



RELIGION ON FIRE



# Religion **on Fire**

Report based on the results of monitoring the damage to religious buildings  
as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (February 24 — August 24, 2022)





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*The project “Religion on Fire: Documenting Russia’s War Crimes against Religious Communities in Ukraine” was initiated in March 2022 by the Workshop for the Academic Study of Religion and supported by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine, and the International Center for Law and Religious Studies at Brigham Young University (USA). This project aims to monitor and document the damage to religious buildings as a result of military actions of the Russian army in Ukraine, as well as the murders, injuries, and abductions of religious leaders of various denominations. Since the beginning of March 2022, our team has been collecting data on war crimes against religious communities of various denominations committed by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. In prospect, the materials can be used for scientific research on the impact of the war on the religious life of Ukraine, the reports of international organizations, as well as in courts as evidence to bring the aggressor to justice.*

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# 1 General overview

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On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, — the largest escalation of the armed conflict since the illegal annexation of Crimea in February 2014. The religious life of our state has been under attack since the first day of this invasion. First, there are shellings of religious buildings. These are war crimes since such buildings are the object of increased protection during armed conflicts. Second, such shelling restricts the religious freedom of the civilian population, which is also prohibited by international humanitarian law. Shelling a temple building both damages it and makes it difficult or impossible to maintain the religious practice, as the temple is no longer a safe place for prayer.

Compared to Russia, the religious situation in Ukraine has a high level of religious pluralism and respect for freedom of conscience<sup>1</sup>. The state support is not provided to any particular denomination, no church has a dominant status. Despite the constitutional guarantee of freedom of conscience, a rigid hierarchical model of state-church relations is being developed in Russia, religious freedom is being restricted, and some religious minorities are even banned due to accusations of extremism. Therefore, the restriction of religious freedom in Ukraine due to the Russian Federation's actions both violates international humanitarian law and attacks the Ukrainian way of life, it's a kind of war between different types of civilizations and social systems<sup>2</sup>.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Russian army has been shelling military and strategic facilities, residential buildings, and social infrastructure facilities. In particular, as of August 24, 2022, at least 927 objects of medical infrastructure<sup>3</sup>, 2400 educational institutions<sup>4</sup>, and 469 objects of cultural heritage<sup>5</sup> were damaged or destroyed. War crimes committed by the Russian Federation are recorded by various investigative bodies. However, the scale of hostilities and crimes is so huge that investigative actions and court processes impose an extraordinary burden on the judicial system and law enforcement agencies of Ukraine. Therefore, state institutions and NGOs are also engaged in monitoring and documentation of war crimes.

The Religion on Fire project is an example of cooperation between government agencies and civil society to effectively document war crimes against freedom of conscience. The project started at the beginning of March 2022. The team of the NGO "Workshop for the Academic Study of Religion" collects and processes open source data about damaged religious buildings and affected religious figures. The project database also includes exclusive materials from field visits to the de-occupied territories. The State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience created a map of destroyed and damaged religious buildings in Ukraine<sup>6</sup>. The project was also supported by the Congress of Religious Communities of Ukraine, the International

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<sup>1</sup> Такої моделі плюралізму, як в Україні, немає ніде в Європі — релігієзнавець Хосе Казанова. URL: <http://nrcu.gov.ua/news.html?newsID=90690>.

<sup>2</sup> Халіков Руслан Повстання проти секулярного світу. — Київ: Видавництво Руслана Халікова, 2022. — С. 156-169.

<sup>3</sup> Голова Комітету з питань здоров'я нації Михайло Радущкий: В Україні відремонтовано 59 медичних закладів, які були пошкоджені ворогом. URL: <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/227398.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 2400 закладів освіти постраждали від бомбардувань та обстрілів, 269 з них зруйновані повністю, — Сергій Шкарлет. URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/news/2400-zakladiv-osviti-postrazhdali-vid-bombarduvan-ta-obstri-liv-269-z-nih-zrujnovani-povnistyu-sergij-shkarlet>.

