

OCU IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLITICS

This is the 2nd annual report by Religion Today.
We are an independent consultancy that monitors
religion in Russia and around the world



**RELIGION
TODAY**

INFORMATION CONSULTING COMPANY

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Dear readers and subscribers,

Religion today is celebrating its second anniversary. In these two years we have become an international community of independent experts that monitors the situation with religion and interfaith relations in Russia and around the world. We are here to offer our consultancy services in the field of interactions between the church, the society, national and supranational powers. As a way to commemorate our anniversary, we present to you our 2nd annual analytical digest on the topic of OCU in the context of international and regional politics.

FOREWORD

The decision to found the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was made at the Unification Council on December 15, 2018. From its first days, it became both a stumbling block and a furnace where a new – and, most likely, the largest schism in modern Orthodoxy was being forged. This schism is not yet finalized in any meaningful legal sense, at least at the level of laity, and yet it is very real. Moreover, as we shall show in our Chronology section, this divide is directly related to the nature of this new “church” and actions of its representatives.

In the past few years, the OCU has undergone several stages of development: exponential growth from the end of 2018 to April 2019, which was followed by a stagnation phase, then recognition by several Local Orthodox Churches, then a schism from within that has been going here and there until now.

The quick growth of OCU parishes at the very beginning was mostly due to staggeringly frequent illegal takeovers of churches belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP). It is during this short-lived period that the majority of conflicts between OCU and UOC MP members took place. Then, in the following years, Ukrainian courts got frustrated with the sheer number of complaints UOC MP congregations filed regarding illegal church and other property takeovers committed by the OCU; the legal system got swamped by lawsuits. The overwhelm brought about a laissez-faire approach of a kind, where churches continued being misappropriated by OCU, sometimes with support from local state administration. This went on till late May 2019, when it became clear that Petro Poroshenko, then-president and a radical supporter of all things Ukrainian, was going to lose office to Volodymyr Zelensky. This more moderate candidate exercised caution in social and foreign issues. For a while, the inter-church feud in the Ukrainian society subsided, most likely due to two factors. First, the OCU, being a creation of Poroshenko’s term, had little love for and trust in Zelensky. On the other hand, no Local Church but Constantinople had taken any steps to recognize the OCU as autocephalous since January 2019.

However, on October 12, 2019 the Church of Greece officially acknowledged the independence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and the Patriarchate of Alexandria followed suit just a month later. If it had been possible to bridge the divide and neutralize the most inflammatory speeches of the OCU and Constantinople representatives, this moment was gone. After the two Local Churches made their fateful choice, the schism grew beyond the point of crossing. Now it has become a fact of life in the Orthodox world, and it may take decades to heal this wound. This was when even the most skeptical observers of international church life had to admit that religion is being interwoven into political processes. Turned into an agent of destruction, it is used by global agents to achieve their strategic goals in the ongoing interstate struggle. From then on, conflicts around OCU church appropriations resume, though on a smaller scale than when they first commenced after the so-called Unification Council.

This decline in takeovers can also be attributed to the fact that in 2020 the OCU itself starts to fall apart: the UOC of the Kiev Patriarchate through Filaret (Denysenko) puts into question the very fact of the OCU autocephaly and its right to exist under the guidance of Epiphanius (Dumenko).

The majority of parishes – and, what’s more important, congregation members of the UOC MP – never left their Mother Church for the OCU, despite earlier claims of OCU representatives and state-adjacent scholars of religion like Dmitro Gorevoy. They used to state that it would only take an independent (from Moscow) Ukrainian religious entity to appear for the faithful to flock under the wing of this new autocephalous church. As a result, numerous churches taken over by OCU activists remained empty, and some had to close down: there was no one to either serve or pray there. At the same time, OCU got into conflict with other denominations: its activists expanded their takeover activities to church buildings that belonged not only to the UOC MP, but also to the UOC KP, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), and others.

As of now, the OCU, though recognized by some of the Local Churches, does not represent a monolithic structure; it is torn apart by political scheming and conflicts from within, and remains alien to the Ukrainian society.

In the 2nd annual report of Religion today, we attempted to present in chronological order all social confrontations, scandals, and equivocal utterances made by – or with the participation of – OCU representatives. It goes without saying that, despite our best efforts, we could not make our chronology perfectly comprehensive. A considerable number of illegal church takeovers, as well as inflammatory utterances by OCU clergy got no coverage in the media, or the coverage was so limited and the outlet so obscure that it was virtually impossible to read and analyze the materials in their full scope. We put little focus on how odd or uncommon such speeches or actions might be. In our day and time, one is hardly ever surprised by some apparent eccentricity of religious figures. The chronological study of the OCU development shows that, once it became the central point of the all-Orthodox schism, it went on to split modern Ukraine as well. Ukrainian citizens were effectively made to choose between their national identity and their faith. By choosing the second, they at times chose persecution: their churches, where they were baptized themselves and baptized their children; the churches where their parents were brought for a funeral service, got taken away from them, and parishioners themselves were subjected to physical and psychological violence.

One must mention here that this religious and political ‘schism’ directly resulted from the emergence of the OCU as a political project. It became an aspect of the competition of the West with Russia in the field of religion: this fragmentation of the Orthodox world by breaking ties between canonical churches and creation of new national autocephalous entities is full-heartedly and generously supported by the US and its major allies.

To substantiate our statement, let us cite a detailed, but succinct piece by our colleagues from Pravblog Telegram channel.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF LEGALIZING THE UKRAINIAN ECCLESIASTIC SCHISM: THE INFLUENCE OF BIG POLITICS

The radical changes in the religious landscape of Ukraine that we have been watching for the last several years, are anything but sudden. To a large extent, they are an extension of a larger political strategy of creating a new geopolitical reality at the Russian borders.

In the view of several Ukrainian experts, this process aims to address several strategical goals. The first one is to use the war in the east of Ukraine to redesign the established value system and to create three fundamentally new factors: a new Ukrainian nation; a new Ukrainian history; and a new Ukrainian idea. This very concept was covered by Volodymyr Horbulin, this most notorious ideologue of Ukraine alignment with the West, in his 2015 article titled ‘Five Scenarios for Ukraine-Russia Relations.’ The second one is to create the largest possible divide between Moscow and Kiev in every area, from politics and economics to history and religion. The third, and last, one is to turn Ukraine into a perpetuum mobile for creating problems for the Russian Federation, which would deplete the resources of the latter and limit its geopolitical activities.

With this in mind, one can well claim that prior to 2018 the increased interest that the Ukrainian government took to religion was dictated by two considerations, i.e., the desire to take part in scenarios that would lead to weakening Russia, and the desire to bulk up the resources of social groups close to the government.

More specifically, Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko was working the first direction, driven by his desire to blend in with the West. As for supporting particular social groups, it was government representatives close to the UGCC that acted with most vigor. The UGCC had a stake in exacerbating the conflict between the schismatics and the UOC, since it would weaken Orthodoxy and allow Uniates to move further east and south through Ukraine, where Greek Catholics had minimal presence.

Therefore, it is little wonder that the Ukrainian parliament initially took the lead to push for legal recognition of the UOC KP and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC).

Here we talk about Nastupleniye interfactional deputy group that included members like representatives of Free People advocacy group. One of Free People coordinators happened to be deputy Andriyi Levus, a Uniate and a long-time collaborator of Parliament speaker Andriy Parubiy (the latter is also an UAOC parishioner). It was

this group that in June 2016 authored the address of the Verkhova Rada of Ukraine to Patriarch Bartholomew asking to grant autocephaly to the church. It was the deputies from this group that wrote outrageous bill drafts aimed at destroying the UOC. Thus, Bill #5309 was meant to alter the official name of the Ukrainian Orthodox church and de-facto create the conditions for a massive overtake of its property, while Bill #4511 would considerably limit the UOC rights in terms of self-governance and functioning. One should also mention Parubiy's visit to Turkey in November 2015, where the speaker took time to discuss the prospects of Ukrainian autocephaly with Patriarch Bartholomew.

With this impressive backdrop, Poroshenko's activities seem to fade a little. The only key initiative worth mentioning was his address to the Verkhovna Rada deputies at the end of 2017, where the guarantor of the Constitution officially committed to doing whatever it was in his power to give his country an autocephalous church.

However, in 2018 the situation changed dramatically. The end of Poroshenko's term left much to be desired: his failures in both economic and social matters seemed to spell doom for his electoral prospects. His popularity rating numbers were also going down. Some political scientist and sociological centers went as far as to claim that should the president manage to make it to the second round, he would still lose to any of his contenders.

It was high time to save the day. Poroshenko's political strategists suggested playing the card of Ukrainian autocephaly. In their view, this project would solve several important issues at once: first, it would elevate the president to the level of a nation-founder; the one who made the sacred dream of every patriot come true. It was assumed that such high accomplishment would make citizens forgive and forget all the blunders and shortcomings of the government – and, obviously, boost Poroshenko's ratings and chances for reelection.

Inspired by this vision, Poroshenko in April 2018 pushed for church autocephaly with renewed energy. The president met with Patriarch Bartholomew and Constantinople Church Synod members to discuss the matter; at his behest, the UOC KP and the UAOC leaders addressed the head of Fener with the same request. This opened the window of opportunity for a plan that had long been brewing at the Executive Office of the President: the plan to merge UOC schismatics together and persuade the Patriarchate of Constantinople to acknowledge this new entity.

However, Poroshenko's plan was met with expected resistance from the canonical Church who objected to becoming a pawn to sacrifice in the president's reelection game. His Beatitude Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine, reflected this position in his speech of April 21, 2018:

According to Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Church is separated from the state and therefore is entitled to handling ecclesiastical matters independently. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has canonical connection to the Oecumenical Orthodoxy, and it has neither appealed to Patriarch Bartholomew to provide autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, nor entitled the president or deputies of the Verkhovna Rada to do so. For this reason, the abovementioned actions signaled both exceeding of the government's authority and its meddling in church affairs.

Since the UOC had taken this stance, the government doubled down and put increased administrative pressure on the denomination. While continuing on the course of

legislative annihilation of the UOC, it started grooming UOC bishops to form a group of clergy ready to team up with the UOC KP and the UAOC.

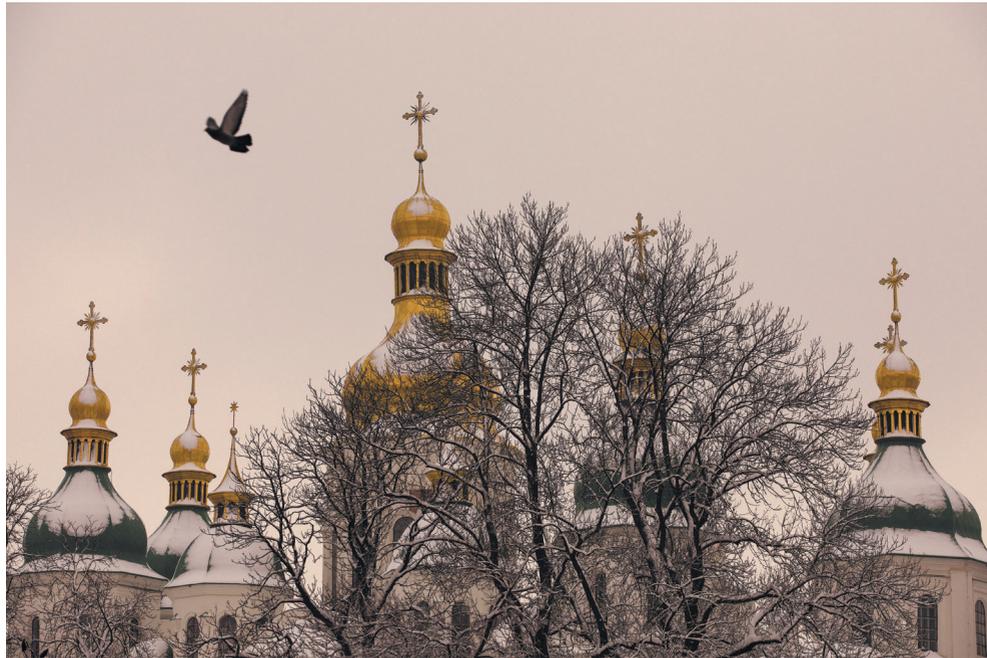
Time proved the tactic to be ineffective: only two UOC bishops agreed to participate in the so-called 'unification council' that resulted in the formation of the OCU. This prevented Poroshenko from both providing Fener with a perfect reason to meddle in Ukrainian church affairs, but also make a persuasive case for legal annihilation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (it was expected that the council would lead to ten UOC bishops signing a document to present to the Ministry of Justice, and the denomination would be stripped of its official status.)

