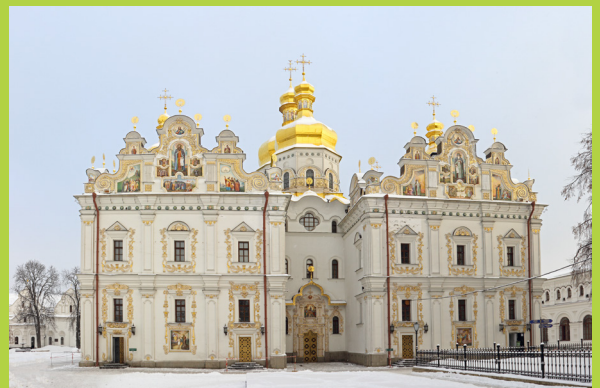


Map of the Actors of the Conflict in Donbas: RELIGIOUS ACTORS



This analytical review of the actors of the conflict in Donbas was prepared in the framework of the "Map of Conflict" subproject of the CivilM+ international civil society platform.

The overall goal of the work on the "Map of Conflict" is to identify the actors and groups involved in the conflict in Donbas at various levels, as well as their influence, mutual relationships, interests, fears, and expectations. It is assumed that this analysis will help identify possible ways of influencing various stakeholders in order to resolve the conflict.

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The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in canonical unity with the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP)

Name of actor

Religious organization "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church;"¹ primate — Onufriy (Orest Berezovskyi), Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in canonical unity with the Moscow Patriarchate (the Russian Orthodox Church) is still the largest religious organization in Ukraine; according to official records, it unites from 11.000 to 12.000 parishes². A part of its parishes are located on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula and in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are not controlled by Ukraine; this enables the UOC (MP) to maintain contact with believers adhering to different political positions. The official position of this church remains publicly neutral; it has emphasized the importance of "peace" and the priority of remaining a "spiritual organization," which stays "above the conflict." Officially it "supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine" and is "out of politics;" the statements of Metropolitan Onufriy are as neutral as possible (even though in one of his earlier interviews he called the war "civil" and "fratricidal"³).

In most cases, however, Onufriy's position proves to be ambiguous: sometimes one can clearly discern the "notes of protest" in it; for example, in 2015 he refused to stand up in the Ukrainian parliament during a minute of silence in memory of the fallen Ukrainian soldiers, which he later explained by the "urgent need to end the war."⁴ Such public rhetoric evokes regular criticism for the lack of understanding of the international nature of the conflict in it, the unwillingness of this church to take action, and the manifestations of separatism; for instance, many people in Ukraine wondered why Onufriy never sent a letter to Patriarch Kirill with a request to influence the end the war in the east of the country. At the same time, however, at the beginning of the conflict, especially in Crimea, the UOC (MP) representatives blessed the Ukrainian military "to defend our Motherland from the Russian military," referring to the defensive nature of the confrontation on the Ukrainian part⁵.

The rhetoric and the public discourse of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow has been quite influential in the UOC (MP). His initial mission was to build a spiritual and geopolitical

1 Official website of the UOC (MP): <https://church.ua/>

2 Statistics of the Ministry for Culture of Ukraine for 2019: https://risu.ua/religiyni-organizaciji-v-ukrajini-stanom-na-1-sichnya-2019-r_n97463 and the specification of this statistics (without additional data for 2020): <https://www.irs.in.ua/ua/statistics-of-religious-organizations-in-ukraine-2020>

3 Metropolitan Onufriy about the conflict in the east: <https://vicariate.church.ua/novosti-uk/blazhennishij-mitropolit-onufrij-pro-vijnu-nasxodi/>

4 The news and the photograph from the Parliament's session: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news/27005934.html>

5 Statement by Metropolitan Avgustin of Bila Tserkva and Bohuslav addressed to the Ukrainian military after the events in Crimea, 03.03.2014, on the website of the diocese: <https://bilatserkva.church.ua/2014/03/03/mitropolit-avgustin-markevich-blagoslovlyayu-nashe-vijsko-na-zaxist-batkivshhini/>

concept of the "Russian World," a model of a sociocultural community above state borders that was to be based on the traditional Russian values of "Orthodox spirituality." In fact, it was the ROC that legitimized Ukraine's belonging to the core of the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. In 2014, Kirill himself stated that a "fratricidal civil war" was taking place in Ukraine and asked Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to "protect Orthodox Christians in eastern Ukraine, who, in an atmosphere of deepening violence coming from Greek Catholics and schismatics, live in daily fear for themselves and their loved ones."⁶

"Orthodox public organizations" became an important element of this rhetoric; they are directly or indirectly led by the ROC, and the pro-Russian wing of the UOC (MP) often cooperates with them. Some of these organizations operated in Ukraine within the framework of the "Policy of Compatriots," and some of their main curators were the deputies of the Ukrainian national parliament on behalf of the Party of Regions. Examples include the "Union of Orthodox Citizens of Ukraine," "United Fatherland" Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods of Ukraine, St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Brotherhood, and the "Orthodox Choice" All-Ukrainian Public Association.

