in Belaya Tserkov. On March 28, 2025, they similarly seized the Church of the Nativity of Christ and the Church of Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg.
- On April 2, 2025, OCU supporters, assisted by servicemen from the 67th Separate Mechanised Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine formerly associated with the Right Sector and underage radicals from Bandera's Trident, seized the Dormition Church of the UOC in the village of Dubovtsy, Chernovtsy Region, in the presence of police. Neo-Nazis who cordoned off the church and prevented parishioners from entering shouted Nazi slogans.
- On April 5, 2025, OCU schismatics forcibly seized the UOC Church of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the village of Panka, Chernovtsy Region.
- On April 8, 2025, OCU supporters led by the self-proclaimed hegumen Vikenty Kozak seized the Dormition Church in the village of Stary Bezradichi, Kiev Region. On the same day, radicals, in the presence of police, took control of the UOC St Michael Church in the village of Svetilnya, Kiev Region, cutting through the doors with an angle grinder.
- During the night of April 8–9, 2025, in the village of Verkhniye Stanovtsy, Chernovtsy Region, a group of OCU supporters led by the pseudo-cleric Roman Grishchuk, identified by parishioners, cut off the locks and attempted to seize St Nicholas Church. One female parishioner was struck in the face with a stick, the altar and the sexton's room were vandalised, priests' vestments were scattered across the floor, and furniture was smashed. After parishioners resisted, the raiders retreated, leaving behind a box of burglary

tools. On April 12, 2025, they returned under police protection and, after assaulting parishioners, seized the church.

- On April 23, 2025, the OCU seized the previously unlawfully re-registered St Michael Church in the village of Stavchany, Chernovtsy Region. On the same day, its rector, Archpriest Vyacheslav Gogol, was stopped by police and ordered to report to a Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support.
- On April 30, 2025, OCU supporters forcibly seized the Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral of the UOC in Brovary, Kiev Region.
- On May 2, 2025, in the village of Stadniki, Rovno Region, a commission of the Regional Military Administration's Department of Culture and Tourism drew up an unlawful transfer certificate handing over the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, which had been sealed by the authorities in 2022, from the UOC community to the OCU without the community's actual participation.
- On May 4, 2025, in the village of Banilov-Podgorny, Chernovtsy Region, schismatics, with the support of the authorities, held a sham meeting purporting to transfer two local churches, the Church of the Ascension of the Saviour and the Church of the Holy Spirit, to OCU control.
- On May 6, 2025, OCU raiders, assisted by the police and the Mayor of Cherkassy, seized the St Andrew Church of the UOC, expelling parishioners from the building while relying on a fabricated decision allegedly adopted by the local Orthodox community.
- On May 12, 2025, OCU raiders led by the pseudo-cleric Roman Grishchuk seized the 19th-century UOC Church of the Holy Great Martyr John of Suceava in the village of Spasskaya, Chernovtsy Region, by breaking open the side doors and then smashing the historic lock from the inside.
- On May 15, 2025, OCU schismatics, assisted by police and local officials, seized the Resurrection Church of the UOC in Krasilov, Khmelnytsky Region,

after breaking the locks. According to eyewitnesses, Archpriest Alexander Dunets, who attempted to prevent the seizure, was beaten and nearly strangled by the attackers, who also took away his mobile phone containing footage of the break-in.

- On May 15 and 20, 2025, the attempts by the OCU and local authorities to seize the Transfiguration Cathedral of the UOC in Varash, Rovno Region, failed. Against the backdrop of years of pressure beginning in 2023, including an unlawful public assembly organised by Mayor Alexander Menzul, and document and court proceedings falsifications, OCU activists led by local deputy Alexander Derevianchuk attempted to enter the cathedral under the guise of an “inspection commission.” They were prevented from doing so by parishioners, who had kept watch over the cathedral and defended it despite threats by the raiders to “return with angle grinders.” The parish stressed that 1,528 believers had voted to remain within the UOC, whereas the authorities had registered the cathedral under the OCU contrary to the will of the congregation.
- On May 16, 2025, in the town of Zastavna, Chernovtsy Region, a crowd of OCU activists, assisted by police, seized the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God after breaking down its doors.
- On May 20, 2025, OCU representatives seized the UOC Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Stary Broskovtsy, Chernovtsy Region.
- On May 21, 2025, schismatics seized the Church of St Paraskeva in the village of Ust-Putila, Chernovtsy Region. Police blocked parishioners from entering.
- Also on May 21, 2025, nationalist radicals ignored parishioners attempting to stop them and poured pig’s blood over the gates of the St Nicholas Cathedral of the UOC in the town of Khmelnytsky, where Metropolitan Onufry, Primate of the UOC, was scheduled to celebrate an All-Night Vigil on May 22 marking the 35th anniversary of the diocese. The previous day, at

the urging of local deputies Alexander Cherniyevich and Viktor Burlyk, as well as the neo-Nazi activist Yevgeny Karas, around 100 nationalists gathered outside the cathedral with refuse lorries and sewage pumping vehicles in an attempt to block the service. As a result of these provocations and threats, the service was cancelled. Later, members of the Khmelnytsky City Council reached out to the SBU and the national police, accusing the UOC and Metropolitan Onufry of “working for Russia,” “inciting interfaith hatred,” “conducting unlawful anti-Ukrainian propaganda,” and other alleged offences, and demanded a “thorough and comprehensive investigation” into these claims.

- On May 22, 2025, OCU supporters cut off the locks and seized the UOC Church of the Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon in the village of Volnoye, Dnepropetrovsk Region.
- Also on May 22, 2025, the authorities transferred the Dormition Cathedral in Kanev to OCU control. Commenting on the decision, Ukraine’s Minister of Culture Nikolay Tochitsky stated that the cathedral had been “freed from the parasitic presence of Moscow churchmen.” He also lashed out at the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, declaring that “there should be no Moscow spirit there” and claiming that it had been “defiled by Moscow priests.”
- On May 24, 2025, the Commercial Court of Cherkassy Region, acting on a motion by the prosecutor’s office, ordered the transfer to the state of the UOC St Michael Church in Gorodishche, Cherkassy Region.
- On May 26, 2025, OCU schismatics seized the UOC Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Belaya Tserkov, Kiev Region.
- On May 30, 2025, a group of OCU activists, led by pseudo-cleric Roman Grishchuk and with police support, seized the St Elias Church of the UOC in the village of Zabolotye, Chernovtsy Region, assaulting parishioners in the process.

- On June 17, 2025, OCU raiders, together with nationalists and police, attempted to forcibly seize the Holy Spirit Cathedral in Chernovtsy. Four priests and several parishioners were brutally beaten, the cathedral was desecrated, and its treasury was looted. However, approximately 5,000 people gathered in defence of the cathedral and forced the raiders to retreat. Immediately after the attempted seizure, the city mayor, Roman Klichuk, posted congratulations to the schismatics on Facebook.
- One of the militants, who was detained by believers, confessed that he and other extremists had received 1,000 hryvnias each from their OCU handlers for doing “the dirty work.” A video also circulated online featuring a response from another raid participant, Roman Grishchuk (son of the schismatic Roman Grishchuk Sr., who has led numerous seizures of Orthodox churches), in which he claimed to have earned \$3,000 for the attack on the cathedral.
- According to media reports, security officials in Chernovtsy compiled lists of believers who had defended the cathedral, with the apparent intention of taking repressive measures against them.
- On June 24, 2025, SBU officers, accompanied by a detachment of 30 armed National Guard servicemen, conducted a search of the Holy Trinity Convent in Korets, Rovno Region.
- On August 6, 2025, a group of OCU raiders cut off the locks and seized the Vvedensky Church of the UOC in the village of Dovbysh, Zhitomir Region, having first severed the electrical cables to prevent video recording of their actions. They were joined by workers from the TCR, who assaulted believers attempting to defend the church; one woman sustained rib injuries.
- On September 13, 2025, nationalists led by OCU “Archbishop” Vladimir (Shlapak) seized the Holy Protection Church of the UOC in the village of Potiyevka, Zhitomir Region, ripping off the locks. Prior to this, the raiders had held an illegitimate vote in the village centre to change the “jurisdiction” of the local community in favour of the schismatics. Outsiders and non-

members, mostly from other villages, participated in the vote. The Orthodox community of the UOC was denied access to religious services.