<sup>5</sup> В Україні запустили проєкт для збору коштів на відновлення зруйнованої росіянами культурної спадщини. URL: <https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7566.html>.

<sup>6</sup> 23.08.2022 Споруди релігійних організацій, що зазнали руйнувань. URL: <https://dess.gov.ua/russia-ruined-at-least-205-religious-sites/>.



# RELIGION ON FIRE

objects destroyed and damaged in **Ukraine** due to Russian war  
since **24.02.2022** till **24.08.2022** at least



Ukrainian Orthodox  
(Moscow Patriarchate) **156**



Islamic **5**



Orthodox Church of  
Ukraine **21**



Jewish **13**



Greek and Roman Catholic **5**



Religious education  
institutions **6**



Protestant **37**



Other religions objects **5**



Made by Workshop for the Academic Study of Religions

Center for Law and Religious Studies at Brigham Young University (USA), etc. As of August 24, 2022, the database had information about 251 religious buildings damaged or destroyed during the war. At least 20 religious figures died, and at least 15 were abducted, some of them are still in captivity.

## International and national law on war crimes

Both national legislation and international humanitarian law are important for the investigation of war crimes. As of today, much of the effort to document war crimes against religious freedom and religious organizations are directed at the international dimension, in particular, the lawsuits to the International Criminal Court of the United Nations, the European Court of Human Rights, or the creation of an international tribunal over the Russian military and political leadership. However, some experts are skeptical about the emergence and effective work of such a tribunal, at least in the short term<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, Ukrainian legislation does not have clearly defined legal norms regarding war crimes against religion. In particular, Art. 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (violations of the laws and customs of war) does not distinguish the category of war crimes against religious freedom or religious objects. This article refers to international treaties which must be observed according to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In particular, it refers to the Hague Conventions on the laws and customs of war, subsequent protocols, and annexes.

In particular, the 1899 Hague Convention with respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land forbids aggressive actions against religion. See Art. 46: "Family honors and rights, individual lives and private property, as well as religious convictions and liberty, must be respected", and Art. 56: "The property of the communes, that of religious, charitable, and educational in-

<sup>7</sup> Кравченко В. Як покарати Путіна за війну з Україною? URL: <https://zn.ua/ukr/international/jak-pokarati-putina-za-vijnu-z-ukrajinoju.html>.



stitutions, and those of arts and science, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, and destruction, or intentional damage done to such institutions, to historical monuments, works of art or science, is prohibited, and should be made the subject of proceedings”<sup>8</sup>. In turn, the Regulation on the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the appendix to the 1907 Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land, adds several more categories of war crimes: Art. 18 guarantees religious freedom to prisoners of war regardless of their religion, and Art. 27 calls those who conduct the siege and plan the bombardment to take “all necessary steps to spare, as far as possible, buildings dedicated to religion”<sup>9</sup>. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict<sup>10</sup>, which is valid for Ukraine, and its two protocols (the second one entered into force in Ukraine in 2020), also emphasize that places of worship are included in the list of cultural values, and therefore it is forbidden to commit any hostile acts against them. Unfortunately, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court<sup>11</sup>, which also mentions the prohibition of hostile acts against religious buildings, has not been ratified by Ukraine (and by Russia), which does not allow to use the tool.

The Criminal Code of Ukraine has no clear provisions regarding war crimes against religious freedom and religious buildings, which complicates the application of Art. 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine in the cases of war-related destruction of temples. Draft law #7290<sup>12</sup> on



Ruins of the Church in Honor of the prophet Elijah and the Apostle Andrew the First-Called  
(Gorenka, Kyiv region)

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<sup>8</sup> Конвенція про закони і звичаї суходільної війни(витяг). URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_765#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_765#Text).

<sup>9</sup> IV Конвенція про закони і звичаї війни на суходолі та додаток до неї: Положення про закони і звичаї війни на суходолі. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_222#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_222#Text).