Overall, the whole autocephaly conundrum failed to yield any favorable outcomes for the former president. First, his ratings remained low, proving that he had been mistaken to bring religion to the forefront of his electoral campaign. Secondly, the OCU escaped his control as well: Symeon (Shostatsky), the president's protégé and a former UOC Metropolitan, who aspired to preside over the new entity lost the race to the then-favorite of the UOC KP leader. Finally, Poroshenko himself was standing on shaky grounds electorally and was too focused on his own goals. He tried too hard to gain popularity and used the whole tomos story to that end, without much regard to the interests of Ukrainian schismatics. One need not look further than the tomos itself. The president made the UOC KP and the UAOC leadership agree to terms such as passing foreign parishes of these denominations to Fener; the OCU accepting the primacy of Constantinople, and so on.

The only party that benefitted from the formation of the OCU were Ukrainian Uniates. From then on, they could put constant pressure on the UOC and finally expand beyond the Western regions of Ukraine. First and foremost, the UGCC got a chance of a lifetime to gradually take over Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The OCU in its current state would allow that. Moreover, the OCU leader himself stated multiple times that such a scenario is quite likely. When in 2019 he appeared on Espresso.TV, Epiphanius (Dumenko) admitted that he had already brought up the question during his meeting with the leader of the UGCC.

His words are further proven by close collaborations between OCU and UGCC representatives: thus, they regularly pray together and conduct joint church services. One is justified in stating that the whole OCU project in its current state has far less to do with Poroshenko or Fener than with Uniates. There is a good chance that those Local Orthodox Churches that recognized the organization helped forward the Catholic agenda more than they assisted Constantinople.

As one can see, both the foundation and the development of the OCU had significant political undertones. The autocephaly that Fener "granted" to the OCU is now held over the heads of "pro-Moscow" Local Churches of Serbia, Czechia, Poland, and Bulgaria. Now that Ukraine has set the example, they are threatened with their canonical rights being questioned and their territories split up. We can glimpse the same tendencies from the timelines of highly controversial events related to the development of this entity, which follows below.



19.12.2018

Vinnitsya state employees under threat of dismissal were forcefully brought to OCU church services in the Holy Transfiguration cathedral overtaken by Simeon (Shostatsky) who had been prohibited in service by the UOC Synod.

22.12.2018

On December 22 (Saturday), some of village council leaders in the Bershad region, Vinnitsya oblast, received a call from Volodymyr Olshevsky, Bershad state administration deputy, demanding to pressure village priests and congregations of the UOC to join the newly formed church entity.

23.12.2018

Archbishop Kliment (Kushch) of Simferopol and the Crimea reported that Poroshenko pressured the Greeks who came to set the Unification Council. For instance, the Ukrainian president ordered to close the airport and not let the Fener delegation out.

27.12.2018

Vinnitsya oblast state administration sends out formal requests for UOC communities to transfer to the OCU. As the UOC outreach office informed, upon receiving identical documents, the clergy of Vinnitsya and Tulchin dioceses expressed their indignation at the state meddling into church affairs.

30.12.2018

An activist group gathered in St. Michael's church of Volyn oblast (UOC)

that has nothing to do with them and voted in favor of transferring to the OCU.

31.12.2018

Archpriest Andrey Henalyuk, the senior priest of St. Michael's church of the Krasnovolya village, Manevichi district (UOC) stated that he was going to file a court appeal in regard to the illegitimate gathering where the decision to transfer the church to the OCU had allegedly taken place.

02.01.2019

Two churches near Chernovtsy were transferred to the OCU. Voting took place in villages Karapchov and Boyanchuk of Chernovtsy oblast; schismatics from all around the oblast were brought specifically to participate in 'church councils' organized by the local administration.

04.01.2019

One hundred nine people from Klekotino village of Vinnitsya oblast appealed to the head of the Joint territorial community (Murafa village council) Serhiy Parteka and the village police inspector Nikolay Oleynik to protect from OCU activists the life of Anatoliy Kochmaruk, the senior priest of the Dormition of the Theotokos village church, as well as the church property.

05.01.2019

On Christmas Eve, nationalists and far right activists (from Right Sector and similar organizations) called upon Ukrainians to join their protest outside a UOC church in Vinnitsya and explain to the faithful that it was time to transfer to the OCU.

06.01.2019

On January 6, 2019, Right Sector members held an all-Ukrainian rally in support of transfer to the OCU. (“Transfer to the OCU”: Perekhod do Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi Ukrainy).

10.01.2019

The OCU is not listed among autocephalous churches on the Fener website. On the official domain of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches section, the OCU is also absent. The list consists of three patriarchates and ten autocephalous churches, and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is nowhere to be seen.

11.01.2019

On January 11, the council of Vorsovka village of Malin district summoned a meeting to transfer an ancient UOC church to the OCU.

The government of Berestechko town (Volyn oblast) attempted to use a concert organized by the OUC to collect money for the OCU. The town council secretary proposed to hold a meeting about transferring the Trinity church to the OCU during the concert organized by the congregation of the canonical church.

13.01.2019

In Vorsovka village (Zhitomir oblast), OCU proponents with the support of the village council and activists from Svoboda movement, gathered a meeting in favour of transfer to the newly organized entity. The church of St. Nicholas was sealed off, and its

senior priest was hospitalized with a hypertensive crisis.

13.01.2019

The church of St. Michael (Krasnovolya village) was blocked by OCU activists. They did not let in either father Andriy, the senior priest, or Nathaniel, the bishop of Volyn and Lutsk. Instead, they brought in their own priest, who belonged to the Kiev patriarchate, and declared him new senior priest of the church.

15.01.2019

On January 15, during the session of Bronitskiy village (Kamen-Kashirsky district of Volyn oblast) council members voted in favor of the local Ukrainian Orthodox Church community being transferred to the OCU. Their illegal actions were stopped by the local law enforcement. Together with the attempt to take over the church, its senior priest and community were slandered in the media: it was claimed that they committed “a terroristic invasion of the village council.”

16.01.2019

In Sadov village of the Lutsk district (Volyn oblast) there was active pro-OCU campaigning going on that involved local educators. Teachers from the village school did not deny collecting signatures in support of the new church, yet claimed they were expressing their civic stand on the matter and do nothing to sway students to their side.

On January 16, 2019, parishioners from Nikolayevka and Ivanovka villages (Borzna district) thwarted an attempt at transferring their religious community to the OCU. Activists had to leave the meeting at the bequest of the parish.

18.01.2019

The head of the UOC legal department called for a court appeal of the Olenovka church takeover. This takeover was one of the many examples of state meddling of internal affairs of an UOC religious community.

19.01.2019

OCU representatives took over yet another church in Ternopolskaya oblast. The night before January 19, the community of the Trinity church, UOC, in Rostoki village (Kremenetsky district) had to serve liturgy and perform the blessing of water outside in freezing temperatures.

On January 19, from 7am on, a pro-OCU group gathered near the church of Nativity of St. John the Baptist (UOC), demanding the senior priest to let them in together with the representative of the Kiev Patriarchate. After some lengthy argumentation, OCU supporters tried to force their way into the church yet again.

21.01.2019

An UOC community of Urvenna village (Rovno oblast) was transferred to the OCU without asking the congregation. According to Serhiy Kondrachuk, the head of Zdolbunov district administration, the decision made at the Urvenna village meeting was enough to transfer the UOC congregation to the OCU, even though no members of the church community were present at the said meeting. The flock of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Rostoki village (Ternopol oblast) appealed to the Ukrainian government to give back the Trinity church that had been taken away from them.

In Polozhevo village, supporters of the transfer took over the monastery church of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki, built in Polozhevo village, Shatsk district (Volyn oblast) on private grounds belonging to the hegumen of the Svitiaz Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul.

In Volyn villages of Skobelka, Berestechko, Kutrov, Nichegovka, and Bronitsa, UOC congregations thwarted all attempts of OCU activists at church takeovers. On January 20, Volyn oblast witnessed multiple attempts of such takeovers. OCU supporters demanded that congregations set up meetings to “transfer” their churches to the OCU.

On January 21, 2019, transfer supporters picked the locks on a UOC church in Bronitsa (Krymno) village, Kamen-Kashirsky district, and expelled the senior priest from the premises.

22.01.2019

In Pokhovka village (Bogorodchany district, Ivano-Frankovsk oblast), state officials assisted OCU supporters in taking over the Annunciation church that belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The invaders came at night and broke the locks open.

23.01.2019

The head of the OCU, metropolitan Epiphanius (Dumenko) stated that the signing of tomos brought about none of the forecast religious tensions, and what was going on was the peaceful transfer of Ukrainian congregations to the OCU.

On January 23, a scandal broke out in Pisarevka village of Vinnitsya oblast. At the village council meeting, the officials attempted to transfer a local church community to the OCU, even though parishioners had already expressed their

loyalty to the UOC. One of the priests suffered a violent attack.

On January 23, 2019, deputies of Rovno oblast council took a decision to appeal to the local UOC clergy and the laity to transfer to the OCU. This decision was approved by the deputies of the 7th Rovno oblast council “according to Article #43 of Law of Ukraine On local governance in Ukraine.”

24.01.2019

One more declaration of a congregation transfer to the OCU turned out to be a fake. Mitried Archpriest Igor Bezogliuk, leader of the Trinity church congregation of the Belaya Tserkov diocese, told the UOC Outreach office that the Orthodox community of Rudnoye Selo village (Volodarka district; Kiev oblast) did not, in fact, transfer to the OCU.

Odessa priests informed the OSCE special monitoring mission about conflicts surrounding Ukrainian Orthodox churches in the oblast.

25.01.2019

The news on Morozovka village congregation transferring to the OCU proved to be false as well. The media incorrectly stated that the senior priest of the church of Dormition of the Theotokos in Morozovka village (Baryshevka district, Kiev oblast).

The national police headquarters in Vinnitsya oblast decided to increase patrolling activities close to churches where inter-confession clashes were known to happen or were likely to happen in the future. Several conflicts broke out due to church takeovers and UOC communities being transferred to the OCU.

Former UOC Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) gave his blessing to accept

into the OCU a congregation of the church of Dormition of the Theotokos in Morozovka village (Baryshevka district; Kiev oblast). As a rationale, he published on his Facebook page an appeal from the senior priest, archpriest Nikolai Brega, addressed to the former metropolitan but lacking a signature.

26.01.2019

On January 26, the local authorities of Brailov village in Vinnitsya oblast initiated a meeting to transfer two UOC parishes to the newly established OCU. There are two UOC churches in the village: one in the name of St. John the Apostle, and the other in the names of St. Peter and Paul. The local village government, ignoring the existing legislation, initiated the collection of signatures to expedite the transfer of both congregations. a local paper published an announcement about the meeting.

27.01.2019

Despite the takeover of the church, the congregation in Nichegovka village of Manevichi district managed to stay within the UOC. Still, hundreds of OCU activists pressured Tarasiy Bernik, the parish priest, for many hours, until he agreed to give them the keys to the church of St. Nicholas.

On January 27, 2019, the UOC congregation of the Trinity Cathedral in Berestechko town (Gorokhov district; Volyn oblast) cancelled the Sunday service to avoid provocation and church takeover by OCU activists.

Supported by the government, OCU activists held a meeting in Luka-Meleshkovskaya village nearby Vinnitsya. Naturally, the meeting was devoted to the transfer of the Transfiguration church to the OCU. The meeting held by the local

UOC community was crashed by hawkish military and War in Donbass veterans.

On January, 27, the church of St. George in urban-type settlement Kamyshevakha (Popasna district; Lugansk oblast) hosted a parish meeting where the question of possible transfer to the OCU was discussed. Serhiy Shakun, the head of the district government, also attended the meeting and made efforts to convince the believers to transfer to the “United Local Church,” i.e., the OCU.

28.01.2019

Members of the urban-type settlement Voronovitsa congregation did not let the local government to hold illegal voting and transfer parishes to the OCU jurisdiction.

Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko signed the bill regulating religious congregations transfer from one denomination to another. The document delineates mechanisms by which a congregation could change its affiliation to religious organizations in Ukraine and abroad. In expert opinion, this bill legalizes religious raiding.

On Monday, January 28, an attempt was made to forcefully transfer a religious community in Solnechnoye village (Mogilev-Podolskyi diocese; Vinnitsya oblast) to the OCU. It was Petro Brovko, Mogilev-Podolskyi mayor, that signed off on the illegal actions. Afterwards, the local administration encouraged village inhabitants to vote for the church transfer to the OCU.

01.02.2019

Saratskiy district authorities made an attempt to take over a UOC church in Mikhailovka village (Odessa oblast). By doing so, they willfully ignored the Ukrainian legislation and the warnings

from the national police who emphasized the impermissibility of local governments meddling into religious affairs by raising the issue of congregation transfer “at general village meetings.”

The role of the OCU is to rid the country of the canonical Church that serves as a “tentacle” of the aggressor state, declared Epiphanius (Dumenko), the head of the OCU and Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine. The statement appeared on the still-active website of the UOC KP – the organization that was supposed to have dissolved itself.