On the territories of Crimea⁷ and in separate districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (ORDLO), the UOC (MP) remains in touch with the local authorities since it does not fall under the ban as a "sectarian organization," continuing to operate officially. At the same time, in Ukraine some of this church's ministers received allegations of anti-Ukrainian activities⁸, arms sales, and assistance to terrorist organizations⁹. Few documents that testify to this stir up hate speech against the UOC (MP) and accusations of its "pro-Russian" position and cooperation with the "church of the occupier."

Interests in the conflict region

The main interest of this church in the conflict region is to preserve and increase its influence by way of expanding the network of its parishes and attracting new believers. It is important for its hierarchs to maintain contact with local authorities at different levels as this often leads to additional benefits and access to local resources — both in controlled and non-controlled territories.

Given the different political views and groups of influence within the UOC (MP), it is virtually impossible to single out one line of its development. The neutral and 'monastic' position of Metropolitan Onufriy does not reflect the existing confrontation between the priests, who often depend on the position of the diocesan (regional) bishop. Previously, the pro-Russian wing of this church could find all kinds of resources and powerful support from representatives of the Party of Regions and later from the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich; it would come in the form of allocating land, resolving legal issues, providing access to various institutions, etc. Upon the granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly, things have changed since a group

6 Department for External Church Relations of the ROC: <https://mospat.ru/ru/2014/08/14/news106782/>

7 Statement of the Simferopol and Crimean diocese of the UOC (MP): <http://crimea-eparhia.ru/index.php/59-events/15243-dukhovenstvo-kryma-podderzhalo-patriarkha-kirilla-i-mitropolita-onufriya>

8 Warning to two priests suspected of anti-state propaganda, news: <https://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhливо/30284-sbu-obyavila-predosterezhennie-dvum-svyashchennikam-za-antigosudarstvennyuyu-propagandu.html>

9 Suspicion of a priest of the UOC (MP) of organizing terrorist activities: <http://www.reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/63817762> and the news: <https://www.obozrevatel.com/crime/06837-korrektiroval-artu-svyaschennik-upts-mp-sbezhal-v-rossiyu-posle-sluzhbyi-dnr.htm>

of openly pro-Ukrainian priests left the UOC (MP) and moved to the OCU; however, different attitudes still persist within the UOC (MP).

In general, the UOC (MP) has been trying to maintain the position of social and political neutrality as much as possible, withdrawing itself from the public space "until better times." On the one hand, hate speech and mass media harassment against it have influenced the moods of its believers; on the other hand, those external attacks have helped strengthen their social bonds in times of crisis.

Activity regarding the conflict

The UOC (MP) continues to carry on its active humanitarian mission in the zone of the contact line and in the regions of its presence, including in ORDLO. Sometimes this humanitarian assistance is associated with the propaganda of the "Russian World," but such a case was officially recorded only once at the beginning of the conflict (distribution of Russian textbooks¹⁰ and sermons by UOC (MP) ministers). Other "Russian World" sermons and possible propaganda have not been properly documented or investigated.

The Synodal Department for Chaplaincy continues to operate within the UOC (MP)¹¹. However, only few military chaplains continue to act – unofficially – after the conflict in the Council of Chaplains under the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, which caused most of them to leave¹², as well as after the unofficial ban on their presence in the units of the National Guard, albeit with a clarification that representatives of a church whose center is located in the aggressor country (meaning the ROC) may be refused access to a military unit¹³.

The top leadership of this church takes part in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, supporting its overall strategy of peacebuilding¹⁴, as well as its appeals to Vladimir Putin for the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners¹⁵, its backing of the President's peace initiatives in 2014¹⁶, and its statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state¹⁷, among other initiatives.

One of the attempts to involve the UOC (MP) in active peacemaking was the statement by the Secretary of the NSDC Serhiy Sivokho on its potential role as a mediator¹⁸ in the negotiations with ORDLO¹⁹; however, this proposal drew public condemnation and did not translate into practical implementation.

10 News about the transfer of history textbooks with the participation of ministers of the UOC (MP) and the ROC <https://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhlyvo/30195-rpc-i-upc-obespechivayut-rossijskimi-uchebnikami-shkoly-v-dnr.html>

11 Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations of the UOC (MP): <https://kapelan.church.ua/>

12 Document on the Council's work: <https://www.mil.gov.ua/diyalnist/zvyazki-z-gromadskisty/rada-u-spravah-dushpastirskoi-opiki-pri-ministerstvi-oboroni-ukraini/normativni-dokumenti-ta-metodichni-rekomendaczii/2014/07/08/konczepczija-dushpastirskoi-opiki-u-zbrojnih-silah-ukraini/>

13 The official clarification of the National Guard of Ukraine regarding the "ban" on the ministry for priests of the UOC (MP) in its units: <https://www.facebook.com/NGUmainpage/photos/a.775481315807114/1525744614114110/?type=3&theater>