- On September 28, 2025, in the village of Nagoryany, Chernovtsy Region, a group of OCU schismatics led by the pseudo-cleric Grishchuk broke down the doors of the UOC Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God and seized it.
- On September 29, 2025, OCU supporters led by the raider Grishchuk, accompanied by OCU chaplains and police officers, seized the Transfiguration Church in the village of Kerstentsy, Chernovtsy Diocese of the UOC. Law enforcement officers blocked the entrance to the village that day.
- On October 8, 2025, National Police and SBU officers conducted searches on the grounds of the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra in the Ternopol Region, seeking documents relating to the alleged illegal transfer of ownership of one of the monastery's churches, the Church of All Saints, which is designated as an architectural heritage site. After cutting the locks off the gates with an angle grinder, security forces attempted to enter the monastery's Economic Building, which the seminarians managed to defend. Criminal proceedings were initiated against the believers who had attempted to protect the holy site, on charges of "obstructing the work of law enforcement."
- On October 9, 2025, OCU raiders, taking advantage of the abbot's illness, illegally transferred ownership of the Transfiguration Church of the UOC in Cherkassy to their own benefit.
- On October 10, 2025, OCU representatives and national radicals, with the participation of the police, seized the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir, Volyn Region, as well as the buildings of the diocesan administration and the theological school of the Vladimir-Volyn Diocese of the UOC, assaulting parishioners and students of the theological school in the process.

- On November 11, 2025, OCU representatives, with the complicity of the SBU and the police, forcibly seized the Church of the Icon of the Chernobyl Saviour in Cherkassy.
- On November 16, 2025, OCU raiders seized the Transfiguration Cathedral of the UOC in the village of Moshny, Cherkassy Region.
- On December 2, 2025, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education attempted, through the courts, to seize the UOC Church in honour of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Sign,” located on the grounds of the Odessa Trade and Economics College. The diocese won the case at first instance, but the ministry filed an appeal in hopes of regaining possession of the church. The panel of the Odessa Court of Appeals upheld the trial court’s decision, recognising the UOC community’s right to use the Church in honour of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Sign.”
- On December 17, 2025, employees of the Third City Hospital in Cherkassy, under pressure from the city mayor, fictitiously transferred the Apostle Luke Church of the UOC to the OCU – which had rented space in the hospital for worship – through a “vote on behalf of the Orthodox community.”
- On December 22, 2025, OCU raiders used a circular saw to cut off the locks and break into the Church in honour of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in Chigirin, which had been fictitiously re-registered in favour of the schismatics in February 2025. Notably, no local residents volunteered to participate in this takeover; OCU pseudo-chaplain Nazariy Zasansky brought in a group of approximately 50 militants in uniform, who introduced themselves to those present as TCR workers. Believers later noticed a video posted by Zasansky in which he expressed outrage at the “absence of anything on the altar and the sacrificial table.”
- On December 23, 2025, OCU representatives, with the assistance of the police, cut off the locks on the doors and seized the UOC Intercession Church in Checheliyevka, Kirovograd Region, which had previously been sealed by court order. The action was accompanied by insults directed at those

attempting to defend the believers and an attack on the local Archpriest Demetrius (Gorodetsky).

- In December 2025, in Tomashpol, Vinnitsa Region, OCU supporters demanded access to the Holy Dormition Church.
- On January 21, 2026, the Commercial Court of the Chernovtsy Region issued a ruling on a lawsuit filed by a fictitious OCU community against the Administration of the Chernovtsy-Bukovina Diocese of the UOC, ordering the canonical Church to vacate the Holy Spirit Cathedral in Chernovtsy. The grounds cited were the illegal decision of the pseudo-schismatic community of February 16, 2025 and the subsequently fabricated re-registration of ownership of the cathedral and adjacent buildings.
- On January 27, 2026, the head of the Hetman's Capital Reserve, with the assistance of police officers, evicted four sisters of the Baturin Krupitsky St Nicholas Convent of the UOC in the village of Osich, Chernigov Region, citing a terminated lease agreement. The nuns had no other place of residence and were officially registered at the convent. No court ruling on the matter had been issued at the time. The doors of the church and the residential premises on the convent grounds were sealed. The convent had previously been restored by the nuns themselves. The authorities, with the assistance of the police and the management of the National Art Museum of Ukraine, have refused to return the nuns' personal property, including liturgical items and icons; the abbess's icons were appropriated by museum staff. The monastery has been turned into a "secure facility," with the nuns living in prison-like conditions. They are denied access to the convent church and the buildings where food is stored, and all parcels from parishioners are subject to strict control.
- On February 9, 2026, OCU raiders used an angle grinder to cut off the locks and illegally seized the UOC Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in the village of Kuzmin, Khmelnytsky Region, depriving the local Orthodox community of access. The Khmelnytsky Regional Military Administration

illegally re-registered the church, changing its name, rector and denominational affiliation “on paper.”

- On February 9, 2026, in the village of Velykaya Yablonovka, Cherkassy Region, the OCU initiated a fictitious “transition” of the local canonical Orthodox community to its ranks in order to seize the Church of St John, convening an illegal “meeting” of fictitious persons to that end.
- On February 9, 2026, the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Kuzmin, Khmelnytsky Region, was seized in a raiding attack. The attackers presented fake documents to demonstrate that the church switched its affiliation to the OCU. In fact, the Regional Military Administration for the Khmelnytsky Region carried out a sham procedure to change the registration of the local congregation by replacing its leader and confessional affiliation.
- On February 10, 2026, the Cherkassy “diocese” within the OCU published an what it called an executive order by its head, Ioann Yaremenko, dealing with “normalising worshipping, administrative and parish affairs” at the Nativity Church in Cherkassy, which is affiliated with the UOC. This document stipulates that this regional schismatic entity will “take all possible measures as permitted by law and canonical law” to take over the church. This de facto amounted to declaring the intention to seize it.
- On February 14, 2026, persons wearing balaclavas broke into the UOC Church of St. John the Warrior in Kiev by breaking its locks, followed by the announcement by the OCU’s Metropolitan of Donetsk Sergey Gorobtsov that the OCU took over the church. On November 4, 2025, the Military Administration of Kiev issued an executive order to this effect by changing the church’s affiliation based on a resolution by an illegitimate assembly. Sergey Gorobtsov said that Sergey Dumenko, who leads the OCU, offered him to “act as the head of this entity in the interests of the OCU’s Synodal Department of Social Service and Charity.”

- On February 20, 2026, OCU raiders broke and replaced locks of the St Nicholas Church in Schastlivoye, which belongs to the UOC's Borispol Diocese. They acted under the pretext of fulfilling the resolutions of a sham assembly, which decided to change the affiliation by joining the OCU. The next day, the schismatics and the police, also present at the scene, prevented the church's rector and the flock from entering the building while threatening to lynch them.
- On February 26, 2026, the Kiev Regional Council adopted a resolution titled "Implementing Ukrainian law to defend the constitutional regime in terms of the operation of religious organisations in the Kiev Region." It provided for assisting district-level military administrations and local self-government bodies in holding assemblies for changing the affiliation of religious institutions with a focus on monitoring the use of public property by religious entities, "including by preventing its use by banned entities."
- Member of the Kiev Regional Council Roman Titikalo initiated this decision and referred to the law titled "On the protection of the constitutional order in the sphere of the activities of religious organisations," also known as the law banning the UOC, as well as the decision of the State Service of Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience of August 27, 2025, to "recognise the UOC Kiev Metropolinate as being affiliated with a foreign religious entity whose operations have been banned in Ukraine." The MP said that the regional council "was on a mission to rid the Kiev Region of the UOC." In addition to this, he said: "There is a problem, since the ban would mean that the state would take over the property, which raises the question: Who will hold religious services in these churches? It is for this reason that we believe that it would be advisable to encourage the congregation to change its affiliation to the OCU before the court delivers its verdict in order to avoid political uncertainty and make sure that people are not deprived of spiritual support." Roman Titikalo went on to call for creating an inventory of the property belonging to the congregations of the UOC by alleging that local

communities received instructions to this effect. Moreover, statements by this official demonstrate that the authorities are keen to make the UOC disappear. He stressed that “joining the OCU is not the only option, since there are other denominations, in particular, Orthodox structures.” He went on to say that the UOC had 407 active congregations in the Kiev Region. In this context, Roman Titikalo said: “Our task consists of carrying out a review to understand how many still exist, whether they use churches that are public property, and to proceed accordingly.”