02.02.2019

There was a search of activists across villages in Kovel district, Volyn oblast. Volunteers were needed to collect signatures in support of the new Ukrainian church. The press office of the Vladimir-Volynskiy diocese of the UOC stated that Andriy Broilo, the head of Kovel district council, took it upon himself to oversee signature collection.

On February 2, 2019, OCU supporters took over the church of Our Lady of Kazan. The church belonged to a UOC congregation of Sadov village (Lutsik district; Volyn oblast). The raiders broke the locks and burst the doors open with tools that they had acquired beforehand.

03.02.2019

Honorary patriarch Filaret failed to attend the enthronement of OCU metropolitan Epiphanius in Saint Sophia Cathedral (Kiev) that took place on February 3, 2019. He, reportedly, was undergoing some medical treatment at the time.

On February 3, in Bogorodchany village of Ivano-Frankovsk oblast, representatives of the local community held a meeting with the intention of transferring the church

from the UOC to the OCU. The head of the Bogorodchany district council Holovchuk Mykhailo Mykhailovich himself presided over the meeting at the community center where he agitated for the transfer.

On February 3 in Urvenna (Zdolbunov district), local OCU supporters did not let archpriest Andriy Ostapiuk into the church of Our Lady of Kazan and thus prevented him from holding a Sunday service.

district council appealed to the local religious community to change their affiliation.

08.02.2019

Public Advocacy, an NGO with ECOSOC consultative status, produced infographics in support of the rights of believers of the UOC. The organization's YouTube channel published a tutorial on legal steps to take in case of these rights being violated.

In Rovno oblast, village heads were being persuaded to transfer their UOC communities to the OCU: ready-made application forms were distributed between the heads of village communities in the oblast.

On February 8, 2019, the executive committee of Ustivitsya village council (Velikaya Bagachka district, Poltava oblast) initiated a community meeting to decide the fate of the local UOC congregation. However, the congregation itself, and even the head of St. Michael's church weren't let in by blocking the entrance doors to the meeting.

09.02.2019

The UOC community in Ustivitsya was not admitted to the meeting and was "transferred" to the OCU without their will. Despite the pressure, the congregation, together with their leader and the senior priest of St. Michael's church, remained faithful to the canonical church.

On February 9, 2019, an OCU delegation that arrived at Mount Athos on a visit with the blessing of Constantinople patriarch Bartholomew, could not get into St. Panteleimon monastery. Archimandrite Eulogius, the hegumen of the monastery, explained to the delegation that the new Ukrainian church was not recognized there.

In Kopytkovo village (Zdolbunov district, Rovno oblast), OCU supporters covertly changed the locks on the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (UOC) and gave the keys to the head of the district administration.

10.02.2019

Malye Dorogostai village, Rovno oblast: the church of the Intercession was "transferred" to the OCU at the community meeting presided by UOC KP clergy. Neither the congregation nor its leader were informed of the decision, though only two weeks ago at the parish meeting they proclaimed their loyalty to the UOC.

Several Vatopedi monks (Mount Athos) transferred to St. Panteleimon's after learning that their own monastery hosted bishop Pavlo (Yuristy) with the OCU delegation. The seven monks thus expressed their disagreement with their monastery communicating with the new church entity.

On February 10, 2019, a group of young people attended a church service in Velimcha village (Volyn oblast). Under the pretense of conducting a survey, they asked parishioners provocative questions, trying to sway them to the OCU side.

On February 10, 2019, a raider group led by three Kiev Patriarchate representatives seized the church of Prophet Elijah in Yasinya/Lopushanka village (Yasinya district of Khust diocese, UOC). A day later, bishop Barsanuphius of the Kiev Patriarchate (Zakarpate) declared that the congregation "transferred" to the OCU.

11.02.2019

On February 11, Kostopol district court (Rovno oblast) upheld the claim of the UOC congregation regarding the transfer and ruled that Kostopol division

of the national police put this violation of religious freedom on the National Register of Pre-Trial Investigations.

12.02.2019

On the day of the Three Holy Hierarchs (February 12, 2019), the congregation of St. Elijah's church of Yasinya/Lopushanka village that was robbed of their church for the first time gathered for prayer outside in the church yard.

13.02.2019

It had been two Sundays with no service at the UOC church of St. Paraskevi (Radoshevka village; Ternopolsk oblast): OCU supporters sealed the church off on January 31. According to senior priest of the church Oleg Vekliuk, UOC members were not let inside.

In Danilovka village (Mena district; Chernigov oblast) there emerged a new activist organization. The so-called "Brotherhood of Evangelizers" promised to convert the religious community of the village to the OCU, though the congregation had already declared its loyalty to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

14.02.2019

The Trinity Monastery, registered in Satanov village (Khmelnitskiy oblast), is non-operational. However, Ukrainian media made an announcement that "the first Monastery transferred from the Moscow Patriarchate to the independent church" (i.e., to the OCU).

16.02.2019

On Saturday, February 16, 2019, supporters of the new Ukrainian church decided to take over the UOC church of

04.02.2019

Epiphanius (Dumenko), the head of the OCU, claimed that takeovers of UOC churches were being committed by Russian agitators whose goal was to ignite a religious war in Ukraine.

05.02.2019

In Privetov village (Zhitomir oblast) protestant activists attempted to "transfer" a UOC congregation to the OCU. However, the parish managed to collect 2.5 times more votes in favor of staying in the UOC (400 for staying against 160 for transferring).

Father Vitaliy Kemin, the dean of Yasinya district of the Khustsk UOC diocese, received threats from nationalists and supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate. They had taken over the church of St. George in Yasinya/Kevelev village (Rakhov district; Zakarpatey oblast) and were threatening to kidnap the priest's son.

On February 5, 2019, OCU supporters led by a village council representative seized the UOC church of Dormition of the Theotokos in Radomyshl village (Lutsk district; Volyn oblast).

07.02.2019

Zolochovka village (Demidovsk district; Rovno oblast): the head of Demidovsk

St. George in Peski village of Gorokhov district.

On the same day, the clergy and the parish of the UOC church in Pozharki village (Rozhysheche district; Volyn oblast) managed to prevent the illegal “transfer” of their religious community to the new church entity. To achieve that, an all-village meeting was held, regardless of inhabitants’ religious affiliations.

17.02.2019

On February 17, 2019, OCU raiders (Kiev Patriarchate, UAOC) took over yet another church in Yasinya district of Khust diocese (Zakarpatty oblast). This time, they targeted an ancient church of the Transfiguration in Yasinya/Plitovaty urban-type settlement under the leadership of father Ioann Tkach. After taking over the church, the raiders went on to threaten the priest.

20.02.2019

The leader of the OCU, Epiphanius (Dumenko) believes that the sacrifice of Nebesna Sotnya heroes gave Ukraine a united nation, opened the EU borders, and helped establish an autocephalous church. He shared his view during a memorial service for Euromaidan victims that happened in St. Michael’s Golden-Domed cathedral in Kiev.

22.02.2019

The Orthodox community of a small village of Dobryn (Khoroshev district; Zhitomir oblast) expressed indignation over the fact that their decision to stay in the canonical church was brazenly violated. The congregation was transferred to the OCU by the local administration.

On February 22, 2019, a village meeting was held in Mushty (Reshetilovka district; Poltava oblast). The organizers called it “a meeting of the Annunciation congregation of the UOC.” However, the senior priest of the church had been informed of it only one day prior to the event, and the parish council had not been informed at all.

23.02.2019

On February 23, 2019, there were two meetings held simultaneously to decide the fate of the monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Nizkinichi, Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast). Upon learning about provocation attempts, the monastery parishioners gathered from across neighboring villages to defend their priests and the brethren.

24.02.2019

On February 24, 2019, activists stirred up unrest in several locations across Chernovitsy-Bukovina diocese: specifically, in Berezhnitsa, Berezhonka, Zadubrovka, Vaslovovtsy, and Tovtry. OCU supporters flooded UOC churches with posters and loudspeakers; in Tovtry, they went as far as to instigate a fight.

On February 24, 2019, OCU representatives together with some local community members broke into the Trinity church in Novoyelizavetovka village (Shiryaevo district). The UOC congregation explained to the OCU representatives that they had committed a crime by breaking the locks, and that their actions would be brought to court.

On February 24, 2019, a former activist of Odessa Self-Defense and a notorious opera singer Todor Panovskiy appealed to the OCU congregation of the church of Nativity (Odessa) at the church meeting. Supported by a certain “priest,” he

instigated those present to take over the cathedral of the Dormition (UOC).

25.02.2019

On their website, the OCU published a message about the Yasinya village church being transferred from the UOC. However, in reality, the congregation prevented the takeover, and the protocols uploaded to the website turned out to be forged. In the published “meeting minutes” it is stated that the meeting was attended by 540 people, and over 400 of them voted for the transfer.

26.02.2019

On February 26, 2019, a group of OCU activists attacked members of the Nativity of the Theotokos congregation (Yasinya village, Rakhov district; Zakarpatty oblast). They beat up several female parishioners who brought meeting protocols to the local council.

27.02.2019

UOC clergy conducted their first service in the church of St. Nicholas (Zhidychin village, Kivertsi district, Volyn oblast) after the building had been taken over on February 22, 2019.

On February 27, 2019, the community of Belichi village (Volyn oblast) at 5pm voted in favor of the “voluntary transfer” of the church of St. Michael under the OCU jurisdiction. The activists of the new religious entity ignored an official address by the congregation that was not in favor of this “voluntary transfer”.

28.02.2019

On February 28, 2019, OCU supporters attempted to unlawfully evict archpriest

Yaroslav Savka and his wife from the house that belonged to the UOC church community (village Tribukhovtsy, Buchach district; Ternopol oblast).

01.03.2019

In Kurozvany village (Rovno oblast), the local government assisted the OCU takeover under the pretense of doing an inventory. The state officers had no documents with them that would grant permission for their actions.

02.03.2019

Several OCU media outlets of Volyn region reported on the transfer of the church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (Oshchev village, Gorokhov district) into the newly formed entity, attaching photos and a scanned copy of a “meeting protocol” that happened in the local club.

In Paradovka village (Vasilkov district; Kiev oblast), around 35 OCU activists led by UOC KP priests attempted to storm the building of the local church of St. Vladimir.

On March 2, 2019, an OCU activist group tried to seize a UOC church in Novaya Moshchanina village (Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast). Andriy Kondrachuk, the head of Zdolbunov district administration and allegedly the figure behind several other raider takeovers in the region, was also present.

03.03.2019

The village of Lobachovka (Gorokhov district): OCU supporters broke down the door of the local church and stormed the building. After the service, twenty one congregation members together with father Mikhail Yavorskiy (the senior priest of the church), Berestechko dean

Dmitry Petrushchak, and two other UOC priests locked themselves in the church to defend it against a possible takeover.

OCU supporters conducted their service in the church, despite all prior arrangements, and then started beating up the congregation, shouting No Russkies allowed here.

On March 3, 2019, OCU activists together with Right Sector fighters took over the Transfiguration church in Gnezdychno village (Zbarazh district; Ternopol oblast). The operation was coordinated by Ivan Lesik, a controversial cleric of the UOC KP.

05.03.2019

The far-right Right Sector published on their Facebook page an announcement of a UOC church in Gnezdychno village (Zbarazh district; Ternopol oblast) “transfer” to the OCU.

07.03.2019

In the town of Tarashcha (Kiev oblast), supporters of the new church are trying to ignite an inter-faith conflict and threaten to take over the church of St. Peter and Paul that belongs to the UOC.

08.03.2019

On March 8, in Rudo Selo village OCU activists sabotaged a traditional procession of the Cross that was going on with the blessing of Augustine (Markevich), metropolitan of Belaya Tserkov and Boguslav.

09.03.2019

In the village of Kopyta (Chernigov oblast) an unlawful takeover of a UOC church by the OCU took place. Yevgeniy

Orda, an OCU priest, was noticed among the invaders.

In Volyn diocese, OCU supporters took over the church of St. Nicholas in Skobelka village (Gorokhov district) and the church of Elijah the Prophet in the village of Klepachev (Kivertsi district). The raiders broke the door locks.

OCU supporters had been blocking the entrance of the church since March 2, refusing to leave. On Saturday (March 9), they cut off the locks and got inside the church.

On March 9, 2019, around fifty people with a loudspeaker entered the church of St. Peter and Paul in Tarashcha (Kiev oblast). These OCU supporters attempted to take over the church.

10.03.2019

OCU activists from the village of Bokhoniki (Vinnitsya district; Vinnitsya oblast) unlawfully prevent the flock, as well as archbishop Barsanothius (Stolyar) of Vinnitsya and Bar, from entering the church of St. John the Apostle where they had removed the locks. Not stopping there, the raiders also did not let the congregation enter the village itself.

