



**Pekka Kallioniemi** @P\_Kallioniemi

Mar 18, 2025 · 23 tweets · [P\\_Kallioniemi/status/1901967581038186716](https://twitter.com/P_Kallioniemi/status/1901967581038186716)

In today's Vatnik Soup, I'll start a new series titled "Degenerate Russia". In it, we look behind the Kremlin propaganda and see the real Russia – an authoritarian country that doesn't care about its people and desperately tries to hold on to its imperialistic past.

1/22



In this first soup, we'll examine religious persecution in Russia and Ukraine, how the KGB/FSB has used religion as a tool of espionage and propaganda, and how Russia is erasing Ukrainian culture by destroying the country's churches.

2/22

UKRAINE STORIES #Religion OPINION

Published on July 25, 2022 19:22. / Updated on August 09, 2022 09:23.

# 'Kremlin's agents in robes' – or the role of Russian Church in the Ukraine war

By [Oleksii Platonov](#)





Russia claims to be the last bastion of Christian tradition, but its history tells a different story. For decades, it has persecuted religious groups, tortured, imprisoned and murdered clergymen, bombed churches, and used the Orthodox Church as a state tool.

3/22







Despite claiming to be a Christian nation, Russia has repressed Christianity when it doesn't serve the state. Under the USSR – and especially under Stalin – churches were demolished, priests executed, and believers sent to the Gulag. Today, this same persecution continues.

4/22

## Why Stalin Tried to Stamp Out Religion in the Soviet Union

Joseph Stalin led a uniquely brutal campaign against religion and religious leaders.

BY: NATASHA FROST  
UPDATED: AUGUST 4, 2023 | ORIGINAL: APRIL 23, 2021

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For example, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) isn't in any way independent – it's a Kremlin propaganda tool. Its leader, Patriarch Kirill, acts more like a government spokesperson, blessing war crimes, encouraging young men to fight & spreading state narratives worldwide.

5/22

Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
10:54 am (Paris)

# Le Monde

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WORLD · RUSSIA

## Orthodox Patriarch Kirill blesses crosses engraved with Putin's initials for Ukraine war 'heroes'

Since the start of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian leader has turned to religion and closed ranks with the head of the Orthodox Church to call out what he sees as the decline of Western morality.

By Benjamin Quénelle  
Published on January 8, 2025, at 11:15 pm (Paris), updated on January 9, 2025, at 7:54 am · 2 min read · [Lire en français](#)

Reuters World Business Markets Sustainability Legal Breakingviews Technology Investigation

## Russian patriarch says 'weirdos' spreading paganism on Ukraine frontline

By Reuters  
February 12, 2025 4:16 AM GMT+2 · Updated a month ago



The Orthodox Church is also a weapon for controlling religious groups, and priests who speak out against the war or the government are harassed or excommunicated. For example, Archpriest Andrei Kordochnik was suspended from service for his pacifist positions.

RELIGION

# Russian Orthodox priests face persecution from state and church for supporting peace in Ukraine



1 of 18 | Last September, when President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial mobilization of reservists, Moscow Patriarch Kirill required his clergymen to pray for victory. Standing in front of the altar and dozens of his parishioners in one of Moscow's churches, Koval decided to put the peace. [Read More](#)

BY KOSTYA MANENKOV

Updated 9:26 AM GMT+2, August 12, 2023

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**Russian Orthodox priests persecuted for opposing war**

Archpriest Andrei Kordochkin, suspended from service in Madrid for his pacifist positions, officiated at a ceremony for the deceased opponent Alexei Navalny in Germany, from where he urges Russians to 'study all forms of non-violent resistance'



Andrei Kordochkin, former priest of the Orthodox cathedral of Madrid, in an image provided by himself. ALEXANDRA VOYENKO

**PILAR BONET**

MAR 14, 2024 · 12:53 GMT-2



The Kremlin is aggressively persecuting non-Orthodox organizations. The Jehovah's Witnesses have been banned since 2017 and its members are often arrested & imprisoned. Protestant communities are also harassed, with their churches raided by the FSB under bogus accusations.

7/22

## Russia jails 9 Jehovah's Witnesses for "extremism"

By Reuters

March 5, 2024 6:42 PM GMT+2 · Updated a year ago



March 5 (Reuters) - Nine Jehovah's Witnesses were sentenced to lengthy prison terms in Russia on Tuesday after being convicted of participating in "extremism" on the basis of leaked recordings of their worship, according to a spokesman for the group.