<sup>10</sup> 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. URL: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/1954\\_Convention\\_EN\\_2020.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/1954_Convention_EN_2020.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Проект Закону про внесення змін до Кримінального кодексу України та Кримінального процесуального кодексу України. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/39449>.



Ruins of the Church of the Ascension of the Lord (Lukyanivka, Kyiv region)

amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine was introduced by the Government on April 15, 2022, the consideration process is pending. This draft law includes, in particular, updates regarding Art. 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. It is proposed to add Art. 438-2: an attack on “a building intended for the purposes of religion, education, art, science or charity, a historical monument, a hospital or a place of accommodation for the sick and wounded, if such objects are not a military target, will be recognized as a war crime” (Art. 438-2, part 2, item 4). If this or a similar law is adopted, Ukrainian investigative bodies will be able to conduct criminal cases for attacks on temples based on national legislation, without appeal to international law. Therefore, it will allow applying the national legislation sanctions on those suspected of war crimes.

# 2 Methodology of data collection

The Religion on Fire project aims to record and document the war crimes, committed by the Russian army against religious buildings and religious figures in Ukraine, and to use it to:

- 1) conduct academic research, to prepare and publish the collected information as articles and electronic database.
- 2) prepare the information for court cases in national and international courts. For this purpose, the Berkeley Protocol<sup>13</sup> for documenting crimes, presented in 2020 by the Center for Human Rights at the University of California at Berkeley and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is used to collect data from open sources.
- 3) disseminate the information about war crimes committed in Ukraine for the international religious and scientific community, as well as in the media, Google map, Wikipedia, and other resources. To provide access to the database to state bodies that represent Ukraine on the international level, first of all to the State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience.

The methodology developed for this research allows to achieve its aims, it was discussed with representatives of the State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine, the Institute of Religious Freedom, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Religion and Beliefs, and other institutions.

The project is engaged in the creation of a database where cases of war crimes, namely the destruction of religious buildings and harm to religious figures, are systematized by chronology and the level of damage. The database describes in detail the time, place, course of events, and nature of the damage. Damage to religious buildings is assessed on a four-point scale: slight damage (no more than 15% of the building is destroyed, it is possible to use it for reli-



Monastery in Ponor of the Icon of the Virgin Who Is Listening (Fasova, Kyiv region)

<sup>13</sup> Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations. URL: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/OHCHR\\_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/OHCHR_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf).





Ruins of the Church of Nicholas the Wonderworker (Zagaltsy, Kyiv region)

gious purposes); medium damage (15-45% of destruction, the building needs to be repaired for further use); severe damage (45-75% of destruction, the religious building cannot be used); destruction of the building (more than 75%, a total loss).

Several tools of information collection are used to maintain the database.

- First, since the beginning of the project, the systematic monitoring of open sources, — sites and social network pages of a religious organization, military and government reports on damage during hostilities and shelling, has been implemented. At the moment, the project team monitors about 150 open sources.
- Secondly, after the de-occupation and demining of the Kyiv region, project representatives organize monitoring visits to settlements subjected to shelling and occupation, and try to visit all religious buildings there. This allows monitoring the war crimes against communities that could not publicly report them via open sources. In addition, during the visits, the project team communicates with representatives of religious communities, which helps to establish the course of events.
- Thirdly, the project team receives internal monitoring data from representatives of religious organizations, press services, who also collect information about damaged buildings within their community or department.

Since the beginning of active hostilities on February 24, 2022, the project team has been monitoring the situation in various regions of Ukraine to include information about crimes (photos, video recordings, testimonies from social networks, publications on the official websites of religious organizations) in the database. A catalog has been added to the main table, which includes folders by regions, and within them — by each case (with pdf files, photos, videos, etc). On this basis, it is planned to create a website to collect and systemize the information about the cases of war crimes committed during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, from February 24, 2022. It was decided not to create a special map, since it was already created by the project partner, the State Service for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience. Project experts are involved in it, there is a constant data exchange.