12.03.2019

In Baranovka, OCU activists held a rally outside the city council and then once again tried to take over the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos that was still under the jurisdiction of the UOC.

13.03.2019

To seize the UOC church in Ivankov regional centre (Kiev oblast), raiders attempted to use mud-slinging, power politics, and bureaucratic foot-dragging.

On March 13, 2019, the Security Service of Ukraine, together with National Police and prosecution procedural management searched the apartment of a certain writer in Cherkassy. Allegedly, the writer was at the bequest of Russian curators creating and distributing through Russian websites materials condemning the creation of the OCU and the tomos.

On March 13, 2019, OCU supporters cut off the locks from the church of St. Nicholas in Selets village (Dubrovitsya district; Rovno oblast). In no time, they replaced the old locks with the news ones, which allowed them not to let UOC believers inside. In addition, they threatened Nikolai Ivanichko, the senior priest of the church.

14.03.2019

After taking over the church of the Intercession in Kurozvany (Rovno oblast), OCU activists attempted to seize the house of its head, archpriest Vladimir Koval.

15.03.2019

Dnepropetrovsk businessman Alexander Petrovsky, also dubbed “Narik” in criminal circles, funded construction of an OCU chapel at the territory of Security Service of Ukraine headquarters in Dnepropetrovsk oblast. The chapel was dedicated in the memory of security service agents who died in anti-terroristic and Joint Forces operations.

On March 15, 2019, OCU activists cut off and changed the locks on the gate of the previously seized church in Berezhnitsya, thus blocking the entrance to UOC congregation members.

16.03.2019

Nun Dimitriya (Pasevich) From the Intercession monastery (Olkha village)

filed a complaint to the Novograd-Volyn Headquarters of the National Police of Ukraine about bodily injuries she sustained during a raider attack on the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Baranovka village.

The state stands with the church that supports it, and there is nothing wrong with the fact that it orders its employees to put pressure on parishes. This was the opinion of honorary OCU patriarch Filaret that he voiced in an interview with Glavkom media outlet when asked about orders to hold parish meetings that regional state administrations send down to district administrations.

In the church of the Transfiguration (Luka-Meleshkovskaya village; Vinnitsya district) the Divine Liturgy was to start at 8:30am on Saturday, March 16. However, OCU activists blocked the church entrance and did not allow the community to have a service.

On March 16, 2019, in the village of Susval (Vladimir-Volynskiy district) OCU supporters who gathered outside the parish grounds of the Nativity of the Theotokos Church doubled their provocation efforts. They stopped UOC congregation members from entering the church and demanded that they give up the keys. UOC congregations from neighboring communities flocked to Susval to support their fellow believers.

17.03.2019

On March 17, 2019, the Orthodox community of the Annunciation church (Rakov Les village; Kamen-Kashirskiy district) that belonged to the UOC prevented an attempt to take over the church. Activists, acting aggressively, entered the church grounds and started a fight at the very steps of the church.

On March 17, 2019, in a village club of Velikiy Kuren (Liubeshov district of Volyn diocese) a handful of OCU activists

attempted to hold a “community meeting,” where fewer than 30 people showed up out of 530 adult village dwellers.

19.03.2019

The situation around the Dormition cathedral (UOC) in Pogreby village (Kiev oblast) remains tense. Igor Baglei, the head priest of the church, receives threats from the activists of the new church entity.

The meeting between OSCE representatives and the coordinator of the fa-right movement C-14 happened in Chernigov oblast on March 19, 2019. Activists stated that the topics of the discussion included “pressing issues that arise when congregations transfer” from the UOC to the OCE.

24.03.2019

On March 24, 2019, in Tovtry village (Zastavna district; Chernovtsy oblast) OCU activists attempted to take over the church of the Dormition belonging to the UOC. There ensued a physical altercation; the police were called and a complaint about the provocation was filed with the law enforcement.

25.03.2019

Photios, bishop of Zaporozhe and Melitopol announced on air (UA:Pershiy channel) that the OCU was going to perform burial services for its deceased members who were baptized into other denominations.

26.03.2019

In Pilipovichi village of Borodyanka district, Kiev oblast, a village council deputy who earlier openly declared himself a Greek Catholic, initiates

transfer of the church of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki to the OCU. The Uniate deputy claims to be one of the UOC congregation members.

26.03.2019

The legal office of the UOC published an interactive map of UOC churches online. The map was presented at the press-conference titled “The UOC in March: Response from international organizations; lawsuits; religious conflicts throughout the country. Facts and numbers.” As of March 26, 2019, the map featured 62 parishes that suffered raider attacks from the new religious entity.

On March 26, 2019, the official site of Rovno oblast administration published an order “On registering statutes of religious communities as amended,” where he wrote the names of thirty parishes of Rovno and Sarny UOC diocese that allegedly transferred to the OCU.

27.03.2019

A daughter of one OCU priest announced that she planned to perform salah (namaz) in the cathedral of the transfiguration and declared jihad against the community of the Dormition monastery of the UOC. The name of the girl was Miroslava Shiman, the daughter of the prohibited in service archpriest Vladislav Shiman, former senior priest of the church of Intercession in the urban-type settlement of Sarat who transferred to the OCU.

31.03.2019

On March 31, 2019, an OCU action group tried to take over a church in Malaya Liubasha village of Volyn oblast. Fortunately, the takeover attempt was

failed, and the police walked the activists out of the church. The UOC congregation put new locks on the church doors, and then those supporting OCU did the same, since they received registration document to create their own religious community.

02.04.2019

On April 2, 2019, activists cut the locks off and unlawfully entered two churches of Dubrovitsya district (Rovno oblast) at once. Before this happened, two OCU communities with the same registration details as the ones belonging to the UOC were unlawfully registered in oblast administration offices.

April 2, 2019, at 9am, the church of the Intercession in Berestyie village (Dubrovitsya district; Rovno oblast) was taken over by the OCU. The UOC congregation of the church had learned about a possible attack an hour before the raider takeover took place. Oleksandr Zadorozhnii, deputy head of Dubrovitsya district council, led the attack.

03.04.2019

Epiphanius Dumenko, the head of the OCU, called for erecting a massive pantheon in Ukraine that would commemorate patriots that had fallen for the unity of the state. “The global national commemoration pantheon” should include, in his view, a cathedral and a museum complex. The OCU leader expressed this opinion during his meeting with the Wall of Memory (Stena Pamyati) advocacy group.

04.04.2019

OCU metropolitan Epiphanius (Dumenko) believes that it is only the new

church entity together with the NATO that could protect this gift [of freedom] from evil. “I with our friends a happy 70th anniversary of the NATO agreement. In their day, Euro-Atlantic nations united to protect freedom. Freedom is a gift from God, as Apostle Paul said: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” –he wrote in his Twitter account.

In Ptichya village of Dubno district (Rovno oblast) OCU raiders cut off the locks from the Dormition church belonging to the UOC. The takeover took place on April 4 around 8pm.

05.04.2019

Oleksandr Dediukhin, OCU priest famous for his staunch support of Petro Poroshenko, published on his Facebook page a video address to presidential candidate Volodymyr Zelensky. Dediukhin, calling Zelensky by his first name, demanded an apology to “millions of Ukrainian Orthodox Christians” for calling the tomos a thermos. He gave Zelensky 24 hours to apologize.

06.04.2019

In the morning of April 6, during the Saturday of Souls service, supporters of the new church entity made their claims to the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Pyatigory.

07.04.2019

On the days when the congregation of the Intercession church in Banya Lisovitskaya (Stryi district; Lvov oblast) celebrates twenty years since its foundation, local officials and activists have taken over the church and do not let the faithful inside for a service.

08.04.2019

Petro Zinich, OCU priests serving at St. Vladimir's cathedral in Kiev, declared that those who voted for Volodymyr Zelensky at the presidential elections, would burn in hell.

10.04.2019

In Kopytov village of Korets district (Rovno oblast), a church was taken over by OCU supporters. The raider attack was initiated by the head of the local police. In one Rovno village during a takeover attempt, an OCU member threatened the senior priest of the church to involve the Security Service of Ukraine and to beat him up.

OCU supporters accused members of the UOC in breaching terms of contract and cut off locks on the church of St. John the Apostle in Kopylov village (Korets district; Rovno oblast). On April 10, after the Holy Liturgy was served at the church of Our Lady of Pochaev, archbishop of Vinnitsya and Bar Barsanothius paid a visit to the parishes of Gurovsty and Maknovka villages (Kozyatin district, Vinnitsya oblast) where members of the canonical church were stripped of their right to serve and pray in their own churches.

11.04.2019

Volyn, Chernovtsy, Rovno, Khmelnytskyi, and Kiev oblast courts processed appeals of UOC communities regarding denials to put complaints on church takeovers and other "transfer-related" unlawful acts of state officials and OCU representatives on the National Register of Pre-Trial Investigations. The courts held that prosecutors and other designated officials put complaints on the Register and start the investigation.

14.04.2019

On April 14, 2019, OCU activists stormed the church of St. Cosmas and Damian in Rozvazh village (Ostrog district; Rovno oblast) during the Sunday service. During the takeover, activists tackled women and children, and the priest who led the attack broke the lock of the church house with a crowbar.

16.04.2019

On April 16, 2019 (Tuesday), OCU supporters cut the locks off the Transfiguration church in Kurash village (Dubrovytsia district; Rovno oblast) and held there a prayer service. The police that were called took no measures to prevent the church takeover and help the UOC congregation.

17.04.2019

OCU metropolitan Anthony (Makhota) expressed his outrage at the government failure to support OCU activists in their takeover of the Intercession church in Sutkovtsy (Yarmolyntsi district).

OCU activists threatened to evict the head of the church of St. Elijah the Prophet (UOC) in Yasinya/Lopushanka village from the church house. Serhiy Slisarenko started to receive threats in February, though he and his family, including his three little children, were officially registered in the building.

On April 17, 2019, members of a newly formed OCU community forcefully seized the church in Staryi Zagorov village (Lokachi district; Volyn oblast) that belonged to the UOC congregation.

On April 17, 2019, OCU members came to the administration of the

Chernovtsy-Bukovina diocese with the demand to transfer all the property belonging to the church of Zadubrovka village (Zastavna district, Chernovtsy oblast) to them – or to arrange for the OCU and UOC communities to take turns to serve at St. Michael's church. When their request was denied, the activists threatened to start a war and apply force to seize the church buildings.

18.04.2019

On April 18, 2019, in Yapolut village of Kostopol district (Rovno oblast), OCU activists used a crowbar to break the doors of the church of St. George and seized the building. The takeover happened because of the order issued by the head of the oblast administration to annihilate the local UOC community.

19.04.2019

Borys Filatov threatened to sue bishop Simeon (Zinkevich) if he failed to prove or retract his "abject lies" of him criticizing the tomos. On April 18, a press conference was held in the Dnepropetrovsk diocese where bishop of Dnepropetrovsk and Krivoy Rog Simeon (born Oleg Zinkevich) denounced mayor of Dnepropetrovsk Borys Filatov for his "flippant remarks regarding the tomos and the church" in the social media.

21.04.2019

On April 21, on Palm Sunday, during a service at the church of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Mikhalcha village; Storozhynets district; Chernovtsy oblast), OCU representatives entered the building with a warning that they would return after Easter to take the church keys.

23.04.2019

On April 23, Starye Koshary village head Halyna Shepshaley announced that OCU supporters had permission to take over the church of St. John the Apostle at Easter. This happened after the head of the church, archpriest Serhiy Korenyuk refused to give her the keys to the church and rejected the idea of rotating services with the schismatics.

28.04.2019

On April 28, 2019, artist Nikolai Kundel, the author of mosaics that are planned to adorn the OCU cathedral in Rovno, shared his ideas in an interview. According to Kundel, one of the cathedral mosaics would depict the scene where an OCU delegation led by Poroshenko received the tomos in Istanbul.

02.05.2019

On May 2, 2019, in Povcha village of Dubno district, OCU activists together with several village council deputies came to the Trinity church to break the seals that had been put several weeks earlier due to the inter-confessional conflict.

03.05.2019

On May 3, 2019, on Holy Friday, several OCU supporters with Stepan Shira, the senior priest of the OCU chapel of St. Peter and Paul (town of Brody; Lvov oblast), attempted to enter the territory of the Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra to conduct their service there. The brethren of the monastery thwarted the provocation.



11.05.2019

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, OCU activists blocked the entrance to a residential house on the territory of St. Nicholas', the church previously taken over by them (Skobelka village, Gorokhov district; Volyn oblast). The activists demanded from the priest to leave the premises together with his family – including his two little children – where they were officially registered.

On May 11, 2019, OCU activists installed a metal bar across the door to the building where the UOC community of St. Michael were commonly conducting their services. The congregation could not enter the building for the Holy Liturgy on the following Sunday.