Russia's Supreme Court designated the Christian denomination as "extremist" in 2017, liquidating and banning its nearly 400 chapters across the country.



## Relentless Religious Persecution in Russia

September 1, 2021

By Dani Wassell

Last June, a Russian court sentenced Jehovah's Witness, Andrew Stupnikov, to six years in prison. He previously spent nearly eight months in detention and four months under house arrest. The same day of Stupnikov's sentencing, another Russian court sentenced four other Jehovah's Witnesses to 3-5 years in prison. These cases have been prosecuted under counter-terrorism laws.

What could the Jehovah's Witnesses, a tiny religious community in Russia, have done to earn such ire from Moscow? Why is it that the Russian government has formally labeled each of these individuals as "extremists" and therefore a threat to the state? Russia has designated the Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist cult and therefore a menace to Russian families and the Russian state. This is a bad omen for all religious minorities in Russia.

IDEAS • UKRAINE

## Russia's War Against Evangelicals

8 MINUTE READ



A view of a destroyed Orthodox cross in the Our Lady of the Joy of All Who Sorrow Church in Bohorodychne, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine on April 5, 2024. The village of Bohorodychne, in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, was one of the frontlines where some of the hardest battles were fought in June 2022. Wojciech Grzedzinski-Anadolu/Getty Images

BY **PETER POMERANTSEV** APRIL 20, 2024 6:00 AM EDT



Pomerantsev's new book is *How to Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler*. He is also the author of *This is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality*. He is a Senior Fellow at SNF Agora Institute, Johns Hopkins University.



# Disappeared Ukrainian priests may be in Russian labor camp, says human rights researcher

GINA CHRISTIAN Jun 5, 2024 National/World



Father Bohdan Geleta, left, and Father Ivan Levitsky are seen in this undated screen grab. The two Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests seized by Russian forces from their church in Berdyansk in November 2022 are possibly in a Russian-operated labor camp in occupied Ukraine, according to a human rights information service. (OSV News screen grab/courtesy of Ukrainian Catholic Church)

(OSV News) -- Two disappeared Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests seized by Russian forces from their church in Berdyansk in November 2022 are possibly in a Russian-operated labor camp in occupied Ukraine, according to a human rights information service.

Since annexing Crimea in 2014, Russia has targeted Crimean Tatars, a Muslim community. Mosques and schools have been shut down, leaders imprisoned, and people disappeared – labeled “terrorists” just for practicing their faith.

8/22

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November 14, 2017 12:00AM EST | Report

## Crimea: Persecution of Crimean Tatars Intensifies

Arbitrary Detentions; Separatism, Terrorism Charges

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# Time to recognise the Crimean Tatar genocide

JON RICHARDSON

Acknowledging the crimes in the 1940s would underline the attachment to Ukraine and rebuff changing borders by force.



Crimean Tatars demonstrate in 1994, 50 years after their deportation in the 1940s. They still wait for justice, now 80 years on (Antoine Gyori/Sygma via Getty Images)

Published 17 May 2024 Russia Ukraine Human rights

Crimean Tatars also face routine police raids, surveillance, and forced conscription into the Russian army. Their cultural and religious identity is under constant attack. And this is nothing new – Tatars were targeted and forcefully deported already during the 40s.

Politics

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## Russia repeats genocide on Crimean Tatars

The 80 years since the genocidal deportation of the Crimean Tatar people are not just a tragedy for the Crimean Tatars, but a systemic diagnosis and a historical warning of what Russian imperialism is. MEP Anna Fotyga, former foreign minister...

Disclaimer - All opinions in this column reflect the views of the author(s), not Euractiv Media.





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ODR: OPINION

# Crimean Tatars face ongoing persecution under Russian occupation

Today, simply existing as a Crimean Tatar can result in imprisonment for years on end


[Elmaz Asan](#)

12 May 2023, 1.37pm



Even smaller Christian sects, like Baptists and Evangelicals, face discrimination. The Kremlin often labels them as “Western agents,” and their worship services are disrupted, and their pastors are given fines and threatened with violence and/or imprisonment.

10/22

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# Russia: Baptist leader detained

As reported by Radio Free Europe (RFE/RL) on 9 August 2023, police in the western Russian city of Kaluga detained Albert Ratkin, a [bishop of the New Word Baptist church](#), “as a witness in a probe against the chairman of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Yury Sipko”. Sipko is under investigation for sharing comments on social media about Russian armed forces fighting in Ukraine.

