

*Report on manifestations of intolerance, hatred and discrimination
against Muslims of Ukraine.*

The report prepared by human rights NGO "Razom iz zakonom" established in 2008 by representatives of the Muslim community in Kyiv to protect and implement the constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms. The organization's activities are aimed at monitoring violations of religious rights, resolving legal issues related to the public interests of Muslims in Ukraine, regardless of their national, ethnic, racial, gender or political affiliation.

To begin with, we would like to answer the question about Islamophobia. There is a low level of Islamophobia in Ukraine, that in most cases is latent and most often manifests in social networks. There are cases of open physical aggression towards refugees based on racial and ethnic intolerance, but this happens in isolated cases. It cannot be said that now in Ukraine Muslims often face with non-tolerance, racism or Islamophobia. It is very easy for Muslims to comply with Islam and there are single intolerance cases that come from some well-known stereotypes about Muslims (terrorism attacks, violence against Muslim women etc.), as well as from the right-wing groups. About 1.5 million Muslims live in Ukraine, the most of whom are Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and people from Muslim countries who came to Ukraine long ago and integrated. The smaller part is made up of refugees and students from the Islamic countries, who do not stay here for a long time. We do not observe Islamophobia on the part of Ukrainian government, law or politics, but from the right-wing, neo-nationalist groups.

Ukrainian legislation applies equally to all religions, there are no restrictions for Muslims on the building of mosques, conducting of Islamic practices and rituals, demonstration of religious attributes, Islamic clothing in public area, also Muslims are free to produce Halal food, to hold peaceful meetings, apply to government agencies such as courts and law enforcement agencies, receive medical care, including circumcision, which is permitted under medical protocols. On the other hand, sometimes we are informed about violations of the legislation and the law of Ukraine by officials. Sometimes religious communities in Ukrainian regions are denied land allocations for building mosques, Islamic centers and individual Muslim cemeteries, giving priority to communities of Christian religious movements.

If we are talking about pressure on the Muslim community from the officials, first of all this is persecution by law enforcement agencies – the Ministry of Internal Affairs (the National Police, the

Migration Service), the Security Service and some embassies of Islamic countries. Islam is not monolithic in Ukraine, we have many different currents, some of them are more contemporary and some are stricter. There are at least three largest spiritual administrations of Muslims that deal with the affairs of Islam, but government authorities do not deal fairly, impartially and equally to all of them.

We observe and record pressure on two religious organizations that have partnerships with each other - Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine «UMMA» and All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organisations «ALRAID». It is important to note that these two organizations condemn so-called "Islamic terrorism", promote the ideas of moderate Islam, adhere to the principle of the golden mean and democracy, and always take a pro-Ukrainian patriotic position, supporting Muslims fighting the Russian occupation of eastern Ukraine.

There have been cases:

- Searches by the Security Service in Islamic Cultural Centers (ICC) of RAMU «UMMA» and «ALRAID» mosques during 2017-2020 years in Kyiv, Vinnytsya, Zhytomyr, Sumy. During the investigative operation in Kyiv, the security forces did not find anything prohibited, but the criminal case under Article 300 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine - the production, distribution of books that promote the cult of violence, racial, ethnic and religious intolerance has not yet been closed.
- Illegal document checks of the parishioners on Friday, 31 of January 2020, near ICC in Kyiv by the Migration Service and the National Police in order to identify refugees who violate migration laws. Also, a few years ago representatives of the Security Service came to the ICC in Kyiv and asked to provide them with information about people who may be stay in Ukraine illegally.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, every day from March to May 2020 and in Ramadan the National Police checked the operation of the mosque in the ICC in Kyiv and documented the information in a report. At the same time, other mosques worked freely during all quarantine, as well as churches during Easter.
- In early 2020, the Security Service installed a video surveillance camera on the territory of the hospital, which is located opposite the ICC in Kyiv. The camera is directed to the territory of the ICC. The reason for installing this camera is unknown.

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian War in Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the occupation of Crimea, the «ALRAID» mosques, «UMMA» ICC, and clergy have suffered violations of

rights and persecution by occupation forces and separatists. During 2014-2019 4 religious organizations ceased to operate in the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas: the religious community "Al-Islah" in Simferopol, the religious communities "Duslik" and "Nur" in Donetsk "Al-Hayat" in Kirovske of Donetsk region, which were part of «UMMA»; one organization had to re-register. Due to intimidation and the threat of persecution, 5 imams left the occupied territories with their families.