- On March 11, 2026, representatives of the OCU led by its pseudo-Metropolitan Roman Grishchuk, took over the Dormition Church of the UOC in Komarov, Chernovtsy Region, with a detachment of special forces and 10 police crews present at the scene.
- On March 15, 2026, a group of radicals headed by Vasily Kifor, a would-be cleric of the OCU, seized the Peter and Paul Church of the UOC in Kosmach, Ivano-Frankovsk Region.
- On March 19, 2026, the media reported that the Volyn Region Military Administration filled a lawsuit to expel the monks of the St Nicholas Miletsky Monastery of the UOC by arguing that the lease on the property expired on January 1, 2026. The officials signalled their intention to hand over the property to the OCU.
- On April 13, 2026, the Ukrainian occupation authority changed the affiliation of the Alexander Nevsky Church in Slavyansk, DPR, from the UOC to the OCU by referring to a resolution by a sham assembly of its would-be parishioners dated September 28, 2025.
- On April 16, 2026, representatives of the OCU cut off the locks and took over the St Michael Church of the UOC in Bezuglovka, Chernigov Region. Its affiliation was illegally changed on January 28, 2026, when head of the Military Administration for the Chernigov Region, Vyacheslav Chaus, signed an order in favour of the schismatics. During this period, activists from the OCU intimidated the church’s rector, Father Yaroslav Sobolevsky, by falsely

accusing him of refusing to perform funeral services for military personnel. According to media reports, Ivan Gonchar, a pseudo-cleric of the OCU, is someone who knows his way around ancient icons, and the raiders he sent to storm the church were very upset by the fact that the Orthodox believers managed to save the icons and churchware before the takeover.

- On May 11, 2026, Ukrainian police officers and representatives of Pereyaslav National History and Ethnography Reserve took over the St Michael Monastery of the UOC in Pereyaslav, Kiev Region, by breaking the locks and expelling its superior, Archimandrites Antony and the monks, while violently treating the believers who tried defending the sacred premises. Once inside the monastery, they compiled an inventory of its property for transferring it to the reserve, which also included the monks' personal cells. They referred to a 2023 ruling by the Commercial Court of Appeal which ordered the UOC to vacate the monastery in favour of the reserve.
- On May 30, 2026, OCU raiders seized the UOC Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Noviye Vorobyi, Zhitomir Region, sealed its entrances and prevented parishioners from accessing the building, while convening a fictitious parish meeting. Before that, the church's rector, hieromonk Ilya, was forcibly sent to the front by the TCR.
- On June 4, 2026, OCU radicals carried out a forceful takeover of the Holy Trinity Church of the UOC in Kremenchug, Poltava Region, with the police looking on. The radicals referred to a Supreme Court ruling recognising that the local congregation changed its affiliation and joined the OCU. They beat up several believers and clerics who tried to make a stand and defend the church, including Archimandrite Joseph, who received death threats. He had to seek medical attention. Radicals and authorities changed the church's affiliation in 2024 by switching it to the OCU following a sham assembly and refusing to take into account the will of the parishioners. All this happened even though the followers of the UOC built this cathedral on their own in the 2000s.

Section 6. Pressure exerted by national and regional authorities on major UOC monasteries

In May 2022, the schismatic OCU, with the support of the Kiev regime, established and registered a “parallel community” of the principal monastery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra (using the same name). In 2023, officials refused to renew the agreement for the use of the two largest churches of the Lavra, both of which had been constructed and restored at the expense of the canonical Church. Moreover, the long-term agreement previously concluded with the UOC for the use of the remainder of the Lavra’s building complex was unilaterally abrogated without legal justification. The Ministry of Culture of Ukraine continues to pursue the transfer of all Lavra buildings to state ownership and the eviction of the monastic community. The monastery’s leadership and monastics are being subjected to persistent pressure to transfer allegiance to the OCU, which in turn is pressing for the handover of the monastery’s buildings.

The seizure of the churches and the building complex of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra was authorised by a decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine dated December 1, 2022, and an executive order issued by Vladimir Zelensky on the same day.

On March 10, 2023, the Director of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra National Architectural Reserve issued a formal letter to the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra (Men’s Monastery) of the UOC, notifying them of the termination of the agreement governing the use of the monastery’s churches and properties, and demanding that the territory be vacated by March 29, 2023. The justification given was the finding of an interdepartmental working group, which had purportedly “established that the monastery had violated the terms of the agreement on the use of state property.”

In his public statements, the then Minister of Culture of Ukraine, Alexander Tkachenko, repeatedly insisted that the UOC leadership must vacate the monastery, making it abundantly clear that the monks faced a “choice” – either to leave the monastery or to join the OCU. Despite legal challenges mounted by the monastery and the absence of any court decision, throughout March and April 2023, the reserve’s management, with the backing of police, attempted to seal off sections of the monastery buildings and forcibly evict the monastics. They obstructed the conduct of divine services and routinely denied the faithful access to the sacred sites.

Following the brotherhood’s refusal to abandon the monastery or transfer to the OCU, the abbot of the monastery, Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, was charged under Article 161.1 (Violation of equality of citizens depending on their racial, national, regional affiliation, religious beliefs) and Article 436-2.1 (Justification, denial of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, glorification of its participants) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. From April 1, 2023, he was held in isolation and placed under house arrest. In June 2023, his counsel, Archpriest Nikita Chekman, declared on the Telegram social network that there had been numerous investigative and procedural breaches in the criminal proceedings against Metropolitan Pavel. He reported that officers of the Security Service of Ukraine maintained a constant presence outside the premises where the Metropolitan was residing, and that his visitors were summoned for questioning as witnesses and required to refrain from communicating with him. In mid-July 2023, Metropolitan Pavel was transferred to a pre-trial detention centre and subsequently released on August 7, 2023, following the posting of bail. The criminal case against him remains ongoing; he continues to be under house arrest.

Law enforcement and special services personnel have subjected the clergy and faithful to sustained pressure, obstructed video documentation, and effected arrests using disproportionate force. As a result, criminal cases have been

instituted on fabricated charges against four UOC activists, who have been placed under house arrest.

On June 6, 2023, via the Telegram social network, Minister of Culture of Ukraine Alexander Tkachenko announced the conclusion of the ministry commission's work at the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra and the signing of a transfer and acceptance act for state property with the reserve. According to his statement, 79 properties in various states of repair were "transferred." He further accused the UOC of "unauthorised reconstruction, extension, and reconfiguration" of the properties, demanded the cessation of the use of the Lavra's buildings within three working days, and insisted that they be returned to the reserve: "The Lavra must be Ukrainian, and it is being returned to the state."

In a statement, the Legal Department of the UOC described the minister's demand as unlawful, unfounded, and unenforceable, noting that judicial proceedings regarding the reserve's claim were still in progress.

On June 5, 2023, the Commercial Court of Kiev once more postponed for one month the preparatory hearing regarding the claim by the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Reserve against the Kiev-Pechersk Monastery of the UOC for the removal of obstacles to the use of property.

On August 10, 2023, the Commercial Court of Kiev upheld the claim of the National Kiev Pechersk Historical and Cultural Reserve "for the removal of obstacles to the use of property," thereby legalising the eviction of the monks from their permanent residences.

On August 11, 2023, Ukrainian security forces cordoned off the Lavra, blocking entry for the faithful and pilgrims, while a commission from the Ministry of Culture sealed several buildings. Two days earlier, on August 9, representatives of the Lavra had been denied the right to submit a counterclaim against the

reserve seeking recognition of the unilateral termination of the agreement on the use of the monastery as unlawful.

On September 12, 2023, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine reported that it had brought under state control 13 properties out of approximately 40 principal structures on the monastery's grounds.

On May 20, 2024, Acting Minister of Culture of Ukraine Rostislav Karandeyev threatened to use force to expel UOC monks from the Lower Lavra, asserting that their presence was illegal. The monks of the canonical Church were given one month to comply voluntarily.