World Watch Research analyst Rolf Zeegers comments: “Pressure exerted by the government on Christians in Russia is growing. Although according to unconfirmed reports Sipko has now left Russia, his case remains an indication of how careful Christians in Russia need to be in what they say and do. Making critical statements or questioning the ‘special campaign’ (i.e. the war in Ukraine) can lead to severe consequences. And if the state agents cannot arrest the suspect himself, they will detain someone else who was in contact with the suspect, carry out a house-search and confiscate computers and other personal belongings.”

Russian antisemitism runs DEEP. The “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” a fabricated antisemitic text, was promoted by the Russian Empire and later weaponized by the Soviets. Today, state media still regularly peddles antisemitic conspiracies.

11/22



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BY MICHAEL BACHNER and JACOB MAGID

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# Reviving antisemitic trope, Putin says Jews are tearing apart Russian Orthodox Church

Comments made during press conference echo Soviet-era antisemitism under Stalin, when the Kremlin persecuted Jews and accused them of being 'rootless cosmopolitans'

By ZEV STUB [FOLLOW](#)  
and JTA  
20 December 2024, 8:42 am



Putin's regime claims to be "anti-Nazi," yet its propaganda is riddled with Nazi-style antisemitic tropes. From blaming Jews for revolutions to pushing conspiracies like the Great Reset, Russia continues its long tradition of state-sponsored hate.



## Israel outrage at Sergei Lavrov's claim that Hitler was part Jewish

3 May 2022

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Sergei Lavrov was asked how Russia could claim it was fighting to "de-Nazify" Ukraine

**Israel has reacted with fury after Russia's foreign minister claimed that Nazi leader Adolf Hitler "had Jewish blood".**

Sergei Lavrov made the comments to try to justify Russia's portrayal of Ukraine as "Nazi" despite the fact that its president is Jewish.

The Russian Orthodox Church has long been tied to espionage. During Soviet times, priests acted as KGB informants and many of them were even KGB-trained agents (like Kirill). Today, the church is still just an ideological weapon for the Kremlin.



**Pekka Kallioniemi**   
@P\_Kallioniemi · [Follow](#)



In today's #vatnik soup I'll introduce a KGB agent and a billionaire who disguises himself as a holy man. His name is Vladimir Mikhailovich Gundyayev, but he's better known as Patriarch Kirill. Gundyayev is a close ally of Putin and he has called Putin's rule a "miracle of god" 1/8



8:05 AM · Nov 22, 2022



4.3K Reply Copy link

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The Kremlin uses the church to push nationalist propaganda. It promotes the war, and its priests are recruiting soldiers to the meat grinder, even enabling war crimes by claiming that "Russian war dead have their sins forgiven."

14/22

## BREAKING NEWS

Gaza's Health Ministry says Israeli strikes across the territory have killed at least 326 Palestinians. Follow AP's live updates.

## Moscow patriarch: Russian war dead have their sins forgiven



FILE - In this photo released by Russian Orthodox Church Press Service, Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill, left, conducts the Easter service accompanied by President Vladimir Putin, background right, at the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, Russia, early Sunday, April 24, 2022. Russian soldiers who die in the line of duty in Ukraine have all of their sins forgiven, the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church proclaimed in a sermon on Sunday, Sept. 25, 2022, comparing their sacrificial death to that of Jesus. (Oleg Varov/Russian Orthodox Church Press Service via AP)

BY PETER SMITH

Published 10:53 PM GMT+2, September 27, 2022

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In Ukraine, Russia has bombed over 600 churches and religious buildings. Even the historic Sviatohirsk Lavra monastery was shelled back in 2022, killing monks and civilians. In other words, Russia is actively trying to erase Ukraine's Orthodox cultural heritage.



## RUSSIA-UKRAINE: 630 places of worship destroyed or damaged by the war

Freedom of Religion and Belief

### RUSSIA-UKRAINE: 630 places of worship destroyed or damaged by the war

*Russia continues to torture priests and destroy Ukrainian churches – IRF released new report in English and in Ukrainian*

IRF (29.03.2024) – During the full-scale invasion, Russian troops damaged or wholly destroyed at least 630 churches, prayer houses, and other religious facilities in Ukraine.

The Institute for Religious Freedom published this new data in the report “**The Impact of the Russian Invasion on Faith-Based Communities in Ukraine.**” The IRF research contains the results of monitoring and surveys on the situation of Ukrainian religious communities in the territories occupied by Russia.