14 The official document of the Strategy that will be mentioned further: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/documents/uccro-peacebuilding-strategy-ukraine>

15 The AUCCRO's appeal to Vladimir Putin on the release of political prisoners: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-call-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

16 Statement in Support of the President's peace initiatives: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-about-peaceful-initiatives-of-president>

17 <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-defence-ukraine>

18 Statement by Serhiy Sivokho: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcsanaUVMLU>

19 See paragraph 1.1.3. National Security and Defense Council

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)

Name of actor

The Kyiv Metropolis of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Orthodox Church of Ukraine);²⁰ primate — Epifaniy (Serhiy Doumenko), Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The receipt of the Tomos of Autocephaly²¹ by the Orthodox Church of Ukraine became one of the key events of 2018, as well as a historic turn in the inter-Orthodox relations in Ukraine. The former UOC of the Kyiv Patriarchate became united with the former Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine and a part of the UOC (MP), having received official recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, albeit with the status of a metropolitanate (and not patriarchate). Active participation of the former President Petro Poroshenko in resolving the Ukrainian church issue largely determined the public position of this church, which has been trying to remain the main "pro-Ukrainian church" and the "Ukrainian church for the Orthodox." On the one hand, active involvement of the OCU in political and public affairs has attracted new supporters; on the other hand, some of the believers got alienated from it because they were not ready to put up with the politicization of spiritual structures.

At the geopolitical level, the OCU has become another official player among the Orthodox churches and a factor of influence in the relations between Patriarch Bartholomew and Patriarch Kirill. According to the estimates of most theologians, the granting of the Tomos has become the ultimate point for toughening up the confrontation in the Orthodox world.

At the level of the religious map of Ukraine, the emergence of the OCU provoked a situation, which is in many respects similar to the beginning of the 1990s, which were characterized by inter-jurisdictional confrontations and the redistribution of property. The wave of transfers of Orthodox parishes²² from the UOC (MP) to the OCU intensified in January 2019, but has not led to critical changes in the size of this church, which is officially significantly smaller than the number of structures within the UOC (MP).

Headed by Metropolitan Epifaniy, the OCU publicly preserves the image of the pro-Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which strengthens the political and ecclesial independence of Ukraine. In his statements, Epifaniy opposes the war, stressing that Ukraine "does not need peace at any cost, but a just peace."²³ In addition, the OCU hierarchs have been trying to maintain a course of liberalization and openness of the church in order to attract new believers.

²⁰ The OCU official website: <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/>

²¹ Chronology of the reception of the Tomos of Autocephaly, Voice of Ukraine: <http://www.golos.com.ua/article/314091>

²² Interactive map of parish transitions, RISU: <https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/exclusive/review/74069/>

²³ Metropolitan Epifaniy's interview for Radio Svoboda: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/mytropolyt-interview/30233020.html>

Interests in the region of the conflict

The OCU actively promotes its interests on two levels. At the first, geopolitical, level, it attempts to gain the widest possible recognition from the church community and the Orthodox world in order to act as an independent player on an equal footing with other players. This contributes to maintaining a more restrained public position — in contrast to the past experience of the UOC KP. At the level of internal politics, this church maintains the image of a pro-Ukrainian church with a more liberal attitude, since it is interested in expanding the geography of its influence, including in the eastern regions.

According to its ministers, the peacebuilding role of the OCU should be manifested in cultural work, including with ORDLO; it should consist in the promotion of Christian values and a pro-Ukrainian position. To succeed in this, they are interested in contacting representatives of regional authorities and big business, often at the expense of and in confrontation with the local structures of the UOC (MP), in order to redistribute the balance of influence.

The strategic interest of the OCU is to strengthen its position as a "Ukrainian church" up to the level of unequivocal leadership in the eyes of the Ukrainian society against the pro-Ukrainian Greek Catholics and Protestants.

Activity regarding the conflict

Since its inception, the OCU has received at its disposal a wide network of military chaplains who serve in various units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard, strengthening its positions among the military. Chaplains for military personnel mainly receive official employment and salaries, providing various support for military units both in the conflict zone and during rotations, mostly in direct contact with the command.

The active social position and developed social service of the OCU has been realized through the Synodal Administration headed by Archbishop Serhiy Horobtsov, as well as through the non-governmental organization "Eleos-Ukraine"²⁴. The main activities include humanitarian aid in the conflict zone, support for military personnel and their families, cultural projects, work with youth, and various initiatives aimed at overcoming the consequences of the conflict.

The top leadership of this church takes part in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, supporting its overall strategy of peacebuilding²⁵, as well as its appeals to Vladimir Putin for the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners²⁶, its backing of the President's peace initiatives in 2014²⁷, and its statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state²⁸, 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 call to help the families of political prisoners and the attempts to influence the release of prisoners of conscience.