# 3 Monitoring results

During the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, at least 251 religious facilities were damaged, 24 of them were destroyed, and 39 were damaged beyond repair. The damaged facilities are churches, prayer houses, chapels, roadside crosses, kingdom halls, synagogues, memorials, mosques, khachkars, and educational institutions. An exact estimation is not available since hostilities continue in some regions, with approximately 20% of the territory of Ukraine being occupied by Russian troops. Thus, it is difficult to access the religious facilities, and the subsequent information is mostly missing.

158 of the damaged facilities, i.e. about  $\frac{3}{5}$ , belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which was part of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) until recently. Even belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church does not guarantee the inviolability of either the church or the parish. Numerous destruction of churches, deaths, injuries, and kidnapping of UOC priests was not condemned by the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). However, on March 26, 2022, Patriarch Kirill officially expressed his condolences<sup>14</sup> about the death of Oleg Artemov, the military priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, who was killed by the shelling.

This attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church's leadership, as well as the actual support of the war and Russia's position, has significantly changed the attitudes of Orthodox Ukrainians towards the Russian Church. Thus, from February 24, 2022, to the beginning of summer, more than 600 parishes left the UOC (MP), — more than in the three previous years<sup>15</sup>. This is not a critical number, since there are still some 12000 parishes there, but the dynamics can be



Eurasia Mission (Irpın, Kyiv Region)

<sup>14</sup> Патриаршее соболезнование в связи с гибелью протоиерея Олега Артемова. URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5912180.html>.

<sup>15</sup> До ПЦУ з московського патріархату за час війни перейшли 600 громад — Епіфаній. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3499129-do-pcu-z-moskovskogo-patriarhatu-za-cas-vijni-perejsli-600-gromad-epifanij.html>.



Irpin Biblical Seminary (Irpin, Kyiv Region)

traced. According to the results of the Council of the UOC (MP) on May 27, 2022, this structure announced its withdrawal from the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church<sup>16</sup>.

Protestantism comes second in terms of the number of damaged and destroyed buildings after the UOC (MP). Information about at least 40 damaged Protestant buildings, including 12 severely damaged or destroyed, was included in the database of the Religion on Fire project. More than 20 damaged facilities belong to the OCU — notice that some of the UOC parishes, whose churches were damaged by Russian shelling, have transferred to the OCU afterward. At least 14 Jewish facilities (not only synagogues, but also memorials and educational institutions), 6 Catholic, 5 Muslim, and at least 5 buildings of other denominations were also shelled. Houses of priests, rehabilitation centers founded by churches, and other religion-related structures were also destroyed. However, they were not included in the general statistics.

The war causes suffering to different religious communities, but for the religious minorities, it is worse than for those large Orthodox churches with thousands of parishes. Often, they do not have enough resources to rebuild the damaged facilities, which can lead to the cessation of community activities at all or for a long period. For example, due to constant shelling, the local Karaite community of Kharkiv was forced to halt religious services in the only kenesa operating outside Crimea<sup>17</sup>. Thus, the indigenous people of Ukraine had no functioning religious buildings anymore. To a large extent, the community members had to leave the city due to the death risk. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was forced to withdraw its foreign missionaries from Ukraine, although it continues to operate locally<sup>18</sup>. Jehovah's Witnesses, followers of Said Nursi, and some other religious organizations could be banned if Russian administrations are established in the newly occupied territories. Religious minorities need ex-

<sup>16</sup> Постанова Собору Української Православної Церкви від 27 травня 2022 року. URL: <https://news.church.ua/2022/05/27/postanova-soboru-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-vid-27-travnja-2022-roku/>.

<sup>17</sup> Вразливі групи на тлі повномасштабної війни: специфіка ситуації та рекомендації з врахування потреб. URL: <https://ccl.org.ua/positions/vrazlyvi-grupy-na-tli-povnomasshtabnoyi-vijnyspecyfika-sytuaciyi-ta-rekomen-daciyi-z-vrahuvannya-potreb/>.