On May 10, 2019, Yuri Doroshenko posted on his Facebook page a news piece stating that the administration of the Kiev Orthodox Theological academy prohibited its students from participating at the celebratory service performed by honorary patriarch Filaret Denisenko at the shrine of hieromartyr Macarius of Kiev.

12.05.2019

May 12, 2019: at night, OCU activists showed up at the territory of the church of the Intercession (Mnishin village; Hoshcha district) to remove the locks. The activists beat up elderly parishioners, blocked the entrance to the church territory, and held their service there.

On May 12, 2019, OCU members cut off the locks to the inside doors of the church of St. Nicholas (Pevche village, Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast) and broke into the building. They placed sentinels and did not let the congregation in. The OCU community filed a lawsuit.

13.05.2019

Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine Epiphanius stated that the OCU maintains close ties with the “patriotic” Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Epiphanius also declared that there was a chance for the two churches to unite in the future.

Oleksandr (Drabinko), former UOC metropolitan and present OCU bishop said he played a role in Igor Lysov getting a national award: the Order of Merit, first grade. Lysov is known as a philanthropist and the head of the Parish Council of the Transfiguration Cathedral on Teremki.

On May 13, 2019, Brian Farrell, the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, declared that “a considerable split between the Orthodox churches in Ukraine” caused the official theological dialogue between Catholics and the Orthodox to stop.

18.05.2019

On Saturday, May 18, at 11am, law enforcement assisted OCU activists in taking over the Dormition church in Tovtry village (Zastavna district; Chernovtsy oblast). National police representatives created a human chain to push the local UOC congregation away from their church.

21.05.2019

In Volyn oblast, congregations transferred from the OCU to the OCU. The church claimed communities “transfer” for the second time, which had to do with redistribution of influence between metropolitan Zinkevich and bishop Gabriel (Krizina). On May 21, 2019, the official website of UOC KP/OCU under the guidance of Mikhail

(Zinkevich) stated that in Volyn oblast, “three more parishes left the Moscow Patriarchate.”

24.05.2019

On May 24, 2019: the OCU head, Epiphanius (Dumenko) stated at the briefing after the Synod meeting that the Holy Synod of the OCU allowed the clergy of their church to become deputies of the local government.

26.05.2019

On May 26, 2019, at 11am, OCU activists wrested the doors of the Dormition church (Vasnoslovtsy village; Chernovitsy-Bukovino diocese) open.

27.05.2019

May, 27, 2019: UOC archpriest and head of the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Novaya Moshchanina village) Igor Gnatishin receives a visit from supporters of the new religions organization. The head of the local community center and the vice principal of the local school entered the premises of the priest's house during work hours and started threatening him and his family.

02.06.2019

On June 2, 2019, young athletic men from Tigr security company blocked the entrance to the Dormition church (Tovtry village; Zastavna district; Chernovtsy oblast). The UOC congregation together with the priest could not get in and were forced to pray on the road behind the gates.

On June 2, 2019, OCU activists attempted to take over a church in Grabovo village (Volynsk oblast) that belonged to the

Shatsk district of the canonical church. The head priest of the church, archpriest Dmitry Kovalchuk, was badly beaten. The police registered his bone fracture as a “scratch” and opened a case under Article 125 of the Criminal code (trivial injury).

04.06.2019

Filatov, mayor of Dnepropetrovsk, in a court of law demanded that the information about his “flippant utterances about the tomos and the church” be refuted. His lawsuit against Simeon (Zinkevich), the ruling bishop of the OCU Dnepr diocese was filed in Babushkinsky district court of Dnepropetrovsk.

07.06.2019

On June 7, 2019, representatives of the newly founded religious organization attempted to register the Transfiguration church in Luka-Meleshkovskaya village (Vinnitsya oblast) as belonging to the OCU.

On June 7, 2019, in the dead of night, OCU activists started a fight near the church house. In that house, there lived Igor Gnatishin with his family. Gnatishin is the senior priest of the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos that had earlier been taken over by the OCU.

09.06.2019

At a parent-teacher meeting of the graduating class (a nine-year training and education unit of Zadubrovka village, Zastavna district; Chernovtsy oblast), student Krestina Velushchak and her mother were prohibited from attending the graduation because they belonged to a UOC congregation.

12.06.2019

Oleksandr Didiukhin, a famous blogger to whom Patriarch Bartholomew gifted a cross, shared his ideas on the role of church in people's lives. He stated that the church should not be viewed as the saviour of souls. Oleksandr Didiukhin claimed that the path to God lies through "the Crimea and Rome, wars, maidans, despair, joy, fire, water, fear, determination, death, and resurrection." The goal of human existence, according to him, is "becoming a god through divine grace."

14.06.2019

Oleksandr Trofimiuk, a OCU representative and the rector of the Kiev Orthodox Theological academy that had recently been prohibited from serving by Patriarch Filaret (UOC KP), signed an enrollment termination order for two students who had participated in a Ukrainian intellectual forum where pro-Filaret sentiments were expressed.

15.06.2019

On June 15, 2019, OCU activists cut off the locks that had previously been installed by them on the (UOC) church of the Intercession (Nuyno village; Volyn oblast). The flock of the canonical church did their best to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict, yet the supporters of the new church entity disrupted an evening service right before the Trinity Sunday.

21.06.2019

Postoynoye village, Rovno oblast: OCU supporters were taking over a house where the UOC congregation had been praying since their church was taken away

from them. The attack led to one lacerated nose, several torn ears, one concussion, and multiple bruises. Three women were taken to hospital; the rest were left to pick up the pieces. The group of attackers consisted of drunken village men and law enforcement representatives.

27.06.2019

In Buderazh village of Rovno oblast, the head of the OCU congregation threatened archpriest Vyacheslav Grishchiuk (UOC) that he would take over the church of the Intercession. He avoids personal confrontations and blackmails the clergyman with the help of the village head.

30.06.2019

On June 20, 2019, bishop of Mukachevo and Karpaty Viktor Bed (UOC) served a lity for Roman Shukhevich in the church of the Transfiguration (Yasen village, Rakhov district). Shukhevich was of the Greek-Catholic denomination, a "fighter for the national and state independence of Ukraine," and a general of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists).

04.07.2019

OCU metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) awarded Bogdan Khodakovskiy, the head of Traditsii i Poryadok organization that Freedom House flagged as extremist.

05.07.2019

People were slow to transfer to the new religious organization due to the aggression displayed by UOC members, according to the words of the OCU speaker, archbishop Yevstratii (Zorya).

He expressed confidence that in villages where communities get divided, it is those resisting takeovers that are to blame and not they who commit said takeovers.

06.07.2019

At 3pm on July 6, 2019, Volodymyr Briukhovetskiy, the head of the all-Ukrainian Union Svoboda chapter in Bakhmanskiy district council and a people's deputy candidate in single-member electoral district 209, was attempting to transfer the UOC church of St. Michael (Kruty village; Chernigov oblast) to the OCU. On his Facebook page, Briukhovetskiy invited his subscribers to "get rid of yet another roadblock installed by Moscow" in Kruty and complained that "thugs brought by Moscow priests" interfered with his plans twice.

09.07.2019

On July 9, 2019, metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) of the OCU gave an interview to Volyn.ua (Волинь.ua), where he stated that religion was a matter of homeland defence and security.

11.07.2019

Ex-metropolitan of the UOC Oleksandr (Drabinko) gave his blessing to seal up the church in Morozovka village. He also "relieved" priest Nikolai Brega, who returned to the UOC from the OCU, from the position of the head priest of the church.

25.07.2019

On July 25, 2019, Oleksandr Kirichuk, iterim head of Volyn oblast administration, issued directive 417 that transferred the ancient church of the Intercession

(Nuyno village; Kamen-Kashirskiy district; Volyn oblast) to the OCU.

28.07.2019

On July 28, 2019, OCU supporters yet again attempted to disrupt a church service and take over the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Susval village of Vladimir-Volynskiy district (Volyn oblast). The activists who came to the village from elsewhere and were led by several OCU priests, locked the congregation in the church.

On July 28, 2019, Vasiliy Sagan, the dean of the OCU Zolochiv district, called the members of the fascist SS Galician division saints. Earlier, a video was published on the Internet that depicted the service at the Memorial cemetery (Chervonoye village, Zolochiv district) during the reburial of SS Galician division soldiers.

03.08.2019

Plitovaty hamlet, Yasinia village (Rakhov district, Zakarpaty oblast): on August 3, 2019, local OCU activist showed at the dedication ceremony for a building site of a new UOC church. Threatening those present with bodily damage and murder, the activists were trying to disrupt the ceremony.

09.08.2019

On August 9, 2019, the senior priest of the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Pyatigory village, Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast) received a letter by registered mail informing him that he needed to vacate the premises of the house that belonged to the church taken over by the OCU.

11.08.2019

On August 11, 2019, in Galuznitsy village (Derazhnya district; Khmelnytskyi oblast), a radical group of Phoenix members that supported the OCU attacked a priest and local police representatives while attempting to take over the local church.

On Sunday, August 11, 2019, OCU representatives, encouraged by their priests singing prayers, unlawfully entered the church of the Intercession in Bobly village, Turiisk district (Volyn oblast). Upon trespassing, they started a fight in the church.

12.08.2019

OCU clergyman Serhiy Tkachuk promotes the use of the Nazi swastika and distributes media materials that praise members of the SS Galician division. On his Facebook page, Tkachuk shared a link to an article in Istoricheskaya Pravda (i.e., “historical truth”) magazine that had a piece on the “spiritual guidance” of the Nazi SS Galician division.

17.08.2019

Employees of the National Police of Ukraine filed a lawsuit against OCU bishop Pavlo (Yuristy) who had taken active part in a raider takeover of the Odessa Nativity church that belonged to the Kiev Patriarchate.

18.08.2019

Roman Kinyk, the senior priest of St. Catherine’s cathedral (OCU Chernigov diocese), together with the Yevgeniy Orda, the cathedral clergyman, and other OCU representatives served a memorial service together with Svyatoslav Longin,

the head of the unrecognized Belorussian autocephalous church.

20.08.2019

On August 20, 2019, Chetvertnya village (Manevichi district): a committee of Volyn oblast government officials, accompanied by the police, transferred the church of the Transfiguration (UOC) to local OCU members. The government representatives together with OCU activists cut off locks from the church.

22.08.2019

On August 22, 2019, the congregation of the Intercession church (OCU) met the UOC procession of the Cross that was going to Pochaev with a billboard saying “Death to Russkies.”

24.08.2019

On August 24, 2019, around 100 OCU members broke the doors and took over the church of the Dormition in Pogreby village (Brovary district; Kiev oblast). Inebriated OCU activists broke the seals put onto the doors by the police, claiming they would not wait for years till the court decided who the church belonged to.

25.08.2019

On August 25, 2019, OCU activists of Mikhalcha village (Storozhinets district; Chernovitsy oblast), led by geography teacher Vasiliy Maskal stormed the church of the Dormition that belonged to the UOC.

26.08.2019

Chernovitsy-Bukovina diocese published a video proving that the takeover of the

Mikhalcha church was planned and OCU members applied physical force against the UOC congregation. While the bigger part of the activist group was storming the doors, another activist was running around the premises with a hammer in hand, trying to knock the locks off the gates.

01.09.2019

On September 1, 2019, OCU community representatives tried to kick the UOC vicar of Rovno diocese, bishop Pimen of Dubno, out of the church of St. John the Apostle that they had taken previously taken over (Kopytov village, Korets district; Rovno oblast).

Plitovatyi hamlet, Yasinya village (Rakhov district; Zakarpaty oblast): on September 1, 2019, OCU activists were illegally blocking the road to the chapel where the UOC congregation that lost their church of Transfiguration gathered for service at the day.

03.09.2019

On September 3, 2019, OCU supporters cut off the locks of the UOC church of St. Peter and Paul in Malinsk village (Berezno district; Rovno oblast).

05.09.2019

On Wednesday night, around 8:30pm, the head priest of the overtaken UOC church in Sadov village (Lutsk district; Volyn oblast) had an unexpected visit from OCU supporters who demanded that he and his family leave the premises of the church house. They informed the priest that should he not comply, they would not hesitate to make him do what they need.

06.09.2019

On September 6, 2019, zaxid.net web portal published a news piece informing that 20 km away from the Donetsk airport in Karlovka village a church in the name of St. Anne was being built near Trizub-dental mobile dental centre. There, the article stated, fighters of the Joint Forces Operation could wait for their turn to show up at the dentist’s. “Renowned painter Taras Lozinskiy is working on the iconostasis; he has been painting it since the first Maidan days. In a month or two, the heroes of Nebesna Sotnya were looking at the artist from the icons like the apostles,” wrote the authors of the article.