Persecution in April-July 2014 of the Mufti of «UMMA» Said Ismagilov in Donetsk. Because of his pro-Ukrainian civic position, he was intimidated, threatened with imprisonment and life. He was wanted by the so-called "MSS DNR". He left the occupied territory in September 2014. In 2014-2018, 4 more imams of Islamic organizations were threatened, intimidated, interrogated by militants, and persecuted: Hamza Isa, Rustam Khusnutdinov, Rinat Khabibutdinov in Donetsk and Seyfulla Rashydov - the head of the religious organization "Salam" in Luhansk. Some believers were persecuted for their religious and civic beliefs. All of them had to leave with their families for the unoccupied territory of Ukraine.

During 2014-2019 in the Crimea and Donetsk, the occupying Russian authorities conducted searches in mosques, Islamic Centers and madrassas:

- On June 24, 2014 - search in the Crimean madrasa in Kolchugino, Simferopol district, illegally detained the director - Ayder Osmanov, later the madrasa failed to re-register with the occupation authorities and stopped working.
- On August 26, 2014 - search in the Simferopol ICC, repeated searches there took place on 28 January and February 25, 2016, during which religious literature banned in the Russian Federation was found.
- On June 14, 2018, gunmen searched and closed the "Al-Amal" mosque in Donetsk, immediately after Ramadan. So-called «MSS DNR» confiscated religious and prayer books that allegedly incited hostility, and the mosque's servants were summoned for questioning to «MSS DNR» as a result of which they took a written undertaking not to leave the territory, and noted that "Al-Amal" is a center of Ukrainian extremist organizations created at the expense of a terrorist organization.
- In December 2019 in the Crimea, FSB officers opened an administrative case against the imam of the Simferopol mosque Rasim Dervishev for "illegal missionary activity", the court fined him 5,000 rubles.

During 2014-2020, many members of the «Hizb ut-Tahrir» religious organization in Crimea were persecuted, which Russia considers terrorist, so Russia violates international law because political prisoners are citizens of Ukraine.

In 2014, when the war with the Russian Federation began and a large number of Crimean Tatars resettled to the rest territory of Ukraine, they faced some difficulties, for example, they were denied re-registration their business, registration of newborns, Muslim women wearing hijab were not able to get a passport, and were often refused employment. Last year, we achieved that Muslim women wearing hijab were allowed to receive documents. But the problem with the employment of women in hijab is still relevant today, women cannot work in some government positions, because the dress code does not provide for the hijab, for example in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We appealed to the Minister to revise the rules of police officers' uniform and to include a strict style of hijab in the dress code, however, this issue was refused, arguing that the state authorities provide for religious neutrality.

Also, despite the fact that the law prohibits infringement of an employee or candidate for a position on religious grounds, some employers reject Muslim women who wear hijab. Arguing that this is not a job for a Muslim woman; the employer asked how many times a day a woman should pray and said that they did not have a suitable place to pray in their office; the employer asked if a woman could take off her hijab at work, because she will frighten "normal" people with her appearance (hijab). Some women have been fired from their jobs after they converted to Islam and began to wear hijab. Unfortunately, there is no judicial practice in this matter.

There are no legal norms in Ukrainian legislation that could somehow infringe on Muslim forced migrants or stateless persons, but now in fact it is very difficult to obtain a refugee certificate, a temporary or permanent residence permit, and even more so Ukrainian citizenship. The Migration Service of Ukraine is the authority that has not been reformed during a long time and, unfortunately, the officials who work there continue to carry out corruption schemes and extort money from refugees from different countries.

The Migration Service, together with the National Police, occasionally carry out raids on several Kyiv hostels where refugees live, mostly from Afghanistan, Syria and African countries. Refugees are taken to the local Migration Service unit, demanded a bribe and only then released. If someone refuses to pay money, an administrative report is drawn up and qualified as a violation of migration law. Thus, by this long-established scheme, the officials are enriched at the expense of refugees, breaking the law and abusing of powers. Those refugees who fall into this scheme cannot

obtain refugee status – the Migration Service employees demand large bribes for paperwork, and when refugees come to the Migration Service with lawyers, the process is delayed and sabotaged. We often hear about forgery of documents, refugees tell us how much it costs now, they are afraid to contact the police. Officials deliberately delay the process of issuing documents, some foreigners cannot obtain permits, although they have been in Ukraine for more than 10 years.