<sup>18</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ Is Temporarily Moving Missionaries Out of Ukraine. URL: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/missionaries-ukraine>.



ternal support, in particular media coverage, to highlight these issues, because they could not have their own powerful media resources. The disappearance of communities of religious minorities due to the Russian invasion is a threat to pluralism and freedom of conscience, which are typical for Ukrainian society.

Many religious facilities were subjected to numerous shellings. For example, on the night of March 19, the mosque at the Bismillah Islamic Cultural Center in Severodonetsk was damaged by shelling, and on June 19, 2022, it was destroyed by the Russian armed forces due to the city assault. At that moment, at least 20 people were hiding inside the mosque, they were killed by the shelling<sup>19</sup>. On March 19, 2022, the Irpin Bible Seminary (All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists) was shelled by the Russian armed forces, but the building wasn't affected. At night, some 100 people used its basement as a shelter. The next day, March 20, 2022, after a preliminary drone aerial reconnaissance, a second targeted mortar shelling took place. As a result, the kitchen was destroyed, the windows were broken, the walls were damaged, the roof was burned, and the outbuildings in the yard were destroyed. Besides, the generator that provided electricity to the local residents during the battles for the city was damaged<sup>20</sup>. Such repeated shelling of religious facilities is an even bigger violation of the customs of war, it is an indicator of the deliberate use of religious facilities as military targets.

In addition to the destruction, other cases that can be defined as violations of international humanitarian law. In particular, the location of Russian armed headquarters or warehouses of ammunition and weapons in temples, or setting up positions next to religious buildings. In particular, the buildings at the church of the Pochaev icon of the Mother of God in Bucha city (Kyiv region) were the headquarters of Russian armed forces during the occupation. The Ascension Church of Lukashivtsi village (Chernihiv region), which is an architectural monument, was used by Russian troops as an arms depot during the occupation.



Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses (Gorenka, Kyiv region)

<sup>19</sup> Кадирівці зруйнували мечеть у Сєвєродонецьку та спробували звинуватити ЗСУ — імам. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3520498-kadirivci-zrujnuvali-mecet-u-severodonecku-ta-sprobuvali-zvinuvati-ti-zsu-imam.html>.

<sup>20</sup> The project team obtained this information from church members during a visit to Irpin Bible Seminary, and saw the electric generator damaged by shrapnel.



## Deliberate destruction of religious facilities

Some religious facilities were hit by indiscriminate bombardment, while others were deliberately destroyed with machine guns or artillery. Currently, the official results of the investigation have not yet been published for most of the cases, but we can reasonably claim that the religious buildings were special targets of some attacks.

First of all, there are published testimonies of eyewitnesses who saw the targeted shelling of a religious facility via large-caliber machine guns or other weapons. It's the case of St. George church in the village of Zavorychi (Kyiv region), which was built in 1873 and destroyed on March 7, 2022, by targeted fire<sup>21</sup>. In another case, there're eyewitnesses of an aerial drone reconnaissance after the initial hit on the Irpin Bible Seminary on March 19, 2022. The next day, there was a repeated, more destructive shelling of the building<sup>22</sup>.

Secondly, the very fact that the church was shelled with a machine gun, especially at point-blank range, indicates that the temple was the target, as it happened in the village of Druzhnya (Kyiv region). The roadside chapel in honor of the 370th anniversary of the village foundation was shelled with a machine gun, probably from an armored vehicle<sup>23</sup>. There're also cases when the church was fired from within, for example, the icons. It happened in St. Dymytrii Rostovskyi church in Makarov (Kyiv region), where the head of Ap. Ivan the Theologian (the icon "Removal from the Cross") was shot by the bullet<sup>24</sup>. The eye of St. Nicholas in the church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker at the State Tax University in Irpin was also shot<sup>25</sup>.

At least 26 religious figures, including military chaplains and volunteers of religious communities who assisted civilians to leave the temporarily occupied territories, have been killed by bombings or shot with automatic weapons. Russian occupation administrations kidnap religious figures, forcing them to cooperate or leave the communities and their hometowns. The Odesa priest of the OCU, father Vasyl Vyrozub, was illegally detained by the Russians from February 27 to May 6, 2022. This is the case of one of the longest captivity<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Рашисти знищили і пошкодили в Україні майже 200 храмів, бо безбожники. URL: <http://www.golos.com.ua/article/362905>.