13.09.2019

Priputni village, Ichnia district: on Saturday, September 13, 2019, OCU activists arrived at the village and, led by prohibited in service hieromonk Leontiy, cut off the locks on the local church. They beat up the parishioners who tried to stop their illegal activities. As a result of this raider attack, one female parishioner was taken to hospital.

17.09.2019

OCU archbishop Ilarion (Protsik) stated that the Orthodox community of Rovno oblast are ministers of evil trying to undermine the unity of Ukraine. As an example, he cited the case of the church of the Intercession in Ryasniki which OCU activists after multiple attempts still failed to take over.

22.09.2019

On September 22, 2019, on the day of St. Joachim and Anne, OCU members

once again demanded that archpriest Volodymyr Meles and his family leave the church house where they were staying legally. At night, OCU activists went on to throw metal objects into the house and broke two windows.

07.10.2019

OCU priest, blogger, and Petro Poroshenko's promoter, Oleksandr Dediukhin published on his official Facebook page a text titled "What's up with P[etro] P[oroshenko] – what's up with the EU." Tagging his text as "Sunday sermon," he called for Ukrainians to attend Maidans in their cities. He reposted the text to his private page as well; there, he attached an image of president Volodymyr Zelensky with horns drawn over his head and an inscription saying "Deliver us from evil!"

25.10.2019

Serhiy Tkachuk, the priest of Kiev church of the Meeting of the Lord presented a new design of the trident-featuring cross: this cross was going to be installed onto a chapel being built adjacent to a gym. On his Facebook page, Tkachuk commented on the significance of a trident for OCU members. According to him, the Ukrainian national emblem represents a unique cultural and spiritual artifact of the history of the European civilization.

26.10.2019

On October 26, 2019, around 6am, OCU members led by the former head of Zdolbunov district administration Serhiy Kondrachuk took over the UOC church in Buderazh village (Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast).

27.10.2019

Rovno district administration, disregarding legal rights of the local UOC community, registered the charter of the newly formed OCU parish of Voynitsa village (Mlinov district). On October 21, 2019, Igor Timoshenko, vice head of Rovno district administration, approved the changes to the charter of the OCU religious community of Voynitsa village, Mlinov district, Rovno oblast.

31.10.2019

Oleksandr Dediukhin sees nothing wrong with watching porn with his wife and thinks that legalizing prostitution would do good for Ukraine. He offered this opinion as a comment on a sex scandal surrounding Bohdan Yaremenko, Verkhovna Rada deputy and member of Sluga naroda ("servant of the people") party. Dediukhin suggested that the politician take it upon himself to draft a law on legalizing sex work.

01.11.2019

On November 1, 2019, around 5pm, members of the Staraya Zhadova village UOC community (Chernovtsy oblast) reported intruder presence in their church of St. Michael and Gabriel. Among the trespassers, there was a relative of Epiphanius (Dumenko), the head of the OCU: Mikhail Polyak is the husband of Epiphanius' godmother.

02.11.2019

Members of the OCU community in Pevche village cut off electricity in the house of a local UOC clergyman to drive him away from the area.

09.11.2019

On November 9, 2019, around 8am, OCU activists took over the church of St. John the Apostle in Mashcha village (Kostopol district; Rovno oblast). The activists, led by two OCU clergymen, cut off the locks from the church doors.

13.11.2019

In Volyn oblast, over 300 OCU members signed a petition to metropolitan Michal to start the Christmas fast on November 14 and to hold the Nativity service on December 25.

On November 13, 2019, a conflict flared up between the believers of Patra (a city in Greece) and the clergy of the local church of St. Andrew the Apostle after the church was visited by OCU representatives.

23.11.2019

On November 23, at 5am, OCU activists broke the door to the church of the Intercession in Rysaniki village (Hoshcha district; Rovno oblast). Upon entrance, they, according to eyewitnesses, held some kind of a religious service.

26.11.2019

Nazarius Gagaliuk, a OCU clergyman, announced at the gates of the UOC church (Zadubrovka village; Chernovtsy oblast) that the UOC clergy do not please God. In his words, Jesus Christ Himself created his "honest, Ukrainian, loving, truthful church."

29.11.2019

On November 29, 2019, around 11am, OCU activists yet again cut off the locks

of the church of St. John the Apostle in Mashcha village (Kostopol district; Rovno oblast). While an employee of the local school, brought to the site by the police, was busy cutting the locks off, radical activists of the district were holding back the UOC congregation.

01.12.2019

On December 1, 2019, supporters of the new church entity planned to disrupt the service at the church of the Ascension (Ryngach village, Novoselitsya district; Chernovtsy oblast). They started a folk song festival in the building, disregarding requests from the UOC community to let them pray in peace.

05.12.2019

OCU representative Oleksandr Dediukhin believes it is a judgement worthy of Solomon to let each parish choose its own church calendar.

The OCU Holy Synod made several changes in their church service that brought the OCU closer to the practice of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. On December 5, 2019, the OCU Holy Synod decided during a meeting that in the eucharistic canon the troparion of the Third Hour was not mandatory, and that the litany of the Catechumens should be dropped in churches where no one was preparing to be baptized.

14.12.2019

Since many believers oppose moving the Nativity celebration, there is need for much larger outreach and education effort. The head of the OCU Epiphanius (Dumenko) expressed this idea to the press after the Bishops' Council that took place in Kiev on Saturday, December 14.



15.12.2019

In Mashcha village, the police did not let the UOC congregation into the church for the Sunday service. On December 15, 2019, about 100 police officers blocked the entrance of the church of St. John the Apostle in Mashcha village, Kostopol district, Rovno oblast.

The diocese of Ivano-Frankovsk reports that on December 15, around 3pm, a group of unidentified men stormed the church of St. Dimitrius (Probiynivka village, Verkhovina district). The group that broke the locks and sealed the doors introduced themselves as “ATO warriors.”

Shortly before the court hearing, OCU members attempted to block the entrance to the church premises, and then reported that the village council head had been beaten. On December 15, when the service was over at the church of St. Michal (Zadubrovka village, Chernovtsy oblast), OCU activists tried to block the entrance to the church premises and then accused the senior priest and UOC the congregation of beating up OCU supporters.

16.12.2019

Kostopol district administration decided to seal the church until they hear back from the Ministry of Justice. On December 16, 2019, the district administration held a panel discussion with the senior district administration officers, police representatives, and members of two religious communities of Mashcha village (Kostopol district; Rovno oblast) present.

18.12.2019

At the beginning of December, the State Bureau of Investigation started criminal proceedings regarding church property

sale in Ternopol oblast. The OCU diocese of Ternopol got embroiled in a controversy surrounding selling Chervonogorodskiy castle, St. Peter and Paul monastery, and a water power plant at the territory of the Dnestrovskiy Canyon natural reserve.

19.12.2019

On December 19, 2019, OCU metropolitan Simeon (Shostatskiy) dedicated a church of St. Nicholas in Vinnitsya higher vocational school of the Security police department. However, the UOC Vinnitsya diocese pointed to the fact that in back in 2007 Simeon (Shostatskiy), a UOC metropolitan at the day, had already dedicated the very same church in the name of St. Alexander Nevsky.

On December 19, 2019, on the day of St. Nicholas, an OCU member started a fight by the church of St. John the Apostle (Mashcha village, Kostopol district; Rovno oblast). Earlier the same activist openly claimed that he would single-handedly deal with UOC members who decided to set watches at their church after several OCU attempts at takeover.

21.12.2019

On December 21, in Bobly village (Turiisk district; Volyn oblast), OCU schismatics took over the church of the Intercession that belonged to the UOC. During the fight that ensued, one female UOC member got her collarbone broken. Head of the village council Serhiy Lisovoy, without waiting for the court decision, unlawfully appropriated the church and the ground it was built on.

22.12.2019

On December 22, 2019, a takeover attempt was prevented in Uspenka village

(Onufrievka district; Kirovograd oblast). Bogolep, archbishop of Aleksandriia and Svetlovodsk, pleaded with Kirovograd oblast and Onufrievka district administrations to not let a religious conflict in the village evolve over the Dormition church. He also called for the clergy and the congregation of the diocese to pray for peace.

Taras Melnik, a high-ranking OCU clergy member entrusted with the work with the military, by fraud got a contract for building a kindergarten and then illegally got additional 120 mln UAH from the client.

On December 22, a group of OCU activists intruded the church of the Intercession (Novozhivotov, Oratov district; Vinnitsya oblast) after the evening service and, upon changing the locks, locked it up. Petro Monastyrskiy, the head priest of the church, informs of the rumours of potential re-dedication of the church by the OCU on the following Sunday.

23.12.2019

On December 23, 2019, at a meeting of Mikhalcha (Storozhinets district; Chernovtsy oblast) village council, local deputies voted for allocating the plot under the UOC church for development and permanent use by the OCU.

25.12.2019

On December 25, 2019, OCU metropolitan Mikhail (Zinkevich) of Lutsk and Volyn announced after a liturgy at the Lutsk Trinity cathedral that those celebrating the Nativity in December are “true Europeans.” He followed it up with a statement that “Maidan stood for it,” and that those celebrating in January “are yet to leave” the USSR.

26.12.2019

In a cellar of the Dubno monastery of St. Nicholas (OCU), “monks” of this religious entity set up a military-style creche with Maidan paraphernalia. The OCU clergy devoted their creation to the heroes of the Euromaidan and the Donbass war and decorated it with chevrons.

29.10.2019

On December 29, 2019, in Sadov village of Volyn oblast, a group of OCU activists approached the UOC community church house to take measurements and conduct the inventory of the church property, as by the website of the UOC Volyn diocese.

On the night of December 29, in Novozhivotove village, Oratov district, Vinnitsya oblast, an OCU activist group savagely beat members of a UOC congregation, shouting “We’re going to off the Moscow priest!”. The UOC community was holding an all-night vigil at the church of the Intercession: after the schismatics had changed the locks, the parish decided to set 24/7 watches at the church.

01.01.2020

On January 1, 2020, to commemorate the 111th anniversary of one of the major ideologues of Ukrainian nationalism, bishop of Mukachevo and Karpaty Viktor (Bed) served a lithy for Uniate Stepan Bandera.

03.01.2020

On January 3, 2020, at 2:20am, two dozen of young male OCU supporters with baseball bats attacked four UOC

members that were on watch at the church of St. John the Apostle (Mashcha village, Kostopol district; Rovno oblast). During the attack, the police were hiding in an official car.

In the evening of January 3, 2020, in Stenka village of Ternopol oblast, about 120 OCU members came to the UOC church house to seize it.

04.01.2020

On January 4, 2020, in Mashcha village of Kostopol district (Rovno oblast), a fire bottle was thrown into the yard of Daniil Ilnitsky, a clergyman of the UOC Sarny diocese. The plated house footing was damaged in the explosion; nobody got hurt.

05.01.2020

On January 5, 2020, in Grinyava village (Verkhovina district; Ivano-Frankovsk oblast), OCU members took over the church of All Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra that is the part of the church ensemble of the church of the Dormition that had been taken over a month before.

09.01.2020

Religioznaya Pravda (“Religious Truth”) otlet informs that bishop of Kherson and Kakhovka Borys (Kharko ran over a pedestrian at a crosswalk when driving through Chernobayevka village of Kherson oblast. The accident happened as far back as on December 13, yet it became known only on January 9. The law enforcement started criminal proceedings.

10.01.2020

On January 10, 2020, head of the UOC KP Filaret (Denisenko) recalled his

signature from the decision of the so-called local council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) of December 15, 2018 to dissolve the church entity that had been led by him.

11.01.2020

On January 11, 2020, during Christmastide that the Church traditionally devotes to joyful prayers and praised to the Savior born, OCU clergy and students spent singing about “father Bandera” and their hate for “Russkies.”

12.01.2020

OCU head metropolitan Epiphanius (Dumenko) consecrated over 20,000 Warriors’ Intercession icons depicting Mazepa, Ukrainian Insurgent Army soldiers, ATO and Maidan activists, as well as members of the OCU. OCU representatives stated that these were “special icons, tailor-made for prayer needs of the Ukrainian military.”

18.01.2020

On January 18, 2020, during the blessing of the water, the UOC community of the church of St. Nicholas (Budyatichi village, Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast) discovered a new lock on their chapel.

20.01.2020

On January 20, 2020, around 11am, local OCU members cut the locks off the church of St. John the Apostle in Mashcha village (Kostopol district) and seized the building.

Susval village; Volyn oblast: On January 20, 2020, OCU ignited another conflict under the pretense of a burial ceremony. The funeral convoy forgot about the

deceased and stormed the doors as soon as they entered the church premises.

21.01.2020

On January 21, 2020, Ternopol citizens released the information that in Ternopol arts school #21, parents were asked to give money for sprinkling their children with Epiphany water. The rite was to be performed by OCU and UGCC clergy.