During the night of August 14, 2024, the Church of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra in honour to the Icon of the Mother of God Life-Giving Spring was seized from the brotherhood; the church itself was subsequently closed and sealed. The Director General of the reserve, Maxim Ostapenko, justified the sealing of the church by claiming it was "state property." Simultaneously, he stated that the reserve had "unilaterally terminated" the agreement with the UOC monastery.

A further egregious affront to the religious sensibilities of UOC believers by the Kiev regime was the conduct of a "scientific examination" of the relics preserved in the monastery, orchestrated by the museum-reserve's management. On March 28, 2025, employees of a commission specially constituted by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine for the "inventory and verification of the historical and scientific value of the relics of saints" descended upon the Lavra's grounds accompanied by security personnel. Not a single clergyman was included among their number. Present, however, were the Head of the Department of Military Surgery of the Military Medical Academy of Ukraine, Sergey Korol; the Head of the Department of Vertebrate Biomorphology of the National University of Ukraine, Doctor of Veterinary Sciences, Oleg Melnyk; the Head of the Department of Human Anatomy of Odessa Medical University, President of the Scientific Society of Anatomists, Histologists, Embryologists, and Topographic

Anatomists, Yelena Appelhans; a Professor of the Department of Anatomy of Vinnitsa University; among others.

During this inspection, reliquaries containing the relics were opened and samples were taken for DNA analysis. Photographs documenting the commission's improper treatment of the entrusted relics provoked widespread public indignation.

On August 28 and September 12, 2025, the Head of the OCU, Sergey Dumenko, also known as pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius, held what he described as public prayer services in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra's Near and Far Caves which the schismatics took from the Orthodox believers in what amounted to an illegal raiding attack.

On February 2, 2026, Ukraine's Ministry of Culture announced its intention to transfer to the OCU two buildings in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra's Lower Section and grant it the right to use them without consideration. This included Building 70, the former residence of Metropolitan Onufry of the UOC, and Building 49, where the UOC Kiev Metropolinate had its administrative quarters. Minister of Culture Tatyana Berezhnaya explained this decision by arguing that it would help the OCU "contribute to preserving the cultural heritage while supporting Ukraine." Another pretext for transferring these buildings in the Lavra's Lower Section consisted of offering the OCU's congregation a proper environment for carrying out its religious and monastic practices as part of efforts to "legally institutionalise its worshiping practices in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra." The ministry also said that Orthodox monks in the Lower Lavra sought to "spread Russian narratives."

On March 15, 2026, Head of the OCU, Sergey Dumenko, also known as pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius, held ordination ceremonies for two would-be monks in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra's Near Caves, which was the first time the schismatics did this over the past seven years.

On April 3, 2026, the seized residence of the UOC's head hosted a meeting of the so-called Sacred Synod, which resolved to transfer schismatic monks from the Theodosius Monastery to the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra.

On February 17, 2026, government officials and representatives of the OCU cut off locks in two churches within the Lower Lavra section: the Church of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Warm Church. Monks belonging to the UOC could no longer hold divine services there.

On May 12, 2026, the staff of the Lavra reserve carried out a violent takeover of the St Anna's Conception Church despite the fact that the court proceedings regarding the rights to use this building as filed by the Kiev regime had yet to be completed.

On May 14, 2026, the OCU's would-be abbot of the Lavra Avraam Lotysh held a meeting with Deputy Commander of neo-Nazi Azov corps Svyatoslav Palamar to discuss the monastery's "spiritual revival" and making it more Ukrainian.

On May 14, 2026, police officers in charge of security at the Lavra detained Brother Nazarus, who was the assistant of the monastery's abbot, lived there and helped monks and pilgrims. He was transferred to an unknown location.

On May 17, Sergey Dumenko held a prayer service at the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra in the presence of neo-Nazis from Azov.

Starting February 25, 2026, in keeping with the decision of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Lavra's caves can be accessed from Wednesday through Sunday, between 9 am and 11 am, and only as part of a group and subject to registering in advance. Visitors must be accompanied by four museum employees. The OCU has been tasked with forming pilgrimage groups. Guided tours are offered on the same days from 12 noon until 4 pm, with the visiting time limited to 30 minutes. On June 4, 2026, supporters of the OCU held a divine

service in the Lavra's Near Caves with the would-be abbot, Avraam Lotysh, leading the prayer. They acted as per the authorisation granted by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine to resume prayer services (once a week, on Thursdays, from 9 am until 11 am).

The OCU has also established a “concurrent” community for Ukraine's second largest monastery, the **Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra** of the OCU in the Ternopol Region. Representatives of the OCU have openly called for expelling the monks belonging to the canonical Church from this monastery so that it could be transferred to the OCU. The regional authorities and the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine spoke out in favour of this initiative.

In May 2023, the Prosecutor's Office for the Ternopol Region opened a criminal file regarding the mismanagement of the land owned by the Pochaev Lavra. The Ministry of Culture of Ukraine dispatched an agency commission to this monastery, pretexting the move by alleging that the monks used a land plot of over 1,000 square metres without authorization and removed the top soil layer from agricultural land. In March 2023, head of the Ternopol Regional Council, Mikhail Golovko, said that he would plead for terminating the contract on using the monastery's land with the UOC. Signed in 2003, this lease was designed to operate for 50 years. The far-fetched allegation on the failure by the canonical church to abide by its contractual obligations served as a pretext for this decision. Apart from the state, the schismatic OCU and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church expressed their desire to take over the Pochaev Lavra.

On August 19, 2023, authorities in the Ternopol Region used security concerns as a pretext for cancelling a cross procession at the Pochaev Lavra to mark the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. Three regions – the Ternopol, Khmelnytsky and Rovno regions – cancelled cross processions. When parishioners and clerics started to arrive at the cathedral in Kamenets-Podolsky,

Khmelnitsky Region, police officers were already there. Law enforcement used this opportunity to hand out conscription notices to draft-aged men.

On April 17, the Ternopol City Council resolved to confiscate land belonging to the UOC within the city limits, which led to the Ternopol Diocese of the UOC losing control over a land plot where the canonical Church's main cathedral stands. During the same month, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine established a commission to inspect the way the Pochaev Lavra used its facilities. In November 2023, the Security Service of Ukraine carried out searches at the monastery. On June 5, 2024, it was reported that a commission of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture, supported by the Security Service of Ukraine, started operating in the Pochaev Lavra. According to experts, these actions indicate the first steps in seizing the monastery and its property.

On August 14, 2024, the Ternopol Region Commercial Court ruled to seize the premises of the UOC's Pochaev Monastery of the Holy Spirit, which is a part of the Pochaev Lavra. On October 31, 2024, the Lvov Western Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal and upheld the ruling.

In February 2025, pseudo-Metropolitan of Ternopol Nestor Pysyk (Orthodox Church of Ukraine) said that he would take over the Holy Spirit Skit at the Pochaev Lavra, which represents its biggest complex and was built almost entirely by the UOC. The authorities are currently working on cancelling the titles held by the UOC on some of the buildings within the monastery to be followed by confiscating the skit. The formal pretext for this is a criminal case under the article "fraud committed by an organized group," which was initiated against the monastery in connection with its efforts to register ownership of part of its property.

As part of this criminal case, on October 9, 2025, searches were carried out at the monastery by SBU officers and the police. Gross violations committed during the operation, as well as the unauthorised breaking down of the monastery gates, led to

clashes with the monastery's residents and students of the Pochayev Seminary. The searches were overseen by the head of the local district SBU department and representatives of the district authorities. On October 10, 2025, with the aim of exerting pressure, a significant number of TCR personnel and police officers were sent to the Lavra, where they conducted "document checks" and attempted to forcibly mobilise the monastery's residents and seminary students.

There is evidence of the Kiev regime's efforts to seize other UOC monasteries while giving these actions an appearance of "legality." On July 5, 2024, the Kiev Commercial Court of Appeal, acting on a claim filed by the Ancient Chernigov National Architectural and Historical Reserve, issued a ruling stating that the administration of the Chernigov Diocese of the UOC had no right to remain on the territory of the **Yelets Monastery** and ordered the clergy to leave the monastery. In autumn 2023, a commission of the Ukraine's Ministry of Culture announced the beginning of work on transferring reserve sites into state ownership, including churches that had been used by the canonical Church. In March 2024, Acting Director General of the reserve Vladimir Khomich demanded that the UOC vacate the **Holy Trinity and Yelets Monasteries**, as well as the **Transfiguration Cathedral** in Chernigov.