<sup>22</sup> Окупанти обстріляли Ірпінську Біблійну Семінарію ЄХБ. URL: [https://risu.ua/okupanti-obstrilyali-irpinsku-biblijnu-seminariyu\\_n127423](https://risu.ua/okupanti-obstrilyali-irpinsku-biblijnu-seminariyu_n127423).

<sup>23</sup> Assumptions of the project team based on the results of the visit to the village of Druzhnya on May 22, 2022, and the inspection of the chapel.

<sup>24</sup> У Макарові окупанти прострелили голову Івана Богослова на іконі (ФОТО). URL: <https://mykyivregion.com.ua/news/u-makarovi-okupanti-prostrelili-golovu-ivana-boroslova-na-ikoni-foto>.

<sup>25</sup> Рашисти прострелили око Миколаю Чудотворцю на іконі в ірпінському храмі. URL: <https://visnyk-irpin.com.ua/rashysty-prostrelyly-oko-mykolayu-chudotvorczyu-na-ikoni-v-irpinskomu-hrami/>.

<sup>26</sup> Би́ли та пита́ли, де Бандера: одеський священник Василь Вирозуб розповів про 70 днів російського полону. URL: <https://suspiilne.media/271555-bili-ta-pitali-de-bandera-odeskij-svasenik-vasil-virozub-rozpoviv-pro-70-dniv-rosijskogo-polonu-video/>.

# 4

## Conclusions

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During the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, the Ukrainian territory was partly temporarily occupied or became a war zone, the entire territory of Ukraine is regularly shelled with rockets, aerial bombs, and artillery. Residential buildings, civil infrastructure objects, and objects of cultural heritage, in particular, religious facilities, are damaged by shelling and hostilities. While some temples could come under shelling by accident (due to indiscriminate shellings and bombings), there is also evidence of targeted attacks by the Russian armed forces on religious facilities.

The vast majority of damaged religious buildings belong to Orthodox churches, — this corresponds to the general religious situation in Ukraine, because most religious buildings belong to Orthodox churches, and about 60% of Ukrainians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. At the same time, religious facilities of other denominations were also subjected to attacks. After the buildings of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the next position is for the religious buildings of various Protestant movements. Similarly, there are representatives of Orthodoxy and other confessions and religious groups among the dead clerics. Destruction, damage, and even probable demolition of religious facilities is also a threat to the religious freedom of Ukrainian citizens because it undermines the possibility to satisfy religious needs in joint prayers and rituals. When a building is destroyed or threatened with destruction, it becomes unsafe to pray in it, which restricts people's freedom to visit their temples.

