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The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)

Religious institution

All actors • Ukraine

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; primate – Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and Metropolitan of Kyiv.

Official position/functions regarding the conflict

Since the time of its public support of the Maidan protests, which helped it attract supporters from regions other than western Ukraine, the UGCC has maintained an active pro-Ukrainian position on the conflict. It supports and receives support in return from the Ukrainian diaspora, mainly in Poland, Canada, and the United States, developing the image of the church of the “Ukrainian Catholics”. At the same time, representatives of the UGCC attempt to speak on behalf of the whole of Ukraine, although they mainly represent the western regions. [In the Development Strategy of the UGCC](#), the emphasis is placed on the level of individual parishes. It is assumed that changes on the parish level will bring changes for the whole church; this idea is carried out through the “Living Parish” project.

Regarding the conflict, representatives of the UGCC, headed by Primate Shevchuk, emphasize the importance of the rhetoric of peace, trying to initiate public discussions on this issue with leaders of the scholarly and civic circles, often on the basis of the analytical centers of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Kyiv and Lviv. [At the theological level and in the statements of the Archbishop, it is stressed that peace must be defined as “just”,](#) that is, it should not come “at any cost.”

Interests in the region of the conflict

The primary interest of the UGCC is to cease to be a church of the Western Ukrainian region of Halychyna and to enter the all-Ukrainian level. Thanks to its activity since the Maidan protests, many Ukrainians in the central and eastern regions have learned more about the UGCC, but still, they still lack representation and contact with believers of other denominations.

This church is also trying to expand its influence in the conflict zone, opening new parishes and attempting to work with the locals; in the east, however, the locals often refer to it as to the “Bandera church” and the “Catholics,” which hinders active progress. Because of that, the leaders of the UGCC have been betting on the development of the church’s ministry through the network of Caritas organizations that cooperate with secular initiatives, which are most often directed at assisting victims of conflict or people in difficult life circumstances. That way it is easier for the UGCC to establish contact with different social groups of influence.

The geopolitical strategy of the UGCC remains at the level of lobbying for its right to establish a patriarchate – a claim based on the historical memory of this church before the Soviet-era persecutions. From time to time this issue is raised at the level of closed dialogues with the Vatican, but a quick practical result is unlikely to come out of that due to Rome’s unwillingness to create a split in the global church community. At the level of Ukraine, the UGCC attempts to offer an alternative to the Roman Catholic Church, presenting itself as the church for Ukrainian Catholics; thus, they often emphasize the pro-Ukrainian character of their ministers and of their position in general.

Activity regarding the conflict

In addition to the official statements of its primate, the main activities of the UGCC are carried

out through the organizations created by them. First of all, this concerns broad humanitarian and social work projects of the “Caritas” of Ukraine (see details in paragraph 6), as well as the Greek Catholic military and medical chaplaincy in the conflict zone.

In the field of peacebuilding, the UGCC especially emphasizes the work of its Commission for Reconciliation (represented by priest Ihor Shaban), which has also become known as the Justice and Peace Commission. Its main goal is to conduct ecumenical initiatives, such as the Week of Christian Solidarity, with common prayers in different churches and dialogues with Jews and Muslims on common public issues.

One of the most famous centers that represents UGCC is the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, which is actively involved in the social and political spheres. [Regarding the conflict, the UCU has a “Volunteer Hundred,”](#) which actively helps the military and their families in the conflict zone, as well as the relatives of the Maidan “Heavenly Hundred”.

Thanks to its parishes abroad, the UGCC can often act at the international diplomatic level – through joint projects with the diaspora, as well as by lobbying for the interests of Ukraine in the Vatican; [this happened repeatedly during the visits of the Ukrainian military to the Pope](#) and [the international pilgrimage of the Ukrainian officers to Lourdes](#).

The top leadership of this church takes part in the work of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, supporting its [overall strategy of peacebuilding](#), as well as its [appeals to Vladimir Putin for the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners](#), it’s backing of the [President’s peace initiatives in 2014](#), and its [statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state](#), among other initiatives.

One of the latest manifestations of its position has been its participation in the Round Table on Religious Freedom and Political Prisoners, where this church has supported the common public call to help the families of political prisoners and the attempts to influence the release of the prisoners of conscience.