24 See point 3 in the map of religious players.

25 The official document of the Strategy: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/documents/uccro-peacebuilding-strategy-ukraine>

26 The AUCCRO's appeal to Vladimir Putin on the release of political prisoners: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-call-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

27 Statement in Support of the President's peace initiatives: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-about-peaceful-initiatives-of-president>

28 <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-defence-ukraine>

"Eleos-Ukraine" Public Organization

Name of actor

The public organization "Eleos-Ukraine"²⁹; director – priest Serhiy Dmytriev; active since 2014.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

"Eleos-Ukraine" officially represents the Synodal Department of Social Service of the OCU, which is headed by the Archbishop of the Donetsk-Mariupol Diocese Serhiy Horobtsov.

This organization aims at solving social problems and developing a social service "based on democratic values without discrimination," as well as at creating a network of representative offices throughout Ukraine. It publicly supports the position of the OCU, and it involves Metropolitan Epifaniy in its activities while emphasizing its readiness to cooperate with secular organizations. The head of the organization, Dmytriev, has demonstrated a distinctly pro-Ukrainian position since his transition from the ranks of priests of the UOC (MP) in Kherson to the UOC KP in Kyiv.

Interests in the region of the conflict

Since 2014, the organization has been actively pursuing a leading role in the field of social service in dynamic cooperation with secular initiatives that deal with the consequences of the conflict. "Eleos-Ukraine" is currently represented in eight regions³⁰. Its leaders are interested in expanding its network in all regions of Ukraine where the OCU is represented in order to strengthen its position and to work with the local population. In fact, "Eleos" can be called the "Orthodox Caritas" of Ukraine, which is interested in closer cooperation with non-religious groups and donor foundations.

In the future, the organization sees itself as the leader in many social spheres, with an emphasis on healthcare and work with the aftermath of the conflict through cultural projects and initiatives of memory preservation.

Activity regarding the conflict

Since mid-2014, the leader of the organization has been an active military chaplain at the 30th Separate Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. At first he was involved in the humanitarian support for the military and their families. In 2016, the organization switched from humanitarian service and direct assistance to victims of the conflict (for example, to internally displaced persons) to the development of medical and cultural projects. Among its most famous initiatives have been: the "House of Mercy" for elderly people in the east (on the non-controlled territory), projects for the prevention of HIV/AIDS with the participation of religious

29 The official website of "Eleos": <http://eleos.com.ua>

30 Map of the organization's network: <http://eleos.com.ua/pro-nas/merezha-eleos-ukraine/>

organizations, "Books to the East" campaign, the TeenClub youth hub, the theater of veterans, and icon painting plein-airs³¹.

Also, priest Serhiy Dmytriev publicly promotes the narrative of the Russian-Ukrainian war through historical projects. For example, "Eleos-Ukraine" initiated the creation of the Wall of Memory beside the St. Michael's Cathedral in Kiev; it consists of portraits of the Ukrainian soldiers who have been killed since the summer of 2014. Thanks to this project, the square in front of the cathedral has become a place for various public actions related to the conflict (including those by the families of the victims).

The leader of the organization is also a representative of the Social Service Commission of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, where he has lobbied for the document in support of medical ministry, Peacebuilding Strategy, and other documents together with the former vice-president of Caritas Ukraine, the Greek Catholic priest Andriy Nahirnyak.

In 2020, Serhiy Dmytriev became one of the initiators of the creation of the Council of Medical Chaplains of Ukraine. This Council has lobbied for the access of ministers of different denominations to medical institutions, with an emphasis on palliative care. Earlier, the "House of Martha and Mary"³² was opened for spiritual and psychological assistance at one of the isolation hospitals with the aim of developing hospices.

31 List of major projects of the organization: <http://eleos.com.ua/pro-nas/nashi-proekti/>

32 The official facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Religious-Organization/%D0%94%D1%96%D0%BC-%D0%9C%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%84%D0%B8-%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%9C%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%96%D1%97-1122569021168787/>

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP)

Name of actor

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate; primate – Filaret (Myikhailo Denysenko), Patriarch of Kyiv and All Rus'-Ukraine

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

From the beginning of the protests on the Maidan until today, the UOC KP has followed a clear and confident pro-Ukrainian line of the Patriarch Filaret, who openly emphasized the importance of the role of this church many times. For example, earlier he declared that "if it were not for the UOC (MP), there would be no war in Ukraine."³³

Having attracted politically active believers in the past, this church has greatly lost its public influence after the granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly and the formation of the OCU. Although initially Patriarch Filaret supported this process and even received the status of an "honorary Patriarch," he later criticized it, accusing his previous team of betrayal and urging his flock to fight against Metropolitan Epifaniy and the OCU³⁴.

Although publicly the UOC KP continues to position itself as the "Ukrainian church," upon the formation of the OCU its influence has practically reduced to zero; from time to time the UOC KP posts individual messages about the psychological imbalance of the OCU primate on social networks, albeit without any confirmation.