25.01.2020

On January 25, 2020, at 11am, in Buderazh village of Zdolbunov district, Rovno oblast, local OCU activists and their supporters from around the area attempted to take over the church of the Intercession. The attack began after people who had never before gone to church started to flock to the building as if to attend a funeral service.

On the night of January 25, in Mashcha village of Kostopol district (Rovno oblast), a group of unidentified people broke the windows in the house of UOC archpriest Daniil Ilnitskiy.

On January 25, 2020, in the church of the Intercession (Buderazh village, Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast) after provocation from the OCU there arose another violent conflict. When the altercation ended, the church was placed under police protection.

26.01.2020

On January 26, 2020, OCU activists led by a newly ordained priest broke into a bell tower and cut the locks off the UOC church of St. Nicholas in Myshev village, Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast). The police were called; however, they resorted to taking photos and did not interfere.

28.01.2020

A Ukrainian TV channel, notorious for publishing fake news about the UOC, told of a “confrontational priest” who “drove the family of a Ukrainian cyborg to despair.” “He refused to hold a funeral service for a deceased Ukrainian warrior and kicked his mother away from the church; what’s more, he called Denis Popovich who died at the Donetsk airport a kinslayer.” This was how the situation in Morozovka (Baryshevka district; Kiev oblast) was depicted by 1+1 TV channel. Local Morozovka OCU activists have upped their game in trying to take over the Dormition church and now are slandering the head priest of the church, archpriest Nikolai Brega of the Borispol diocese.

Priest Oleksandr Dediukhin commented on the death of the former speaker of the Russian Orthodox Church Vsevolod Chaplin, this “unrepented sinner” who was “just one of the many.” a controversial blogger and an OCU member, Dediukhin, who is also of Russian nationality, did not see in the death of the ROC clergyman “much to rejoice about,” since “there are over 140 million more left.”

02.02.2020

On February 2, 2020, the UOC community of Susval village (Vladimir-Volynskiy district; Volyn oblast) for the first time did not hold a liturgy at their church: the building was sealed off by the police, and several officers had been on watch around it. The law enforcement officials declared that an attempt to open the doors would be considered unsanctioned.

04.02.2020

On February 4, 2020, the OCU Holy Synod post facto prohibited the UOC KP patriarch to ordain clergy.

10.02.2020

Archimandrite Stephan, a member of the Philotheou monastery left the church service attended by OCU bishop Epiphanius (Dimitriu) of Olbia.

13.02.2020

On February 13, 2020, an organized OCU raider group gathered around the church of St. Nicholas (Budyatichi village, Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast) demanding to open the doors and let representatives of the new religious entity in.

20.02.2020

OCU priest Dmitriy Pedina joined the protest in Novyye Sanzhary where citizens railed against relocating Wuhan evacuees in their settlement.

21.02.2020

Not a single Ukrainian church in Khmelnytsk oblast “would return under the spiritual yoke of Moscow,” said OCU bishop Anthony (Makhota) of Khmelnytsk. Court rulings in favor of the UOC, according to him, were akin to “spiritual Ilovaish; the betrayal of national, public, and spiritual interests of the state of Ukraine.”

On February 21, 2020, at the premises of Ovadnoye amalgamated territorial community council, a round table took place to discuss the religious conflict in Susval village of Vladimir-Volynskiy

district. The meeting was initiated by the local authorities. Andriy Bokoch, aide to people’s deputy Igor Guz, also arrived at Ovadnoye. Following the event and despite protests from the UOC congregation, it was decided to transfer the church to the OCU.

24.02.2020

From February 22 to February 24, 2020, in Mashcha village of Kostopol district, OCU activists threatened the head priest and the congregation of the church of St. John the Apostle; they broke the windows in the priest’s house and threw eggs at the house where the UOC congregation gathered for prayer.

29.02.2020

On February 29, 2020, after more than eleven months of the UOC congregation of Susval village fighting for its church, OCU bishop Matthew of Vladimir-Volynskiy and Turiisk held a service at the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos. The community was illegally transferred to the OCU on March 26, 2020, and the church was given away to the schismatics.

01.03.2020

On March 1, 2020, OCU bishop Adrian (Kulik) called for all the “clergy estate” to harness their bodily desires and “take part in the Lent challenge” of losing weight.

03.03.2020

OCU activists who had previously taken over the church in Myshev, disrupted a meeting where it was planned to discuss giving the bell tower back to the UOC

community: the schismatics laid their claims to both buildings.

March 3, 2020: the Nativity church in Odessa that had previously refused to submit to OCU bishop Pavlo Yurystyi and professed their loyalty to the UOC KP, a fight ensued between those supporting Filaret and the OCU.

Notorious OCU priest Oleksandr Dediukhin wrote on his Facebook page that president Volodymyr Zelensky was to go to prison “sooner or later.” This prophecy of a sort was based on Dediukhin’s belief that the government was unjustly critical towards prosecutor general Ryaboshapka.

11.03.2020

On March 11, around 4pm, OCU raiders took over the church in Buderazh village of Zdolbunov district (Rovno oblast). Despite the agreement not to unlock the church before the court ruling, the schismatics yet again cut the locks off and seized the building.

15.03.2020

Serhiy Chudinovich, Kherson-based OCU clergyman, introduced the use of disposable plastic spoons for the Holy Communion. On March 15, 2020, he streamed the Sunday liturgy with this innovation in place on his Facebook page.

24.03.2020

On March 24, 2020, the OCU Holy Synod through telecommunication allowed its clergy to hold church services without laypeople present. The Synod recommended OCU members to “partake of communal prayer utilizing the capabilities of remote connection.”

31.03.2020

OCU activists in Yasenovka village (Rozhyshche district; Volyn oblast) post facto issued documentation for building the church that they had taken over as far back as in spring 2019.

03.04.2020

Andriy Dudchenko, a clergyman of the OCU Transfiguration cathedral and the secretary of the OCU Synod theology and liturgy council, stated on his YouTube channel that one does not need to fast by the book and every person should decide the manner of fasting for themselves, since “we don’t live in the same latitudes as Greece.”

OCU bishop Nikodim (Kulygin) offered to postpone Easter till the end of the COVID quarantine that was going to last “as long as the Lord deems necessary.” The OCU representative thinks it would be best to prolong the Lent, though in a milder form, till the end of the quarantine, and then have the Holy week and the whole cycle of the Easter holidays.

08.04.2020

On April 8, 2020, one of OCU activists in Budyatichi village (Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast) illegally entered the territory of the church of St. Nicholas sealed off by the police and broke the movement detector that the canonical congregation purchased at their own expense and with the permission from the police. After doing that, he punched an UOC clergyman in the face.

15.04.2020

On April 15, 2020, OCU activists under the protection of a private security

company broke the door of the UOC church of St. Nicholas in Budyatichi village (Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast). Roman Pavlovich, a local teacher who punched the head archpriest of the church in the face a few days ago, also participated in this forced entry.

23.04.2020

In an Odessa church that was vied for by the OCU and UOC KP, OCU representatives broke the bearing wall to get inside, according to a UOC KP legal representative. The UOC KP congregation of the Nativity church in Odessa that earlier refused to submit to OCU bishop Pavlo (Yurystyi) now declared they did not hold themselves accountable for the alterations to the appearance of the church carried out by the OCU.

Mykhailo Babiy, the head of the OCU community in Shumsk (Ternopol oblast) claimed on air in an interview to a regional TV channel that the head of the UOC Transfiguration church archpriest Mykhailo Kostyuk “needed to be isolated.”

20.04.2020

On April 20, 2020, in Buderazh village (Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast) OCU supporter Hryhoriy Yanchak beat up a local citizen because the latter’s wife attended the Easter service at a UOC church. Buderazh informants say this was not the first time that Yanchak attacks UOC members: within the last year, four complaints were filed about him with the police.

25.04.2020

The UOC KP starts lawsuits against the OCU about the issue of re-registration of the former’s diocesan administrations.

Thus, Neonila Tkachenko, the lawyer of the dissolved religious entity, on April 17, 2020 won a case where the Odessan Primorskiy district court ruled for the state registrar of the Odessan city council legal department to present duly certified copies of the registration file for the religious organization previously titled “The Diocesan administration of the UOC KP Odessa and Balt diocese.”

30.04.2020

Teodor Horobetz, the OCU speaker for the Odessa oblast, seized the UOC KP church of Baksha village (Odessa oblast). The UOC KP bishop reported that representatives of the religious entity led by Epiphanius (Dumenko) had taken over the church that had for thirteen years belonged to the Kiev Patriarchate.

05.05.2020

For three weeks in a row, the OCU community that had taken over the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Buderazh village (Zdolbunov district; Rovno oblast), had been disturbing the UOC congregation during their prayers at the church house, blasting their own services through loudspeakers.

14.05.2020

The UOC community of Checheliyevka village (Petrovo district; Kirovograd oblast) in February of the same year was unlawfully transferred to the OCU. On May 14, 2020, schismatics made another attempt to seize the church of the Intercession.

15.05.2020

On May 15, 2020, in Bruikhovichi urban-type settlement, the OCU, the Catholic

church, and the UGCC representatives planted a maple at the territory of the Major Seminary of Lviv (Roman-Catholic Ukrainian diocese). The maple was meant to become the symbol of inter-confessional unity.

16.05.2020

In Yasinya/Lopushanka village (Rakhov district, Zakarpaty oblast), OCU activists filed a lawsuit to evict the family of the priest who was serving the UOC community of the local church of St. Elijah the Prophet. Serhiy Slisarenko, the said priest, had no other residence but the church house; moreover, his family, including three underage children, are all legally registered in that house.

21.05.2020

Head of the Synod administration of the OCU chaplaincy metropolitan John (Yaremenko) complained to Chief Commander of Armed Forces Ruslan Khomchak that many chaplains had been dismissed due to the administration failing to pay bonuses.

22.05.2020

On May 22, 2020, the official website of the Volyn oblast administration published a new “religious” decree issued by the head of the administration: the decree mandated two religious buildings to be passed to the OCU. The buildings in question were the two previously seized churches: the Trinity church in Berestechko town (Gorokhov district), and the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Borovichi village (Manevichi district).

27.05.2020

In September 2020, it is planned to close the OCU school of philosophy and theology at the Yuriy Fedkovych

Chernovtsy National University. The decision was made at the meeting of the academic board after the university president Roman Petrishin pointed out that there were not enough students enrolled to justify the existence of the school.

28.05.2020

OCU bishop Fotius (Davidenko) filed an official request to Zaporozhye okrug administration to register a religious community led by Igor Savva, an OCU clergyman who conducted the Holy Communion online. The bishop made this request after Yevstratii (Zorya), the speaker of the OCU and metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) declared that Savva did not belong to the OCU at all.

29.05.2020

OCU representatives consecrated the red and black Ukrainian Insurgent Army flag in Dnepropetrovsk at the square in front of the city administration and the oblast council buildings. Around 200 people attended the event. After the flag was raised, the ceremony was followed by a demonstration.

03.06.2020

The head of the Kharkov OCU community of St. Peter and Paul Vasily Bobrakov submitted a petition to Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal to bypass the Kharkov administration and grant them a plot of land.

On June 3, 2020, two OCU clergymen and two other people who called themselves members of Right Sector attempted to take over the church of the Intercession in Zemlyanoye village (Krasnopolye district; Sumy oblast) that belonged to the UOC.

07.06.2020

On June 7, 2020, OCU activists in Yasinya/Lopushanka village of Rakhov district (Zakarpaty oblast) blocked the entrance to the chapel for the OCU priest and the congregation. The community used to gather there after the church of St. Elijah the Prophet was taken over by the OCU. The chapel of St. Tryphon is situated at the territory of the seized church.

16.06.2020

Yuri Chornomorets believes there is nothing wrong in bringing an antimins and holding an Orthodox liturgy at Hagia Sophia after it was turned into a mosque. The theologian and the scholar of religion suggested that the Istanbul cathedral could double as a church and a mosque.

30.06.2020

Rakhov district court of Zakarpaty oblast adjudicates the claim of two OCU activists from Yasinya urban-type settlement who demand charter documents of a legal entity from one of local Orthodox communities. OCU representatives have already made several attempts at re-registering the congregation of the canonical church of the Nativity of the Theotokos. However, the oblast administration did not acknowledge their protocols of “parish meetings.”

01.07.2020

On July 1, 2020, OCU archbishop Nestor of Ternopol and Kremets during a funeral service for Ivan Dediukh, a soldier of the Aidar Battalion, declared that everyone who died in Donbass were

symbolic bricks that the Ukrainian state is being built of.

08.07.2020

On July 8, 2020, Oleksandr Dediukhin told a joke about Our Father to the crowd protesting against investigation of former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko. Then he called the government “Zelensky suckers” and quoted the altered Nazi slogan of Drang nach Osten.