It has recently become known that the number of revocations of temporary and permanent residence permits and expulsion has increased for Caucasian nationality representatives, what is associated with recent events in France. Such actions by Ukrainian authorities are illegal, as there have never been any cases of terrorism by members of Islamic radical groups in Ukraine, as well as there are no cases of open religious enmity and confrontation between Chechens, Dagestanis and Ukrainian nationalists. Some forced migrants from Syria, citizens of some countries, such as Yemen and Sudan, are not even allowed into Ukraine at the border.

In addition, the Migration Service of Ukraine and the Security Service secretly and closely cooperate with the authorities and the secret agencies of authoritarian regime countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan). Over the past six months, we have had several such cases when the Security Service detain a political refugee by the request of another country as if he was involved in the terrorist group ISIS and extradite him. The last demonstration case took place on October 4, 2020, when Alisher Khaidarov, a native of Uzbekistan who was persecuted on religious grounds, who has lived in Ukraine for a long time, has a wife and 4 minor children, was abducted by unknown individuals. Alisher applied many times for a residence permit, but each time he was denied, not taking into account the fact that his children are citizens of Ukraine. It turned out that he crossed the border of Ukraine with a fake passport and was sent to Uzbekistan, where criminal proceedings have been instituted against him. Employees of the Security Service of Ukraine took part in the operation of abduction and illegal expulsion. This is not the first case.

There were cases when the local non-Muslim society opposed the fact that representatives of Muslims or Crimean Tatars held government positions, which indicates their low level of awareness about Islam. During these six years of Ukrainian-Russian war, non-Muslim society accustomed to Muslims, to women in hijabs on the streets, and it is true that now the situation with Muslims is a little better. During this year, at least 4 new mosques were opened in Ukraine and it is planned to build another large one in Kyiv. Also, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, announced that he is going to sign an order stating that Islamic holidays - Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr will become state ones. Non-Muslim community reacts sharply to such news, they express their dissatisfaction

that Muslims that Muslims seem to want to establish their own laws in Ukraine. We see this hatred in the comments on social networks. At the same time, Islam in Ukraine began to radicalize, that is there are more admirers of strict orders in Islam. Sometimes we see bad headlines in Ukrainian media, as well as the use of incorrect Islamic terminology. Such rhetoric divides Ukrainian society into "us" and "outsiders" and can lead to incitement of interreligious and ethnic impatience.

After the terrorist attack made by Brenton Tarrant in the mosques of Christchurch in New Zealand, which happened in March 2019, the number of neo-Nazi groups (NGO "Karpatska Sich" and others) increased in Ukraine, which oppose all people of non-Slavic appearance, including people who profess Islam or Judaism. Representatives of these groups call for preparations for a "Racial Holy War" in social networks (Telegram, Facebook) openly and to attack Muslims and Jews. Moreover, they translated Brenton Tarrant's manifesto into Ukrainian, and sell printed books in the open access. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, human rights activists and religious leaders of Ukraine addressed this issue to the Security Service, but there is no any result, their appeals were ignored. As a result, human rights defenders conducted their own investigation, which showed that the Security Service of Ukraine has some interest in this. These neo-Nazi groups conduct such anti-Muslim propaganda, teaching their supporters that "all blacks are Muslims and all Muslims are black" despite the fact that Islam is a religion, not an ethnic marker.

There are several human rights organizations in Ukraine that monitor and record violations of Muslim rights in the occupied territory (Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk), as well as in the rest of Ukraine: NGO "Center for Civil Liberties", Human Rights Centre "ZMINA", NGO "Razom iz zakonom". Muslims themselves fight religious intolerance and discrimination in Ukraine, they create charitable initiatives, take part in conferences and thematic events, but there are very few such active people. The media write very little about Muslims life. On the other hand, we observe the stigmatization of Ukrainian Muslims because they do not feel themselves a part of Ukrainian civil society, they are politically and socially passive and remain a closed community.

Expressing our respect, thank you for the opportunity to present this report.

If you need any additional information, we are always ready to provide it.

Sincerely, Chairman of NGO "Razom iz zakonom"

Victoria Nesterenko