On October 24, 2025, the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience (SSEFC) announced that it had recognised one of Ukraine's largest convents – the **Holy Trinity Convent in Korets**, Rovno Region – as "affiliated" with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). At present, the SSEFC is seeking through the courts to strip the convent of its status as a legal entity and, pending a final court ruling, to "suspend its activities" (by sealing its property and blocking its bank accounts) as an interim measure in connection with a lawsuit seeking its liquidation. The local leadership of the OCU has laid claim to the monastery and is calling for the expulsion of the nuns from it.

On March 24, 2026, the SSEFC announced that it had recognised the **Holy Protection Goloseyevo Hermitage Monastery of the Kiev Diocese of the UOC** as

“affiliated” with the ROC. The decision was preceded by an information campaign in the media directed against the private school operating at the monastery. Its staff was accused, among other things, of teaching mathematics using Soviet textbooks and of teaching pupils children’s songs from the Soviet era. The institution’s administration stated that it was not a “secret school,” but rather a family club whose classes were optional. On January 7, 2026, Ukraine’s Prosecutor General’s Office announced the opening of a pre-trial investigation under political articles of the Criminal Code concerning the school’s activities. At the same time, Ukrainian media outlets published a number of materials inciting religious discord and targeting Orthodox children’s schools operating at UOC monasteries.

A key element of the Kiev regime’s actions aimed at alienating UOC-owned monasteries has been **efforts to seize Orthodox objects of worship, including the relics of saints and items of church decoration**. The country’s current authorities, which are willingly selling off their own history, view these objects as mere artefacts whose value is determined not by history and tradition, but by their auction price. In June 2023, media reports stated that the Ukrainian authorities had reached an agreement with UNESCO on the removal of ancient icons and relics of saints from the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra in order to ensure their “preservation” in European museums. It is known that ancient Byzantine icons, secretly removed from the country with the assistance of the above UN body and Swiss NGO International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, were displayed at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Following this, reports emerged of agreements regarding the removal of Orthodox saints’ relics from the Lavra. At the same time, Ukraine’s Ministry of Culture referred to them merely as “exhibits.” It was suggested that ancient items of Orthodox art removed with the consent of the Kiev regime could potentially be used as a means of payment for Western arms supplies.

In an attempt to mitigate criticism from the international community, in November 2023, Director of the National Preserve Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Maxim Ostapenko told journalists, “Together with specialists from various fields, the Ministry of Culture

will conduct an examination and verify the authenticity of these sacred objects. We want to ensure that no accusations are made against us in the future that we are preserving the wrong objects of worship or that the sacred artefacts have been stolen.” On March 31, 2024, Ukraine’s Ministry of Culture representative Maryana Tomin supported this approach, announcing plans by the ministry to carry out an “inventory” of the relics of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra located in the monastery’s caves, which she referred to as the “unburied remains of the saints.” According to her, anthropologists, military chaplains, and archaeologists were expected to be involved in this work. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that UOC clergy are not allowed to participate in these activities. Under provisions of Ukrainian legislation on military chaplains adopted in December 2021, UOC priests are prohibited from serving as chaplains; this role may only be performed by priests of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) or representatives of the schismatic OCU. Accordingly, these groups have been granted the authority to carry out the “examination of the unburied remains” of Orthodox saints. Representatives of both confessions have previously stated on numerous occasions that the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra contains “wrong” remains, that is, the relics of “Russian saints.” Since several such “wrong” saints were removed from the OCU’s calendar of saints, experts believe that a situation may arise in which the relics of saints who do not meet Ukrainian criteria of “patriotism” could be removed from the Lavra.

Such precedents have already occurred. On October 5, 2023, Ukraine’s Ministry of Culture confiscated from the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the UOC in Chernigov the relics of three saints: St Theodosius and St Philaret, and the Venerable Lawrence of Chernigov. At present, there is no information as to whether these relics remain in the Holy Trinity Cathedral. It is also unknown whether they were damaged by employees of the Ukrainian ministry during the unexpected seizure of the cathedral and in the period that followed. The Ancient Chernigov National Architectural and Historical Reserve possesses no documents concerning the “inventory” of the relics of St Philaret and St Lawrence.

The fact that the Kiev authorities are considering the possibility of using the relics of Orthodox saints as bargaining chips can be also seen from an article titled “Ukraine is ready to offer Romanians the relics of St Theodora of Sihla in exchange for the remains of national heroes” published by the Romanian Patriarchate’s publication “Basilica” in October 2023. The article refers to undisclosed agreements between the governments of Romania and Ukraine concerning the search for the relics of St Theodora of Sihla, which Romanian researchers believe may be located in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. They are allegedly intended to be exchanged for the remains of Hetmans Filip Orlik and Ivan Mazepa, who are buried in Romania.

On January 23, 2025, a “solemn” transfer took place, during which “Metropolitan” of the OCU Alexander Drabinko handed over to Head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church Svyatoslav (Shevchuk) fragments of the relics of St Andrew the First-Called and Prince Vladimir that belong to the UOC, under slogans about “unity within the Ukrainian people and the Kiev Church.” In 2018, the Kiev Transfiguration Cathedral, where these holy relics had been kept, was seized by the OCU with the assistance of Drabinko.

On July 6, 2025, coinciding with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky’s meeting that day with Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican, Svyatoslav Shevchuk solemnly brought the above relic fragments into the Uniate Cathedral of Stt Sophia in Rome, stating: “Today, in the context of the actions of the Synod of Bishops of our Church in Rome, we solemnly brought into this holy temple the relics of the Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir. That Vladimir, whom the Moscow occupiers stole from Ukraine, is returning today to his church.”

7. Hate speech, unprovoked aggression and violence against UOC clergy and believers

Prominent politicians, senior government executives and regional officials are fostering hate speech towards the UOC, while a large-scale information campaign against it is being carried out through state and private media. As a result, churches

and sacred sites of the canonical Orthodox Church have been targeted by acts of vandalism and arson, and its clergy and believers have faced unprovoked violence and aggression.

From 2022 to 2026, hate speech towards the UOC has been present in public statements by Ukraine's state leadership, high-ranking government officials and politicians, senior executives of special services and law enforcement agencies, as well as prominent public and religious figures. For instance:

- In December 2022, former President of Ukraine Petr Poroshenko said in an interview with Channel 5, which he owns: "I am not aware of such a church, the UOC. According to current legislation, there is only a Ukrainian branch of the Russian Orthodox Church. This is not a church; it is a KGB den that endorses and blesses the killing of Ukrainians, a poison for any believer."
- On January 27, 2023, in a comment to Channel 24, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Alexey Danilov – he served in this position from 2019 until 2024 – expressed his objection to referring to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a church, by making the following argument: "When this institution [the UOC] is called a church, it contradicts the tasks which they are directly assigned." He also accused representatives of the UOC of "supporting terrorism," "working exclusively for the FSB," and claimed that "these bastards participated in international trips representing Russia abroad."
- On August 26, 2022, Head of the Military Administration for the Sumy Region Dmitry Zhyvitsky said: "It is now clear who the real enemy is... I will do everything to ensure that the UOC ceases to exist in the Sumy Region."
- On July 8, 2022, Chairman of the Ternopol Regional Council Mikhail Golovko said: "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a structure hostile to our state, engaged in subversive and criminal activities... The struggle for Ukraine's independence continues, and we cannot afford to be tolerant in religious matters."