Interests in the region of the conflict

If earlier the main interest of the UOC KP was to function as the pro-Ukrainian political alternative to the UOC (MP), now it is primarily interested in maintaining its ambiguous status and retaining its former supporters. The vision of this church is determined by the personal position of Patriarch Filaret, who would like to see the collapse of the OCU and the return of its parishes to the UOC KP, along with his own influence. According to the theologians, however, after he dies, it is most likely that most of its clergy will join the OCU, and the UOC KP will cease to exist as a separate structure.

Activity regarding the conflict

Before 2018 and the granting of the Tomos, the UOC KP publicly and actively supported the new government in the person of Ukraine's former president Petro Poroshenko. Its actions mainly concerned active humanitarian service. An unusual change happened when the UOC-KP priests were mobilized into the ranks of military

³³ His interview for Channel 5: <https://www.5.ua/suspilstvo/filaret-yakby-ne-bulo-v-ukraini-zaleznoi-vid-moskvy-tserkvy-ne-bulo-b-ukrainskoi-viiny-135643.html>

³⁴ Patriarch Filaret's statement and his appeal to believers: <https://www.unian.ua/society/10641435-zvertaytesya-do-vladi-protestuyte-filaret-zaklikav-viryani-do-borotbi-proti-epifaniya.html>

chaplains; many of them started serving in the conflict zone in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and in the National Guard of Ukraine; their number decreased later, however, and they mainly stayed at the level of individual brigades and units, where they received official employment.

Another important step of Patriarch Filaret was his letter addressed to Patriarch Kirill³⁵, which was regarded as an attempt at reconciliation; however, according to the comments in the UOC KP, in fact it was not meant to be reconciliatory and did not bring any actual result.

After the public condemnation of the Unification Council and the creation of the OCU, the UOC-KP severed any relations with the Orthodox world and withdrew itself into the zone of ecclesial alienation. This did not prevent Patriarch Filaret from ordaining two more bishops after the outflow of the UOC KP hierarchs to the OCU, as well as from re-creating the Synod of the UOC KP³⁶.

35 A copy of the original letter from Patriarch Filaret to the Russian Orthodox Church: <https://rivne.church.ua/2017/11/30/original-lista-filareta-do-predstoyatelya-rpc-patriarxa-moskovskogo-i-vsijeji-rusi-kirila/>

36 <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-48755950>

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)

Name of actor

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 UGCC³⁷ 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 Archbishop, it is stressed that peace must be defined as "just"³⁸, 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"³⁹ 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.

37 Theses and comments on the Development Strategy of the UGCC: http://news.ugcc.ua/video/dvanadtsyat_tsitat_pro_vt%D1%96lennya_strateg%D1%96i_rozvitku_ugkts_v%D1%96d_eksperta_78949.html

38 Clarification on the official website of the UGCC: http://news.ugcc.ua/video/glava_ugkts_potr%D1%96bno_peremogi_ne_lishe_u_v%D1%96yn%D1%96_a_potr%D1%96bno_peremogi_nad_v%D1%96ynoyu_89597.html

39 Stepan Bandera (1909–1959) was a Ukrainian radical politician and theorist of the militant wing of the far-right Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, especially active during WWII.

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,"⁴⁰ 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 Pope⁴¹ and the international pilgrimage of the Ukrainian officers to Lourdes⁴².

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 peacebuilding⁴³, as well as its appeals to Vladimir Putin for the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners⁴⁴, its backing of the President's peace initiatives in 2014⁴⁵, and its statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state⁴⁶, among other initiatives.

40 The official webpage of the initiative: <https://hundred.ucu.edu.ua/>

41 The news about the meeting of the Ukrainian military and the Pope: <https://hromadske.ua/posts/papa-rymskyi-pryvital-ukrainskykh-viiskovykh-u-vatykani>

42 The news about the last pilgrimage: <https://pilgrimage.in.ua/ukrajinski-vijskovi-ta-kapelany-povertayutsya-z-mizhnarodnoho-vijskovoho-palomnytstva/>

43 The official document of the Strategy: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/documents/uccro-peacebuilding-strategy-ukraine>

44 The AUCCRO's appeal to Vladimir Putin on the release of political prisoners: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-call-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

45 Statement in Support of the President's peace initiatives: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-about-peaceful-initiatives-of-president>

46 <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-defence-ukraine>

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.

Caritas of Ukraine

Name of actor

International Charitable Fund "Caritas of Ukraine;"⁴⁷ president – Andriy Vaskovych

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The official position of the fund coincides with the general position and strategic vision of the UGCC; as a non-governmental organization, its priority directions⁴⁸ include assistance to families and children, medical support, and dealing with social problems of migration, among others.

Regarding the conflict, the fund has demonstrated a more active position than the UGCC as a church; building peace is among its priorities. This is best manifested in the project "Bridging the Faults" (see the description of the actor's activity).

The Caritas network is widely trusted and known in the Ukrainian public space for its humanitarian activities on a par with such major players as the Red Cross and Man in Need; this is thanks to the large scale of its work in the gray zone.

