

## **Ukraine ensures the rights of the Jewish minority**

According to the active legislation in the field of protecting the rights of ethnic minorities **the Ukrainian state guarantees its citizens equal political, economic, social and cultural rights irrespective of their ethnic origin, language and religion.** Ukraine's Criminal Code envisages the punishment for the limitation of these rights as well as stirring up ethnic hatred, degrading honor and dignity of the representatives of ethnic groups.

The corps of legislation in this field includes:

- the Constitution,
- the Declaration on Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine,
- the Laws: "On National Minorities", "On Local Self-Government", "On Associations of Citizens", and "On Printed Mass Media (Press) in Ukraine".

**Ukraine is a party to the European Framework Convention on Protection of National Minorities.** On May, 15, 2003 the Verkhovna Rada passed the Law "On Ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages". Under this document the Charter's provisions will be applied to 14 minority languages, including the Jewish minority, in seven main spheres of social life: education, legislation, administrative and public institutions, mass media, culture, economy, transborder cooperation.

The draft laws, concepts, state programs and other acts on interethnic relations and ethnic minorities' rights are being considered by the **Advisory Council of Heads of all-Ukrainian Organizations of National Minorities** with the **State Committee on National Minorities and Migration.** The Council also deals with the manifestations of ethnic prejudice and recommends relevant measures to be taken.

One of the main tasks both for the government institutions and non-governmental organisations is to adopt policies that strengthen the awareness of the richness that cultural diversity brings to society. This includes development of the school curricula and teacher education programmes to promote intercultural societal dialogue.

Currently, there are about **105 Jewish associations and organizations** in Ukraine, **five of them have an all-Ukrainian status**:

- Jewish Council of Ukraine,
- Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine-Vaad of Ukraine,
- Jewish Congress of Ukraine,
- Jewish Fund of Ukraine,
- Jewish Confederation of Ukraine.

Ukraine creates all necessary conditions for satisfying cultural, educational and informational needs of the Jewish minority.

*Five schools provide education in Hebrew and Yiddish alongside with 60 Sunday schools, 12 Jewish school groups and 10 kindergartens. In 1993 the International Solomon University was opened in Ukraine. Besides that the Department of Jewish history and culture functions at the Institute of Political and Ethnonational Studies. Four professional and 20 amateur theatres and folk groups preserve and familiarize the Ukrainian public with the Jewish cultural heritage.*

Major activities of the NGOs and other civil society's institutions are focused on revival of Jewish customs and traditions, comprehensive development of Yiddish and Hebrew languages and education, including the Holocaust education, promotion of amateur and professional Jewish art, safeguarding historical and cultural heritage, monitoring and protection of social and other rights of Jewish population, information and mass-media activities.

The central specialized editorship of the literature in the languages of national minorities of Ukraine publishes books in Hebrew. Over eight years the Ukrainian national television broadcasts the Jewish program "Jahad". There are also regional radio programs in L'viv, Chernivtzi and other towns of Ukraine. Over 20 newspapers and journals has special sections devoted the different aspects of the the Jewish community life, including the state-sponsored supplement to the parliament's official newspaper - *Jewish News*.

**221 Jewish religious communities secure the revival of Judaism in Ukraine.** The Ukrainian State considers the restitution to the Jewish community of its cult

premises and other property which was taken from them during the Soviet times to be the proof of historic justice. In this regard they are provided with all necessary help and support of the President and the Government of Ukraine. **55 out of 109 synagogues have already been handed over for the use of the Jewish community.**

The Ukrainian state attaches special importance to establishing harmonious relations between the representatives of different nationalities and confessions, developing the culture of tolerance, as well as preventing and combating anti-Semitism and racism, including full use of the law-enforcement measures.

This includes the mass-media as Ukrainian authorities realize the danger of the publications that hurt ethnic dignity and honor of the citizens of Ukraine. **Within this context the State Committee for National Minorities and Migration monitors mass media market tracking down publications of anti-Semitic or xenophobic character.** In case of their appearance it submits requests for the appropriate actions to the Prosecutor General, State Committee on TV and radio broadcasting, regional administrations, editors of newspapers, as well as issues the statements of its own.

*After the publications of articles which exploited the idea of the so-called “Jewish conspiracy” on January, 28, 2004 the court of law ordered the closure of the newspaper “Silski visti” for the propagation of the information, that stir up interethnic hostility.*

**The role of NGOs here is of paramount importance.** Constant attention is being paid in Ukraine to the development of understanding and mutual respect between the representatives of various ethnic and religious groups by promoting joint efforts and partnership between the governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations.

An active role in this respect is being played by the **Association “For interethnic peace and stability in Ukraine”**, the **Institute of Judaica and Antidefamation League**. They monitor relevant publications in newspapers, engage in dialogue with the state bodies, judiciary, and organize conferences, seminars concerning the rights and freedoms of ethnic communities and their social protection. The All-Ukrainian Church Council is another example of mechanisms to promote tolerance and mutual respect that are successfully working in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian authorities in cooperation with major Jewish organization in Ukraine are currently working on the **National Program on Tolerance Education**.

**Ukraine views the problem of combating anti-Semitism manifestations in the wider context of combating intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia through developing and strengthening dialogue among different cultures and civilizations with the special emphasis on preventive measures.**

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