- On August 26, 2022, Chairman of the Rovno Region Council Sergey Kondrachuk (later removed from office), referred to the monastic community of the UOC as “smelly and shaggy” and its clergy as “FSB priests” in an interview with a local TV channel.
- On December 21, 2022, Head of the Military Administration for the Lvov Region Maxim Kozitsky said: “The complete separation of the UOC (Moscow Patriarchate) from the Russian Orthodox Church is inevitable. There is no need for self-discreditation; a decision must be made immediately.”
- On December 21, 2022, former head of the Ukrainian Security Service Vasily Malyuk described the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as “an environment conducive to enemy infiltration” and stated that the mission of the Security Service of Ukraine was “to cleanse this environment of enemy presence as efficiently as possible.”
- In a February 2023 interview, former head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Lieutenant General Alexander Skipalsky urged Ukraine’s counterintelligence services to “focus its substantive efforts” on the UOC. “When a cross procession moves, it reminds me of a lead ram-provocateur guiding a crowd to a slaughterhouse. Of course, key positions [in the UOC] are occupied by individuals working for Russia,” he said.
- On March 30, 2023, Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, said that only the OCU should remain in Ukraine, while the UOC “will gradually relocate to Russian cities.” He also expressed his regret with the fact that the UOC did not go through a “physical purification” process in the first months of the special military operation, since it would be harder to do it now.
- On April 27, 2023, member of the Verkhovna Rada Inna Sovsun, who initiated one of the draft laws to ban the UOC, criticised the Verkhovna Rada for its “lack of political will” and urged it to adopt the corresponding decision. She claimed

that such a decision would “ease tensions at the local level” and relieve local authorities from having to “engage in conflicts and forcibly remove priests of the ROC from Ukrainian churches.”

- During a visit to the would-be Vladimir-Volynsk Diocese of the OCU, its head, Sergey Dumenko, i.e., pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius, sharply criticised Patriarch Kirill, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the position of the UOC. Speaking on May 10, 2023, at the cathedral of the OCU in Vladimir, Volyn Region, Dumenko referred to Moscow as “today’s Egypt and Babylon,” urging people to “finally break free from slavery to Moscow.” He also compared believers of the canonical Orthodox Church to “Jews who had become so accustomed to living in Egyptian slavery that, even when witnessing miracles, they followed not God but the golden calf – an idol they created out of their own interpretation of church canons and rules.”
- In a parish sermon in May 2023, the would-be Archbishop of Rovno Hilarion Protsik (OCU) said: “We still tolerate the Muscovites living under our roof. A mother buries her son today, and then she goes to the basement of the Resurrection Cathedral [the cathedral of the UOC], where the Muscovites pray, and bangs her forehead on the floor, praying for that same damned Kirill. Where is the truth, where is the reason, where is the heart of that mother?”
- On July 15, 2024, former President Petr Poroshenko posted on Facebook a congratulatory message on the 1036th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus, labelling the canonical Church as “an evil force that opposes the faith” and vowing to “fight against it.” He also stated that “today, more than ever, the issue of adopting a law to ban the Russian pseudo-church FSB structure, which masquerades as the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate, is critical.”
- On November 19, 2024, Vladimir Zelensky, in a statement regarding interactions with religious organisations, said: “Of course, we are not talking about the Moscow Church. The era of those who sanctify terror is over.”

- In a Facebook post on June 18, 2025, Roman Grishchuk, a would-be OCU cleric, described parishioners of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Chernovtsy as zombies by accompanying his message with a fragment from Hollywood blockbuster World War Z, in which the military goes after a zombi crowd and shoots it at point-blank range. He added the following comment: “In my humble opinion, the video shows what must be done.”
- On June 27, 2025, Dmitry Yarosh, founder of the Right Sector, a terrorist group, used a Facebook post to call for liquidating the UOC as “a hostile imperial phenomenon.” He argued that “neutralising one parish of the Russian church in Ukraine amounts to destroying a whole regiment of rats on the front, while ensuring that a Christian convent or a major monastery reunite with the Ukrainian church, i.e., the OCU, is like destroying a whole army of orcs.”

The stance of the leadership of other religious organisations in Ukraine warrants particular attention. In their public statements domestically and especially abroad, the head of the OCU, Sergey Dumenko (pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius), and other representatives have consistently denied the existence of persecution and have asserted that full religious freedom prevails in Ukraine. At the same time, however, they have called for the implementation of Law No. 3894-IX and a de facto ban on the UOC, made political accusations against the UOC’s episcopate, clergy and faithful, and sought to justify pressure on the Church.

- On December 23, 2024, during a meeting between Vladimir Zelensky and members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations, Dumenko, in his address, specifically thanked the head of the Kiev regime for the adoption of Law No. 3894-IX.
- On February 3, 2025, at a service in St Sophia Cathedral in Kiev on the occasion of his birthday, Dumenko made accusations against the UOC, stating: “Those who call themselves Orthodox, who are our brothers in faith, tirelessly oppose the unity and recognition of the local Ukrainian church. Both abroad and in Ukraine itself,

they sow doubts and untruths.” He also characterised the removal of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra from UOC use as “liberation from the yoke of the Russian world.”

- According to the official website of the OCU, on January 15, 2026, at a meeting with the German Ambassador to Ukraine, Heiko Thoms, Dumenko assured him that “there is complete religious freedom” in Ukraine, that “the law banning the activities of religious organisations associated with the Russian Orthodox Church is of an extremely safe nature,” and described the numerous instances of violent church seizures, many of which have been recorded on video, as “the process of the transition of communities to the OCU.” He further accused the UOC of “certain publications that are created intentionally in order to manipulatively present them to the world community.”

Attempts by Orthodox media outlets to document the pressure on the UOC and the discrimination against its communities have been met with harsh suppression by Ukrainian security services. Since 2024, 14 journalists from the Union of Orthodox Journalists (UOJ), Ukraine’s largest Orthodox media outlet, have been subjected to investigation and prosecution. They face a range of political charges such as “high treason in wartime,” “collaborationism,” “creation and participation in a criminal organisation,” “incitement of religious hatred committed by an organised group,” and “justification of armed aggression,” among others. In reality, however, the charges stem from their professional activities – namely, the objective reporting of violent church seizures, the discriminatory nature of legislation targeting the UOC, and other forms of pressure. Four of those journalists were held in pre-trial detention for several months and their release was only secured by international scrutiny. In addition, the UOJ and other online resources that report on the religious persecution of the UOC have been subject to extrajudicial blocking in Ukraine, with so-called “sanctions” imposed on them. Several journalists were left with no choice but to leave the country.

Section 8. US influence on the evolution of the church crisis in Ukraine

The United States, along with other Western countries, has clearly played a role in fuelling the church crisis in Ukraine, with Washington viewing it through the lens of curtailing Russian influence in the region. There is broad agreement among religious leaders, politicians, legal experts, civil society representatives and media outlets across numerous countries that the United States, together with the Patriarchate of Constantinople (which effectively functions as a foreign policy instrument of Washington), bears primary responsibility for the upheaval in Ukraine's confessional landscape. The complicity of America's Western allies, whether through direct support or tacit acquiescence, in the ongoing abuses against the UOC, despite the egregious nature of the violations of believers' rights, is likewise undeniable.

It was with the covert backing of the United States that Constantinople promoted the creation of the schismatic OCU in December 2018. This structure was formally established on the initiative of former Ukrainian President Petr Poroshenko and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who granted it the official Tomos of Autocephaly. During this same period, persecution of the UOC intensified markedly.

Following concerted efforts by American representatives, who are known to wield considerable influence in the Greek world, the OCU was recognised by the primates of the Greek and Alexandrian churches, both of which are financially dependent on the Greek government, and in 2020, by the primate of the Church of Cyprus. The Russian Orthodox Church responded by severing relations with Constantinople and with those primates and bishops of the local churches who had supported the Ukrainian schism.

The importance of this non-canonical church structure was underscored shortly before its creation by Joe Biden, who, as leader of the Democratic Party, met with the head of the UOC of the Kiev Patriarchate (one of the two non-canonical churches subsequently united into the OCU), Filaret (Denisenko; died March 20, 2026), and the future leader of the OCU, Sergey Dumenko (pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius).

American officials have repeatedly voiced their support for the Ukrainian “church independence” project, including former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, US Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, and US Ambassador to Ukraine (2013–2016) and subsequently to Greece (2016–2022), Geoffrey Pyatt. The OCU also received its first official congratulations on its creation from American diplomats.

A statement by Mike Pompeo, published on the US Department of State website on January 10, 2019, pointed out that “the January 6th announcement of autocephaly for an independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine marks a historic achievement as Ukraine seeks to chart its own future. On this momentous occasion, the United States reiterates its unwavering support for a sovereign, independent Ukraine.” In July 2019, the US Senate adopted a resolution on the fifth anniversary of the Maidan revolt, in which it praised the creation of the OCU as “an important milestone in Ukraine’s pursuit of its own future free from Russian influence.”

