

**Regional Center of Human Rights for the Working Session 7 “Fundamental freedoms I,
including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief”
of the 2019 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

“Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” by “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part” are defined as genocide according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

We assert that situation with one of the religious minorities in Crimea – the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU, before – Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate) – is bordering with genocide since it leads to the destruction of a religious group as a social community.

Now Ukrainian Church religious minority in Crimea facing a real threat of complete elimination and requires immediate support from the global community. Specifically, because to adhere to the Ukrainian Church in Crimea in opposite to Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate remains one of a few opportunities to preserve Ukrainian identity in the occupied territory.

In 2014, Russian authorities **explicitly seized the temples of OCU** in Sevastopol city and Perevalnoye village. The church premises were handed over to the Church of Moscow Patriarchate. **In the end of the first year of occupation, only 11 of 45 parishes of OCU continued their existence.**

To date, there are only **8 temples of Crimean Eparchy of OCU** in the occupied peninsula. One of them, situated in Evpatoriya city, makes up just twenty square meters. Still, in 2019, the occupying powers have ordered to destroy this temple.

The main church of Crimean Eparchy of OCU – the Cathedral of Sacred Equal Apostles St. Prince Volodymyr and St. Princess Olga – **is also in jeopardy now.** This temple has sheltered parishioners from the other communities, which had already been dissolved. Several weeks ago, on the 29th of August, Russian court issued a decision on the eviction of the Crimean Eparchy of the OCU from the Cathedral. The judgment has been implementing.

What is more, **before the court had ruled the case,** in June 2019 Russian authorities **semi-seized the temple** pretending they intended to renovate the building even though that was not necessary. **In fact, they have been destroying it.** That proved once again the use of hybrid methods by Russian Federation along with official policies and practices of the state.

Thus, during the occupation, the actions of Russia led to the destruction of dozens of parishes of OCU in Crimea. Now the authorities began to demolish the remaining, which will lead to the complete elimination of this religious community on the peninsula.

Therefore, **an immediate response** from the OSCE members and the global community **is required** in order to **stop and prevent the destruction** of the Ukrainian religious congregation in Crimea.

We urge governments and international organizations:

- **to condemn the actions** of the Russian Federation aimed at the dissolution of Crimean Eparchy of OCU;
- **to require from Russia to comply** with its obligations as an OSCE participating state and according to international law concerning the rights and fundamental freedoms of thought, conscience, religion or belief;
- **to demand to stop the seizure** of the Cathedral of Sacred Equal Apostles St. Prince Volodymyr and St. Princess Olga – the main temple of OCU community in Crimea.

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For more information, please see thematic review [“Crimea beyond Rules. Religious Occupation: Oppression of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate”](#).