Interests in the region of the conflict

Running a broad range of activities and opening new offices in the central and eastern regions, Caritas of Ukraine is interested in stable development and stable financial support of its branches. It is looking for priority areas of work and new partners who can help make the impact of its initiatives last longer.

Moreover, the fund uses the resource of the Greek Catholic communities; for instance, it can propose the opening of its regional office if there is an active initiative group and a leading priest in the region (priesthood is a prerequisite for the position of the director). Thus, Caritas can act not only as a new non-governmental initiative in a promising region, but also as a kind of a social service franchise for the church. The "Living Parish" large-scale project of the UGCC was launched precisely with this purpose⁴⁹; in it, a clergyman and a layman (a representative of the church community) learn to cooperate in order to develop projects together. Ever since the adoption of the Strategy for the Development of the UGCC, the "Living Parish" project has become a movement of the entire church.

Aware of the work of the Roman Catholic Caritas throughout Europe, the Greek Catholic Caritas of Ukraine tries to maintain high standards of its work and to promote its name both among secular foundations and among church initiatives.

⁴⁷ The official website of the CF "Caritas of Ukraine": <http://caritas.ua/>

⁴⁸ Description of the directions of the fund's work: <https://pilgrimage.in.ua/ukrajinski-vijskovi-ta-kapelany-povertayutsya-z-mizhnarodnoho-vijskovoho-palomnytstva/>

⁴⁹ Description of the project: http://ugcc.ua/news/blazhenn%D1%96shiy_svyatoslav_zhiva_paraf%D1%96ya_klyuchova_pod%D1%96ya_nashoi_tserkvi_yaka_viznachit_nash_spos%D1%96b_zhittya_%D1%96_dushpastirstva_na_bagato_rok%D1%96v_vpered_84722.html

Activity regarding the conflict

The Caritas of Ukraine works in several directions. The first, humanitarian, direction encompasses large-scale assistance to groups affected by the conflict; this includes providing basic necessities, as well as psychological, medical, legal, and material assistance to people in need. In particular, this applies to diverse programs for the reintegration of veterans⁵⁰. The second direction is building peace in a broad sense; it happens through the "Bridging the Faults"⁵¹ project, which works with local territorial communities, facilitating and consulting them.

50 About the program on its official website: <http://caritas.ua/uca/>

51 Link to the facebook page of Caritas Kyiv, although the organization is active in other regions as well: <https://www.facebook.com/KyivPB/>

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

Name of actor

The Roman Catholic Church of Ukraine,⁵² diplomatic representative of the Vatican – Apostolic Nuncio Claudio Gugerotti.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

Both globally and in Ukraine, the Roman Catholic church reflects the diplomatic position of the Vatican. Most often its rhetoric can be heard in the public sermons and statements of the Pope; then it is repeated in the speeches of the Apostolic Nuncios in different countries where the RCC is represented.

The Ukrainian society, especially the pro-Ukrainian Christians of different denominations, expected a more decisive position of Rome regarding the armed confrontation in the east. Meanwhile, the Pope's statements remained quite restrained, albeit with a hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Rome's position became even more unambiguous after the meeting of Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis in Havana in 2016, at which the Russian aggression against Ukraine was not publicly recognized; only general statements were made about "the need for reconciliation in the confrontation on the territory of Ukraine"⁵³. In a later interview, the Pope called the war in Ukraine a "hybrid" one, but he did not mention the role of Russia in it⁵⁴.

Since 2015, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti has been the appointed Papal Nuncio in Ukraine; before this appointment he served in Georgia, a country with similar political issues. In his statements, he often emphasizes the importance of "dialogue that recognizes truth," although without any specification⁵⁵, as well as the role of the humanitarian assistance from the Vatican.

Interests in the region of the conflict

The Roman Catholic Church has been trying to preserve its stable position in Ukraine without any attempts to expand as in the case of other Christian denominations. In the context of the military conflict in the east and the existence of the demarcation line, it is important for this church, together with the Nuncio, to maintain free access to its parishes in the territories that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government, while also to guarantee complete freedom and security for its believers in both the Donbas and Crimea.

52 The official website of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ukraine: <https://nunciaturekyiv.org/uk/>

53 Translation of the Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill after the meeting in Havana: <https://credo.pro/2016/02/151894>

54 Pope Francis on the war in Ukraine: <https://www.dw.com/ru/%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B0-%D1%84%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA-%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BB-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BD%D1%83-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B5-%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B/a-49492636>

55 Interview with Nuncio Claudio Gugerotti about the war in Ukraine: <http://kmc.media/2018/03/23/papa-francysk-mig-by-uvyity-do-normandskogo-formatu-posol-vatykanu.html>

Activity regarding the conflict

Since the beginning of the armed conflict, the RCC has maintained the ministry of military chaplains, which is significantly smaller in scale compared to the UGCC or the OCU — also due to the smaller number of Roman Catholics among the military. This ministry began to develop more dynamically after the conversion of Ihor Shtorm, the former Protestant pastor and founder of the First Battalion of Military Chaplains, to the RCC. Soon after that, having received permission to continue his chaplaincy, Shtorm organized the Christian Rescue Service on the grounds of the "House of Father Pio" in Kyiv. CRS develops programs directed at rehabilitation and support of the families of the participants of the military conflict.