In a similar vein, **Canadian** Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland commented on the OCU’s receipt of the Tomos of Autocephaly, congratulating the OCU on its independence on January 9, 2019 via Twitter. She emphasised that Ottawa “welcomes this positive change in recognition of Ukraine’s sovereignty.”

The **United Kingdom** also provided political and diplomatic backing for Kiev’s actions. Thus, at a UN Security Council meeting on the persecution of the UOC on July 26, 2023, the British representative stated that London found it “entirely understandable that Ukraine wants to protect its national security” and recognised the Kiev regime’s “every right to do so.” At hearings on Ukrainian issues in the House of Lords on November 21, 2024, the OCU was mentioned as an institution at least on equal footing with the UOC (which was labelled a symbol of Russian imperialism).

High-ranking US officials have held numerous meetings with the leaders of the schismatic church. Joe Biden’s Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with pseudo-Metropolitan Epiphanius during his visit to Kiev in May 2021. In February 2023,

President Biden met with the OCU leader in Kiev, where he reportedly recalled his earlier meeting with Epiphanius in Washington in September 2018.

In a conversation between former Secretary of State Pompeo and a Russian prankster posing as Petr Poroshenko, which was made public in October 2024, the two discussed the church crisis in Ukraine. When asked about the creation of the OCU, Pompeo replied that he had been at the heart of that event and that the Moscow Patriarchate must be ousted from Ukraine.

It is notable that US-backed platforms such as Voice of America have regularly published materials in support of the OCU, thereby promoting its international perception as a “democratic” and “progressive project” that advances the interests of an independent Ukraine.

The terrible consequences of such support are reflected in the shattered lives of thousands of clergy and believers in Ukraine.

It is also worth noting that the **US State Department**, in its annual reports on international religious freedom, routinely seeks to blame Russia for violations of religious freedom in Ukraine in the respective section of its reports. In the reports published in 2023 and 2024, despite citing some instances of infringement of the rights of hierarchs and parishioners of the canonical Church, the Americans essentially justify the crimes of the Kiev regime, presenting a distorted interpretation of events. Both documents, in particular, assert that the number of parishioners of the schismatic OCU already exceeds that of the UOC by several times. One need only look at photographs of the so-called “services” organised by the OCU to see that the reality is quite the opposite.

With Donald Trump’s arrival in the White House in January 2025, the rhetoric of Washington officials, as well as American journalists and political scientists, regarding the Ukrainian religious crisis has shifted somewhat. However, it remains far from a direct condemnation of the Kiev regime’s actions in the religious sphere.

Nevertheless, Ukraine still does not appear on the US list of “Countries of Particular Concern” in the annual reports of the dedicated body – **US Commission on International Religious Freedom**. In an attempt to offset growing international disapproval of Washington’s silence, the Commission nonetheless included a separate section on Ukraine in its 2025 report (covering the reporting period of 2024) for the first time, drawing attention to Law No. 3894-IX, which effectively bans the UOC: “Zelensky signed into law new legal amendments related to the activities of religious organisations, despite widespread concerns about the amendments’ compatibility with international law. The revised legislation allows the government to ban religious organisations in Ukraine affiliated with a foreign religious organisation whose management centre is located in a country waging war against Ukraine... The amendments would likely significantly impact the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which Ukrainian authorities and society have viewed with suspicion following Russia’s 2022 invasion, due to the UOC’s historical and ecclesiastical ties to the Moscow Patriarchate. Furthermore, the new amendments risk imposing collective punishment on individual members of religious communities.” The Americans even called on Kiev to ensure the implementation of Law No. 3894-IX in accordance with international human rights standards. These recommendations were, of course, ignored.

In an interview with Fox News on March 2, 2025, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard stated: “We’re talking about many of these European countries, and Zelensky himself, who claim to be standing and fighting for the cause of freedom and democracy. When we actually look at what’s happening in reality in these countries as well as with Zelensky’s government in Ukraine, is the exact opposite. You have the cancelling of elections in Ukraine; you have political parties being silenced or even criminalised, or thrown in prison. You have the freedom of religion – churches being shut down. You have political opposition being silenced. You have total government control of the media. We could go down a whole laundry list of issues that are against the values of democracy and freedom.”

Republican journalist Tucker Carlson, in an interview with podcaster Clayton Morris on March 15, 2025, once again called for a reduction in funding for Ukraine: “We pay for pensions, for the guaranteed pension of bureaucrats on Ukraine, who work for the corrupt government of Ukraine, headed by the anti-American, anti-Christian Zelensky.”

In an interview with popular Republican journalist Megyn Kelly on April 30, 2025, Tucker Carlson again accused the Zelensky regime – and him personally – of total corruption, including the embezzlement of American funds, and of banning the largest Christian denomination.

On June 2, 2025, Young Republican National Federation (YRNF) co-chair Catherine Whiteford published a video investigation on social media, presenting evidence of the systematic persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the participation of Ukrainian authorities. It included footage of the violent seizure of churches by government officials. Whiteford refuted the “great myth of religious freedom in Ukraine,” criticised the adoption of the law effectively banning the UOC, and stated that the names of the government officials involved in the seizures, along with video evidence of their crimes, had been handed over to the US presidential administration, the US Department of Justice, and the US Permanent Representative to the UN.

Despite these isolated voices of reason emerging from the United States regarding the Zelensky regime’s misanthropic policies toward the country’s largest denomination, there is no indication of a change in Washington’s overall stance on Ukraine’s religious affairs.

Section 9. Response of the international community

Persecution of the canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine has been documented in reports on the human rights situation in the country by the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**. In the report covering the period from November 16, 2018 to February 15, 2019, several incidents of rights violations against UOC believers are recorded, including pressure by the Security

Service of Ukraine through searches and interrogation of UOC clergy. It was noted that the “process of mandatory renaming of religious organisations that are affiliated with religious centres in the Russian Federation ... is primarily targeting Ukrainian Orthodox Church communities and may be discriminatory,” and that the restrictions on access by clergy of such organisations to facilities of the Ukrainian armed forces are contrary to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It was further established that the so-called transfers of UOC communities to the OCU in some cases “were not voluntary and were initiated by state or local authorities or even representatives of extreme right-wing groups, who were not members of those religious communities.”

The OHCHR report presented at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council on October 7, 2022 mentioned that “local authorities in at least seven territorial communities in Kiev, Sumy and Lvov regions temporarily suspended the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church ... for the duration of martial law.” It was noted that the authorities had not provided any justification for such decisions, and that the activities of other regional communities and organisations had not been suspended – indicating “a discriminatory measure on the ground of religion or affiliation with a particular religious group.”

The report covering the period from August 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023 mentions discriminatory bills targeting the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church and the UOC. The OHCHR expressed concern that state actions against the UOC might be discriminatory.

Additionally, on November 11, 2021, the UN Human Rights Committee issued concluding observations on Ukraine’s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, expressing concern about reports of violence, intimidation and vandalism with regard to places of worship surrounding church transitions from the UOC to the newly established OCU. The Committee also expressed concern about reported police inaction during such incidents and the lack

of information about investigations carried out by a participating state. Kiev ignored these observations.

The supplement to the OHCHR report on the human rights situation in Ukraine covering the period from February 1 to April 30, 2023, released on June 16, 2023, notes an increased number of incidents in which Ukrainian authorities used violence against members and supporters of the UOC, as well as prohibitions on the Church's activities by regional councils, and searches of UOC facilities conducted by Ukrainian law enforcement. Concern was expressed about potentially discriminatory actions by the authorities. The report stated that in April 2023, a surge in hate speech was reported, along with several incidents of violence against the UOC and its clergy. It was also reported that Ukrainian government officials, bloggers and public opinion leaders had used discriminatory rhetoric and openly called for violence against UOC clergy and supporters. Law enforcement was unable to effectively prevent incidents related to hate speech targeting the UOC.

