

THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION ON FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE

Infographics based on the IRF's research

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS AND SACRED PLACES

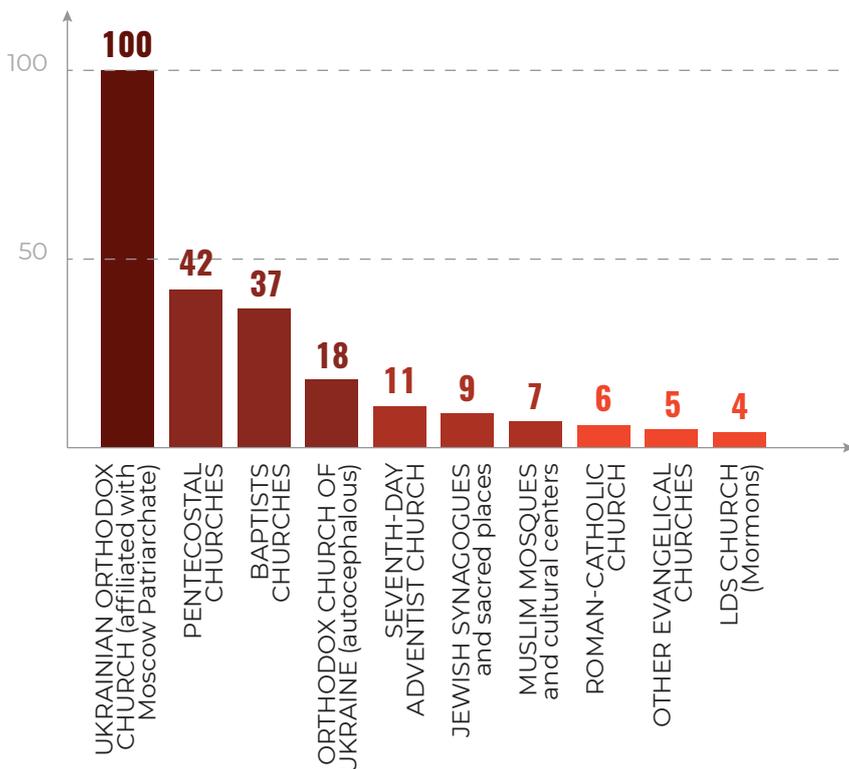
damaged by shelling because of Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine



At least **240** religious buildings and sacred places have already been damaged due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

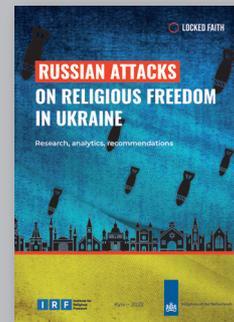
CONFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

of the religious buildings and sacred places damaged by shelling because of Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine



COMING OUT IN JULY 2022
 FIND THE FULL TEXT OF
 THE IRF'S RESEARCH ON

LOCKED FAITH.org



IRF's research is supported by the Netherlands embassy in Kyiv



Kingdom of the Netherlands

RUSSIAN ATTACKS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN UKRAINE

Summary of research by the Institute for Religious Freedom

BACKGROUND

In 2014 – 2015, the Russian aggression against Ukraine was accompanied by abductions, tortures, and extrajudicial executions of clergymen and believers of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and a number of Evangelical Protestant churches (Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, etc.). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to targeted harassment. As a result, in the Russian-occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, most religious communities have ceased to exist, believers are forced to pray privately or gather clandestinely, and religious freedom has disappeared. The forced implementation of Russian legislation on combating “extremism” and “illegal missionary activity” has significantly worsened

the situation of religious communities and associations in these regions and in annexed Crimea too.

From the first days of the full-scale Russian invasion, the Institute for Religious Freedom has begun monitoring and collecting data on the impact of the war on faith-based communities in Ukraine. IRF interviewed national and local leaders of most churches and religious associations in Ukraine and filmed testimonies of targeted shellings of houses of worship and attacks on religious actors. The full text of IRF's research will be presented in July of 2022 and deliver the complete picture of significant changes of the religious situation in the Ukrainian regions that have suffered from Russian aggression.

KEY FINDINGS

Since February 24, 2022, the Russian attacks on religious freedom in Ukraine have become crueler. If during the last few years, the Russian invaders only threatened to kill priests, now religious leaders are being killed and tortured – again, but on a scale far worse than in 2014. If previously, Russian occupational authorities expelled Ukrainian believers from their churches and prayer houses, now Russia is destroying the spiritual heritage of Ukraine with bombs and missile strikes without justification by military necessity.

Russia's imperialistic policy, based on the ideology of the “Russkiy Mir” (Russian World), is now being openly implemented in the Ukrainian territories under occupation. For example, by removing Ukrainian books from libraries and burning them in public, banning the use of Ukrainian language in the public sphere and even on road signs. Also, the occupational authorities strive to take under control all religious activity, force local religious communities to justify Russian aggression and establish subordination with the Russian religious

centers, compel pro-Ukrainian religious actors to cooperation using threats and torture.

Russian media and religious leaders, like Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, are justifying the war against Ukraine with propaganda about the supposed protection of Orthodox believers of the Moscow Patriarchate and Russian speakers. Instead, Russian military aircraft and artillery are destroying both houses of worship and believers, regardless of language, denomination, and ethnicity. Examples of massive destructions such as in Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, and Kharkiv allow to conclude that Russia would rather eliminate whole cities and destroy the Ukrainian historical and spiritual heritage than accept the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination and sovereignty. Numerous documented crimes committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine must be investigated according to international humanitarian law as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** For the US Senate and President – to finally pass, sign, and implement the H.R. 5408 Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act.
- 2** For the EU and other democratic states – to introduce personal sanctions against Russian officials, religious leaders, media workers, and other individuals who are responsible for justifying and (or) implementing repressions against Ukrainian religious actors and faith-based communities.
- 3** To create a Special Tribunal for the Punishment of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.
- 4** To facilitate the investigation by the International Criminal Court of any war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide that are perpetrated on the territory of Ukraine.
- 5** For the UN and OSCE – to demand Russia to provide unhindered access to the occupied Ukrainian territories, including Crimea, and the people detained there for independent monitoring missions to observe the situation with religious freedom and other human rights.