The main action that Gugerotti took regarding the conflict was his visits to the parishes in Donetsk and Luhansk⁵⁶; however, those visits caused a number of questions and reprehension in the Ukrainian public sphere. In particular, he was accused of "supporting the occupiers," especially because it was unclear how he had managed to get free access to the non-controlled territories. This issue calls into question the potential of this church as a mediator in the peacebuilding process, although the RCC has had similar successful experiences abroad. The official reasons for the access of the RCC representatives to the occupied territories are unknown, but, according to the informants, those were personal diplomatic agreements. Moreover, officially the visits were limited to celebrating masses, since a broader influence is not allowed.

The largest RCC's humanitarian project during the conflict was the initiative "Pope for Ukraine",⁵⁷ which in two years provided aid to many victims of the conflict in different parts of Ukraine. See details in chapter 8.

The top leadership of the RCC takes part in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, supporting its overall strategy of peacebuilding⁵⁸, as well as its appeals to Vladimir Putin for the release of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners⁵⁹, its backing of the president's peace initiatives in 2014⁶⁰, and its statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state⁶¹, among other initiatives.

56 The news on the second visit of Gugerotti to Donetsk: <https://synod.ugcc.ua/data/apostolskyy-nuntsiy-znovu-vidvidav-okupovanyy-donetsk-492/>

57 The official website of the initiative: <https://www.facebook.com/popeforukraine/>

58 The official document of the Strategy: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/documents/uccro-peacebuilding-strategy-ukraine>

59 The AUCCRO's appeal to Vladimir Putin on the release of political prisoners: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-call-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

60 Statement in support of the President's peace initiatives: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-about-peaceful-initiatives-of-president>

61 <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-defence-ukraine>

"Pope for Ukraine" initiative

Name of actor

Special humanitarian initiative of Pope Francis "Pope for Ukraine";⁶² director — Jan Sobilo, Auxiliary bishop of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia Roman Catholic diocese.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The "Pope for Ukraine" initiative was launched in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the population affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine. It followed a global fundraising campaign for the needs of Ukrainians that took place at the call of Pope Francis on April 24, 2016. During their two-year work, the coordinators of this initiative supported more than 400 public projects on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, among which were both religious and secular projects. The main goal of the initiative was to meet the needs of the affected population.

Interests in the region of the conflict

The initiative officially ended at the end of 2018, having performed humanitarian functions within the framework of the diplomatic relations of the Vatican and Ukraine. For the period of its activity, its representatives were interested in providing humanitarian support for the population of Ukraine, as well as in strengthening the image of the Vatican and demonstrating its balanced position on the conflict. The activity and the financial assistance of the "Pope for Ukraine" initiative helped overcome the skepticism of some critics regarding the too neutral position of Rome and maintain a high level of trust personally to Pope Francis compared to other religious leaders⁶³.

Activity regarding the conflict

In the framework of the initiative, representatives of the RCC in Ukraine managed to support more than 400 initiatives aimed at overcoming the consequences of the armed conflict, mostly through humanitarian and social support of the victims of the war.

⁶² The official website of the initiative: <https://www.facebook.com/popeforukraine/>

⁶³ The news on the rating of trust to religious leaders in 2018: <https://credo.pro/2018/10/222220>

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations

Name of actor

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations;⁶⁴ the chair changes annually.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The AUCCRO is the interreligious advisory body created for the development of a common vision and common position on social and political issues by the Ukrainian religious organizations that cover approximately 95% of religious organizations in Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the protests on the Maidan, the Council tried to quickly respond to social and political challenges; it called for an end to any manifestation of violence. Regarding peacebuilding, it issued several statements: a statement in support of the overall Peacebuilding Strategy⁶⁵, appeals to Vladimir Putin to release prisoners of conscience and political prisoners⁶⁶, a statement in support of the President's peace initiatives in 2014⁶⁷, and a statement on providing aid to protect the Ukrainian state⁶⁸, among others. The Peacebuilding Strategy proposed general prescriptions, calling on religious organizations to contribute to peacebuilding through cultural work and service.

Interests in the region of the conflict

Since its formation, one of the main directions of the Council's work has been lobbying for the interests of the Ukrainian religious circles before the highest levels of government of Ukraine. In particular, this concerns direct contact with different parliamentary groups, as well as attempts to block or promote legislative initiatives that reflect the vision of the Council.

The AUCCRO representatives are interested in maintaining the unique role of this organization, expanding their influence both domestically and internationally; often they publicly support the general policy of the state and respond to the key events from a religious point of view.