On March 14, 2023, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent letters to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, UN General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Bujar Osmani, and OSCE Secretary-General Helga Schmid, highlighting the flagrant violations of the universal and constitutional rights of Orthodox believers in Ukraine. He emphasised that these violations stem from the repressive policies of the Kiev regime, which are aimed at dismantling the UOC. The messages reference numerous instances of persecution against the canonical Orthodox Church, including the widespread seizure of UOC churches and the forced, illegal dissolution of their communities framed as voluntary transitions to a different jurisdiction. They also highlight the so-called restrictive measures ("sanctions") imposed on bishops of the canonical Orthodox Church, the revocation of Ukrainian citizenship from several of its bishops, and both moral and physical pressure on priests and parishioners. The Minister described the actions of the Ukrainian authorities as a severe violation of rights and discrimination against Orthodox Christians in Ukraine, which contradicts a number of widely recognised

international legal instruments, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, among others. Sergey Lavrov urged international leaders to take a principled stance on the illegal actions of the Ukrainian regime against the UOC, to demand that Kiev halt its arbitrary actions and repression against the canonical Orthodox Church, adhere strictly to Ukraine's international obligations, and prevent the forced eviction of monks from the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. The OHCHR report covering the period from June 1 to November 30, 2025 once again criticised Law No. 3894-IX, emphasising that “national security” cannot be invoked as a permissible ground for restricting the rights of religious communities, and that this legislative approach contradicts international legal agreements, including those signed by Ukraine. Violent clashes during the attempted seizure of the Holy Spirit Cathedral in Chernovtsy in June 2025 were also mentioned.

On May 14, 2025, seven UN special rapporteurs – on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; on the independence of judges and lawyers; on minority issues; on freedom of religion or belief; and on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism – addressed a statement to the government of Ukraine. It cited numerous violations of the right to freedom of conscience and freedom of speech, including the forced dissolution of religious communities. Criminal cases and arrests of hierarchs and clergy of the UOC who had suffered for their views and opinions were listed. The statement also mentions instances of the violent seizure and expropriation of church property, including the seizure of the cathedral in Cherkassy and the attempted seizure of the cathedral in Chernovtsy, during which UOC clergy and parishioners were brutally beaten.

Furthermore, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russian diplomatic missions abroad continue to actively communicate information about the persecution of UOC clergy and parishioners to their foreign partners, widely

disseminating updated versions of this Report. In particular, Russian diplomats have highlighted this issue when discussing Ukraine matters in the Security Council, the General Assembly, and other **UN bodies**. They have sought condemnation of the repression against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its parishioners. Repeated appeals have been sent to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, his Assistant for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris, and the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilisations, Miguel Moratinos. The aforementioned messages have been circulated as official documents of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Corresponding efforts were also made with the relevant structures of **the European Union**, which largely continues to overlook the persecution of the UOC. In August 2023, the previous version of this Report was sent by the Permanent Mission of Russia to the EU to former EU Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief Frans van Daele, Managing Director of the European External Action Service for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Michael Siebert, and Vice-President of the European Commission for Promoting the European Way of Life Margaritis Schinas. In the transmittal letters, the Permanent Mission specifically emphasised that the lack of public condemnation by the European Union of the Kiev authorities' illegal actions against the UOC and its parishioners would only encourage Kiev to persist in its discriminatory policies, potentially deepening societal divisions. These documents received no response.

Russian representatives have also used the **OSCE** platform to highlight cases of violations of believers' rights, urging participating states to take notice.

Specifically, during meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council (on November 2, 2023, March 14, March 21, July 4, September 5, and October 24, 2024), the discriminatory actions of the Kiev regime in the realm of religious freedoms were extensively discussed. It was emphasised that the legislative entrenchment of persecution against the UOC constitutes a direct violation by Ukraine of several commitments it has undertaken within the OSCE framework. These include

provisions from the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE (1975), the Vienna Document of the CSCE (1989), the Copenhagen Document of the CSCE (1990), and decisions from the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht (2003). In accordance with these documents, participating states have committed to respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. They are obligated to work towards preventing intolerance and violence based on religion or belief, and to ensure and promote individuals' freedom to profess and practice their religion or belief, either alone or in community with others – including, when appropriate, adopting transparent laws, regulations, practices and policies.

Russian diplomats have called on representatives of the relevant OSCE executive bodies, primarily the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Personal Representative of the Maltese Chair-in-Office on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, including against Christians, Regina Polak (Austria), to respond publicly to the intensifying repression against UOC believers in Ukraine. Similar appeals were also sent to OSCE officials through the Russian Permanent Mission. To date, no substantive replies have been received.

On August 22, 2024, observed as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, Russia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE, Alexander Lukashevich, commented on Ukraine's newly adopted law banning the UOC in an interview with RIA Novosti, calling on future OSCE officials to finally give honest assessments of the unprecedented acts of abuse and repression against canonical Orthodoxy on the part of the Ukrainian authorities.

The existence of religious persecution in Ukraine is acknowledged by many Western politicians, prominent government officials, leading journalists and experts, including those who support Ukraine.

Thus, in a commentary published in the *Daily Express* on May 25, 2025, Lord Jackson of Peterborough, a leading member of the UK Parliament's all-party group on freedom of religion or belief, stated that "shutting down the country's oldest church will only sow the seeds of future social unrest." While prosecuting

individuals for treason is lawful, he argued, banning an entire religious organisation constitutes a gross abuse of power. He also stressed the importance of Ukraine carefully considering its religious policy to ensure it aligns with its long-term goal of integration into the Western world.

On July 24, 2025, the text of a letter from the law firm Amsterdam & Partners, dated July 8, to the US President, the UK Prime Minister, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, and European leaders regarding the deprivation of Metropolitan Onufry's Ukrainian citizenship was published. The letter calls for reminding Ukraine of its obligations under international law to protect and promote civil liberties and human rights and emphasises that actions against the UOC, including the deprivation of citizenship of the head of the UOC, completely violate freedom of religion. Similar letters have been sent to the heads of local Orthodox churches. Lawyer Robert Amsterdam, in his capacity as Chargé d'Affaires for International Affairs of the UOC, has repeatedly issued scathing criticism of the Zelensky regime's violations of religious freedom.

Representatives of the US Congress regularly criticise religious persecution in Ukraine. In particular, in 2025–2026, Florida Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna responded to written and video appeals from UOC parishes whose churches had been seized, condemning the arrests of UOC clergy and their forced mobilisation.

In early 2024, the **Public Advocacy human rights group** announced international recognition of the cases of violation of the UOC's rights and the consistent policy of discrimination against this church and restriction of the rights of its leaders and believers pursued by the Ukrainian authorities. That statement followed a joint request by the OHCHR special rapporteurs on freedom of religion or belief, on minority rights, and on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association regarding the violations of UOC believers' rights recorded in Ukraine, and the response of Ukraine's Permanent Mission to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva to that request, published on January 29, 2024. The signatories of the request expressed concern about the persecution of the UOC and

its believers for what the special rapporteurs recognised as the lawful and peaceful exercise of UOC believers' rights to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and freedom of association, enshrined in Articles 18, 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Among other things, they pointed out that one of the UOC hierarchs had been served with a summons to appear in court on charges of inciting interfaith hatred and that his residence had been searched, while another hierarch of the Church had been given a custodial sentence by a court verdict. The special rapporteurs also highlighted Ukrainian court decisions encouraging the authorities to seize the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, which had been used by the UOC, and the numerous searches that Ukrainian security forces had conducted in UOC monasteries, offices, educational institutions and other premises in November 2022. They also expressed concern over the increasingly frequent manifestations of hatred and incitement to violence against UOC believers and clergy across Ukraine, predominantly in the country's western regions.

According to Public Advocacy, although UOC believers were undeniably subjected to unlawful persecution during 2022–2023, as well as in earlier periods, the Ukraine's Permanent Mission's response to the special rapporteurs was incomplete and contained unreliable information in a number of clauses.

At the same time, experts point out that many major pro-Western NGOs, including Amnesty International and Freedom House, have not been reporting violations of religious freedom in Ukraine, while highlighting similar violations in other countries.

In addition, calls on the international community to condemn the Kiev regime and take measures to end the persecution of canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine have also come from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the State Duma and the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Permanent Commission on International Cooperation in Human Rights of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, and other bodies.

Numerous statements of support and solidarity with the UOC by local Orthodox churches and their leaders, as well as representatives of religious and civil groups around the world, continue to be published.

At the same time, unfortunately, the problems faced by canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine have not been made a priority by the United Nations or other relevant organisations. In response to appeals from the Russian Foreign Ministry, the relevant international organisations generally limit themselves to perfunctory statements that they are monitoring the situation. When they do issue a response or criticism, it is selective and restrained.