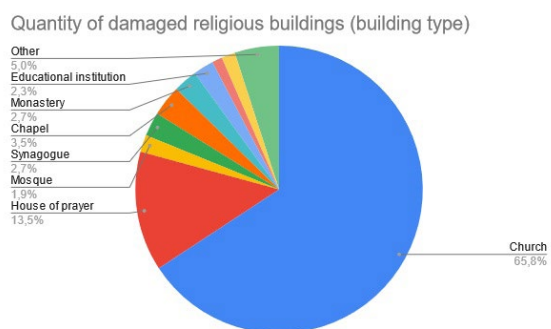
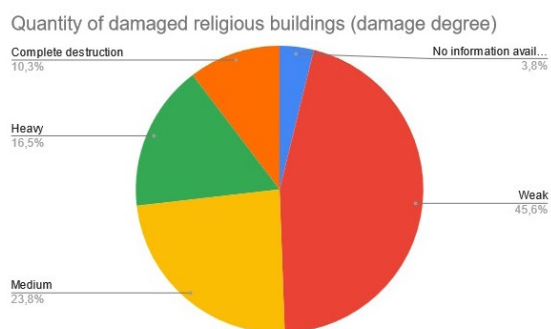
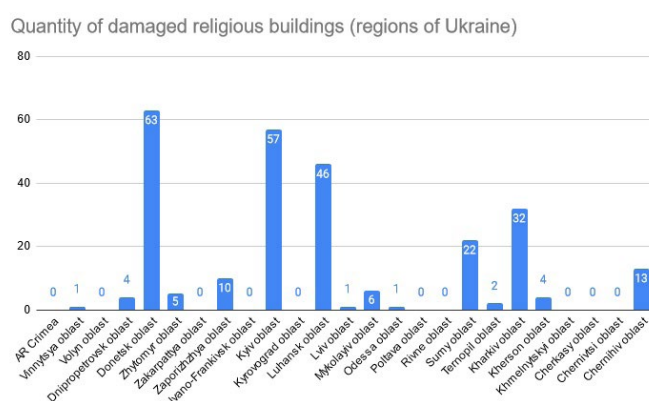
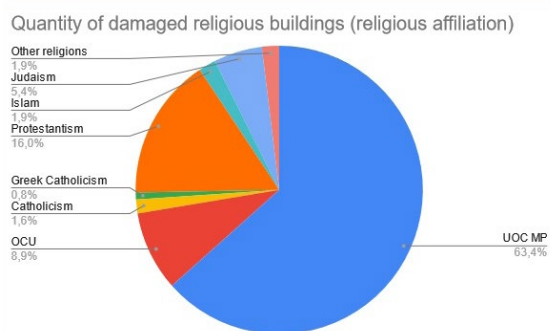
Besides, Russia's aggression against Ukraine aims to establish an authoritarian, exclusivist approach to religious freedom, which is inherent in the Russian Federation. In particular, the activities of religious minorities are significantly complicated in the occupied territories, and some movements (namely, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hizb ut-Tahrir, followers of Said Nursi, etc) are directly banned. But even belonging to Russian Orthodoxy can guarantee security only on the basis of full political loyalty to the occupation administrations. This approach is totally different from the religious pluralism that exists in Ukraine, and which will be lost as much as Ukrainian territory would be occupied, at least temporarily, by Russia.

# 5 Recommendations for authorities and international human rights organizations

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1. **To support religious minorities.** It is more difficult for vulnerable communities to survive crisis and resume activities after shelling or occupation. In case of a lack of support from fellow believers, assistance should be provided by the state, civil society, and international humanitarian and human rights organizations.
2. **To promote the documentation of war crimes.** Every crime must be documented to restore justice and protect the rights of victims. At the same time, the team of the Religion on Fire project believes that documentation of war crimes against religious freedom and religious organizations is among the priorities, not least considering that the Russian authorities and religious leaders position paint themselves as the defenders of traditional values and spirituality unlike with their actions.
3. **To develop Ukrainian legislation.** Ukraine should both apply international humanitarian law and develop national legislation regarding war crimes against religious freedom. Even if international tribunals for the investigation of the Russian Federation war crimes are not established in the near future, the national legislation will make it possible to prosecute those guilty of crimes against religion and cultural heritage as those guilty of any other war crime.
4. **To advocate for sanctions against Russian religious figures.** Unfortunately, almost all religious leaders in Russia support the war, they call for the continuation of hostilities, and sometimes directly encourage the destruction of Ukrainians and Ukrainian identity. Such leaders should be subject to sanctions and criminal proceedings in order not to promote the position of the Russian political leadership abroad.
5. **To maintain international attention to war crimes.** It is necessary to widely highlight the discrepancy between the statements and actions of the Russian side for both Russian society and the pro-Russian communities in Europe. This can be achieved by spreading truthful and evidence-based information about the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine during the large-scale invasion.

# 6 Monitoring results in tables and diagrams<sup>27</sup>



<sup>27</sup> The sum of categories may differ from the total number of damaged and/or destroyed religious facilities, because in some cases it is impossible to determine certain information, namely, degree of damage, jurisdiction, type of facility, etc.