64 The official website of the Council: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua>

65 The official document of the Strategy: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/documents/uccro-peacebuilding-strategy-ukraine>

66 The AUCCRO's appeal to Vladimir Putin on the release of political prisoners: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-call-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

67 Statement in support of the President's peace initiatives: <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-about-peaceful-initiatives-of-president>

68 <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/statements/uccro-statement-defence-ukraine>

Activity regarding the conflict

In addition to issuing public statements in different periods of the conflict, the AUCCRO has actively represented the interests of religious organizations in Ukraine at the level of deliberative meetings of the OSCE in Vienna (except those religious communities that have not been included in its composition); there it has stated the need to monitor religious persecution in Crimea and Donbas⁶⁹. Often its role consists in lobbying for the interests of Ukrainian influence groups under the circumstances of their public confrontation with the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, which claims that its believers are being persecuted in Ukraine; the AUCCRO often searches for counterarguments against such statements. Representatives of the UOC (MP) often support the rhetoric of the ROC, however, and thus sometimes they contradict their colleagues from the AUCCRO.⁷⁰

Together with the Institute of Religious Freedom,⁷¹ representatives of the AUCCRO continue to document the facts of persecution, violence or any violation of human rights on religious ground in the conflict zone. Those cases can later be used by human rights defenders while preparing for claims to the courts of various instances.

As mentioned earlier, on behalf of the Council the initiative group managed to create and adopt the Peacebuilding Strategy, which was presented in the regions and recommended for practical use in peacebuilding work.

69 The AUCCRO's call to monitor religious persecution: <https://www.irs.in.ua/ru/side-event-osce-hdim-2019-warsaw>

70 The news about the speech of the delegation of the UOC (MP) at the OSCE meeting in Vienna: <https://news.church.ua/2017/06/23/golova-predstavnictva-upc-pri-mizhnarodnix-jevropejskix-organizacijax-vzyav-uchast-v-naradi-obsje-u-vidni/>

71 The official page of the Institute: <https://www.irs.in.ua/ru>

Chaplaincy in various denominations, military chaplaincy

Name of actor

The movement of military chaplains that act on behalf of different religious communities, some of which were already mentioned earlier in paragraphs 1.4, 2.4 and 5.4 regarding the service of military chaplains in different churches.

Official position / functions regarding the conflict

The movement of military chaplains developed after the beginning of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula; it was a response to the urgent need of individual Ukrainian military units. Many of its ministers began their chaplaincy career with providing humanitarian aid to battalions and brigades;⁷² later their role got crystallized and received an official status.

Now the official position of the Ukrainian military chaplaincy is to support the nationwide vision of the conflict (in the context of the military service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine), as well as to support those religious organizations that the chaplains represent.

Interests in the region of the conflict

Regarding the military chaplaincy in general (and omitting the issue of conflicts between chaplains of individual denominations), we can say that the chaplains are mainly interested in the stable support of their service on the level of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as on the national legislative level. In particular, they are interested in obtaining the official (recognized by the state) status of the participants in hostilities, which provides them with the social and medical insurance, as well as in financial support (including the expenditures on such necessary resources as gasoline when moving along the contact line). At the moment, military chaplains are actively cooperating with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard of Ukraine, as well as with individual initiatives of the local police.

Activity regarding the conflict

The inter-denominational movement of military chaplains supports the military and the command in a variety of ways, working with the personnel and officers. In particular, in addition to satisfying the spiritual needs of the military, ministers often help solve urgent problems of the unit and work closely with a military psychologist or partially replace him/her in his/her absence.

Chaplains continue to maintain social contacts with the families of the military personnel, as well as to inform the military about the news and the political decisions in the outside world; they search for additional resources to satisfy the needs of the army or other military formations. Sometimes their work with the families of the

⁷² An article about the changes and the dynamics of the development of the military chaplaincy in Ukraine since 2013, Kalenychenko Tetiana: https://www.academia.edu/24232001/Changing_focus_on_Military_Chaplaincy_Religious-Spiritual_Counseling_and_Care_in_Ukraine

military happens in the form of social projects, such as family retreats organized by representatives of the UGCC.⁷³

Although this is not the duty of the military chaplains, they often help establish communication between military units and officers, especially if they are required to take care of several units at once.

Another important aspect of the chaplains' work is their cooperation with the Civil-Military Cooperation Service (CIMIC). The Ministry of Defense launched a pilot project of mobile brigades, which included a chaplain, a military psychologist and a political officer, whose task was to solve urgent problems with the civilian population in different parts of the demarcation line. Such brigades, in the opinion of the command and of the officers themselves, have proven their effectiveness and helped establish ties with local communities in the face of dynamic changes on the front line.

73 News about the work with the families of the participants of the military conflict in Donbas and in the South of Ukraine from the town of Drohobych, UGCC: ugcc.ua/news/duhovnopsiholog%D1%96chnu_reab%D1%96l%D1%96tats%D1%96yu_voin%D1%96v_atoos_ta_ihn%D1%96h_rodin_proveli_v_drogobich%D1%96_88902.html