On July 8, 2020, the news broke that OCU activists planned to seize the church of the Intercession in Novozhivotove village of Vinnitsya oblast. The UOC congregation and the police agreed to keep watch at the church that was targeted for attack.

10.07.2020

The OCU community of Matveevka village (Ternopol oblast) that transferred to the schismatic entity from the UOC in the winter of 2019, addressed a complaint to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky about the actions of their leader Serhiy Boris.

12.07.2020

On July 12, 2020, the clergy of the OCU, UGCC, and RCH together dedicated a Dominican church in Bororodchany, Shevchenko street 61.

18.07.2020

The congregation of the Trinity church in Shpilokosy village (Sokal oblast; Lvov oblast) that was one of the first to change its affiliation from the UOC to the OCU, was left churchless due to the renovations left unfinished. Village inhabitants are outraged with the unauthorized

renovations started by the new OCU head priest of the church. The community addressed a complaint to the prosecution office of Lvov oblast, as well as to local officials, and OCU metropolitan of Lvov and Sokal Dimitriy.

16.07.2020

On July 16, 2020, the Pridneprovskiy district court of Cherkassy granted a request of from Central Investigation Department in Cherkassy oblast to place children’s author Oleg Slepynin under arrest for criticizing the OCU and the tomos.

20.07.2020

In Zdolbunov, OCU activist and former head of the district administration Serhiy Kondrachuk insisted that journalist Valentina Illina who happened to be a wife of a UOC priest, was denied the position of editor-in-chief of the local newspaper Nove Zhittya that she was previously invited to take.

26.07.2020

When members of the canonical church came to their church for a service in the morning, they discovered four schismatic clergymen already holding their own service there. On July 26, 2020, OCU representatives broke the locks of the UOC church of the Exaltation in Zabolotsy village (Ivanychi district, Volyn oblast).

On July 26, 2020, OCU activists attempted to take over the UOC church of the Intercession in Novozhivotove (Vinnitsya oblast). The schismatics entered the church by cutting off veranda locks with a circular saw.

27.07.2020

Ruling archbishop of the OCU Kharkov diocese Athanasius (Shkurupiy) called president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky and the Armed Forces of Ukraine “traitors” and urged the people to “hold the court of the people’s wrath” for “Putin’s henchmen.” He published these statements and called for an armed insurrection on the account of the Donbass armistice.

07.08.2020

UOC communities in Kropivnitskiy and Znamenka towns, as well as in Olshanka and Uspenka villages were “transferred” to the OCU by the decree of Kirovograd district administration. The document stated that this re-registration happened “upon the application of the religious community and according to Article 14 of Law of Ukraine Concerning Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and Article 25 of Law of Ukraine Concerning Local State Administrations.” However, the communities were re-registered without their knowledge.

09.08.2020

On August 9, 2020, in the yard of the church of St. Elijah the Prophet (Yasinya/Lopushanka) of Zakarpaty oblast during one of the many OCU provocations against the canonical community, a schismatic activist hit an UOC female congregation member.

OCU priest and active supporter of former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko Oleksandr Dediukhin who had multiple times urged Ukrainians to start mass protests advised to travel to the capital of Belarus to make the prayer for Belarusians be “fervent.”

16.08.2020

On August 16, 2020, the church of All Saints in Rovno previously overtaken by the OCU was found damaged: the lock was half torn out of the door; the window broken; icons and the sign torn. Head of the UOC KP community Vitaliy Druzyuk said he disclaimed any responsibility in case of violent altercations between the Kiev patriarchate and the OCU, since the police refused to file his complaint about the takeover of the church and re-registration of the UOC KP congregation as an OCU one.

19.08.2020

On August 19, 2020, on the day of Transfiguration, OCU activists broke the locks of the Ascension church (UOC) in Prislup village of Mezhhorye district (Zakarpaty oblast) and attempted to hold their service there. The police arrived at the site and assisted the OCU priest to leave the building.

On August 19, 2020, on the day of Transfiguration, head of the OCU community of Budyatichi village (Ivanychi district; Volyn oblast) Mykhailo Dmitruk purposefully drove into the crowd of UOC parishioners gathered near the church for prayer and warned them that it would be worse the next time.

23.08.2020

On August 23, 2020, in Khmelnytskoye village (Gorokhov district; Volyn oblast), OCU activists prevented the local UOC community from entering the church of the Intercession, as reported by head priest of the church Nikolai Sliva. When the people arrived for the service in the morning, they discovered that the locks had been changed.

Around 8am, OCU representatives, accompanied by a group of activists, entered the territory of the UOC church in Malye Krushlintsy (Vinnitsya district). While the UOC community was holding a Holy Liturgy, the newcomers opened the building of the refectory/Sunday school and held their own service in an attempt to take over the church.

On August 23, 2020, on the day of the National Flag in Ukraine, OCU metropolitan Mikhail (Zinkevich) consecrated the flags of Ukraine and the European Union.

26.08.2020

On August 26, 2020, Synod administration of the OCU chaplaincy published a decree issued by its head, metropolitan John (Yaremenko), that signalled a growing schism within the ranks of the OCU chaplaincy. Thus, Yaremenko prohibited them from becoming members of any NGOs, institutions, or unions.

28.08.2020

OCU priest Adrian (Kulik) believes that the celebration of the Independence Day that took place on August 24 at Sophia Square (Kiev) was “more repugnant and sinful than any LGBT pride” and accused the president in promoting sexual deviance. He urged the OCU to protect ethnic values of the Ukrainian people.

01.09.2020

OCU priest Oleksandr Dediukhin made a speech at the meeting of European Solidarity party in Kiev where he gave a Biblical explanation as to why it was essential to support the political force led by Petro Poroshenko. Emphasizing that he attended the event “as a metaphysicist and

not a partisan priest,” Dediukhin stated that he supported European Solidarity because he “reads the Bible.”

06.09.2020

Head of the OCU Epiphanius (Dumenko) urged the government of Ukraine to protect the parishes that decided to “transfer” to his religious entity. In his words, hundreds of congregations joined the OCU after it was granted the tomos. He complained, however, that the process was stalled, largely due to the “interference of certain government officials.”

14.09.2020

OCU priest Petro Sokolovskiy threatened Pavlo Bely, a clergyman of the Kiev diocese of the UOC KP, with violent death. “Listen here, Pavlo Bely, don’t raise too much noise on our land, or else you won’t be as white in our chernozem,” Sokolovskiy wrote [a play on words here: Bely means “white,” while chernozem can be translated as “black soil”].

On Monday, September 14, 2020, OCU bishop Adrian (Kulik) declared on air in his interview to Emigrantskoye radio (Емігрантське радіо) that the population of Ukraine hosts many enemies of the Ukrainian nation. He went on to say that if the state has a Ukrainian body and a foreign soul, it will lead to schizophrenia.

Kulik also expressed certainty that Orthodoxy is a sect in nature, while he wants “Ukrainian Orthodoxy” to be closer to Christianity and not separate itself from other denominations. He believes that the Russian Orthodoxy is “deviant,” its Greek alternative is more civilized, and that the OCU should move closer to Christianity.

16.09.2020

In Budyatichi village of Ivanychi district (Volyn oblast), OCU activists, after taking over all the premises of the local UOC congregation, are now attempting to prevent the community from settling in a temporary church on privately owned land. UOC adversaries through deception collected signatures for their complaint and submitted it to the prosecutor’s office, the police, and the local council, trying to persuade the authorities in the unlawful nature of the actions of the congregation.

23.09.2020

After about eighteen month after the UOC church in Rovno oblast was taken over, OCU activists decided to also seize the priest’s house where the community holds services. OCU activists of Poleskoye village (Berezhno district; Rovno oblast) gave the family of Stepan Korokchuk, the priest of the local UOC congregation, two days to vacate the parish building before their own “priest” was going to move in there.

25.09.2020

Former deputy Serhiy Melnichuk reported of a raider takeover of the UOC KP that took place when the OCU emerged. According to the ex-deputy, the patriarchate of Kiev was dissolved through forgery, and the OCU was registered with law violations.

OCU representatives – dean of Belaya Tserkov district, priest Nikolai Hopaynich and dean of Obukhov district, priest Konstantin Madzyanovskiy openly rallied for European Solidarity, the party of former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko.

26.09.2020

OCU representatives committed a raider takeover of the church in Belovezhi Pervye village of Bakhmach district centre (Chernigov oblast) that had been previously restored by efforts of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. a group of OCU members misappropriated the key to the church door by threatening the builders who were trying to finish their work before the dedication ceremony planned for the following day.

Yaroslavichi village, Mlinov district (Rovno oblast): on September 26, 2020, OCU representatives dedicated the church that had been previously taken away from the UOC congregation. The event was officiated by OCU archpriest Ilarion (Protsik).

27.09.2020

On September 26, 2020, in Belichi village of Ivanychi district (Volyn oblast), OCU activists equipped with tools for breaking locks attempted to take over the church of St. Michael that belonged to the local UOC congregation. After several hours of confrontation, the parties agreed to seal the church awaiting the results of the trial. On September 27, the UOC parishioners gathered in the rain for a short service and a prayer by the church.

28.09.2020

The National police initiated a criminal case regarding OCU priest Petro Sokolovskiy who threatened Pavlo Bely with violent death. The case was opened under Part 1 of Article 129 (“Threat of murder”) of the Ukrainian Penal Code.

04.10.2020

On October 4, aggressively disposed OCU activists attempted to seize the UOC church of St. Sergius of Radonezh. After the Sunday Liturgy, a group of schismatics gathered near the church. First, they slashed tires of cars belonging to UOC priests, and then broke into the church.

05.10.2020

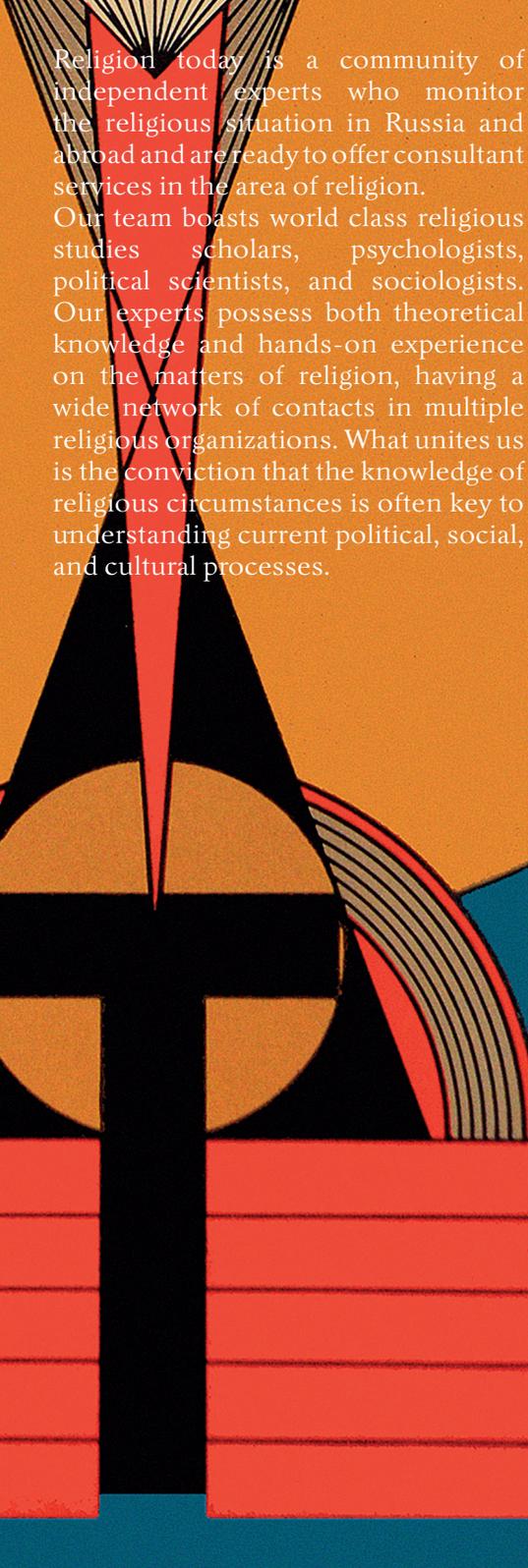
On October 5, 2020, OCU raiders who the day before broke into the church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Galinovka (Volyn oblast) put their own locks on the church doors in the presence of the police. The UOC priests were left locked in the church for over a day. The police who arrived at the scene did nothing to interfere.

15.10.2020

Hegumen Mercurius Bikira, the head of the OCU monastery of St. Nicholas in Dubno, on the day of the Intercession performed the service dressed in the colors of the Ukrainian flag and with the map of Ukraine embroidered at the back. On his surplice, at the spot where one would expect a depiction of the cross, there were tridents embroidered. The hegumen purchased the robes in Galicia where he is originally from.







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