### News

## Zelensky: Russia killed about 50 Ukrainian priests during the invasion

 Oleksandra Opanasenko · 18:55, 11 december 2024

Russian troops killed about 50 Ukrainian priests and destroyed 700 Ukrainian churches.

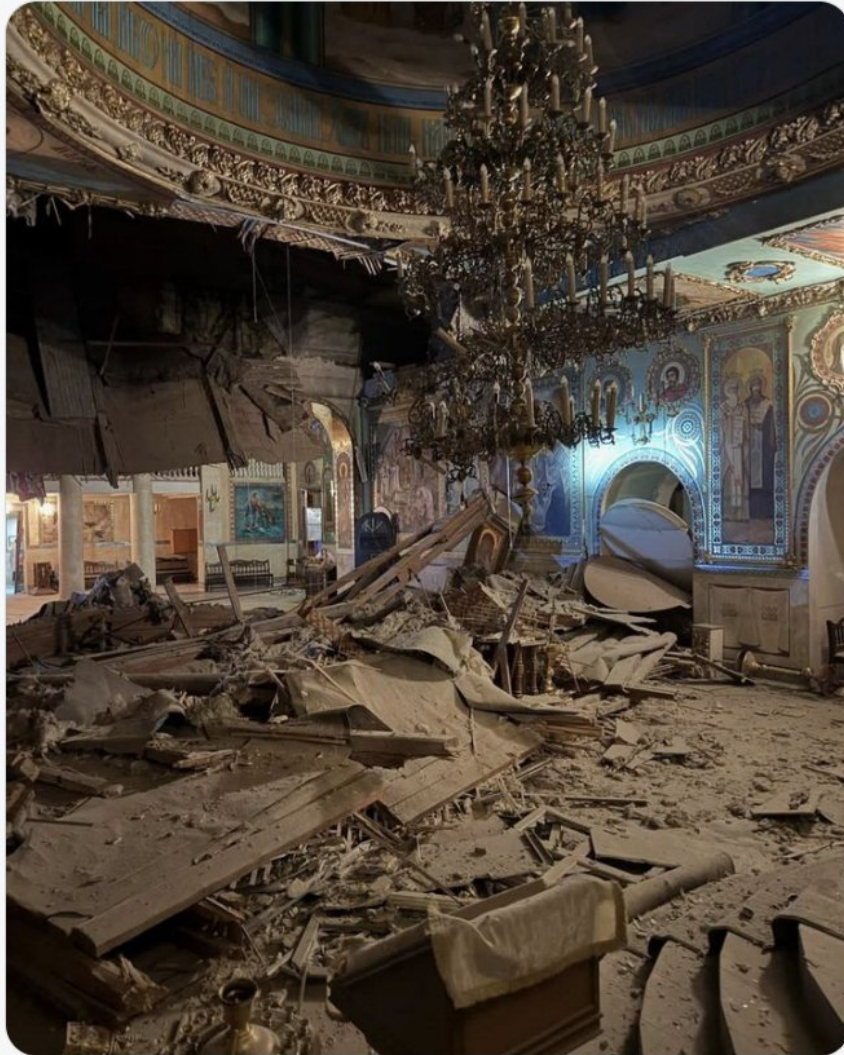
This was stated by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in an interview with the SBN TV channel.

According to Zelensky, priests were killed for refusing to serve Russian Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Church – they were shot, and some were tortured. Priests were also taken prisoner.



**Kate from Kharkiv**  @BohuslavskaKate · 8h

Russian famous "Christian values" is to bomb churches



In the occupied regions, Russia is seizing churches and transferring them to the Moscow Patriarchate, and priests loyal to Moscow replace local clergy. There are several cases where these priests have worked for the FSB, and have spied on behalf of the Russian state.



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## Over 1200 religious organizations closed or driven out of Russian-occupied Crimea

24.01.2025

Halya Coynash

**While Russia began its systematic attack on independent religious communities in Crimea in 2014, all of the same methods of repression and terror have now been extended to all parts of Ukraine under occupation**

### Documenting war crimes in Ukraine

The Tribunal for Putin (T4P) global initiative was set up in response to the all-out war launched by Russia against Ukraine in February 2022.

#### SIMILAR ARTICLES

[Russia seizes Ukrainian Orthodox church in ongoing attack on all that is Ukraine in occupied Crimea](#)

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[Ukraine moves to defend persecuted Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Russian-occupied Crimea](#)







Кобзар 🇺🇦🇨🇦🇷🇺  
@CanadianKobzar

x1 ...

To all of the American Christians that support russia because they allegedly defend “traditional values” - here is a dose of reality.

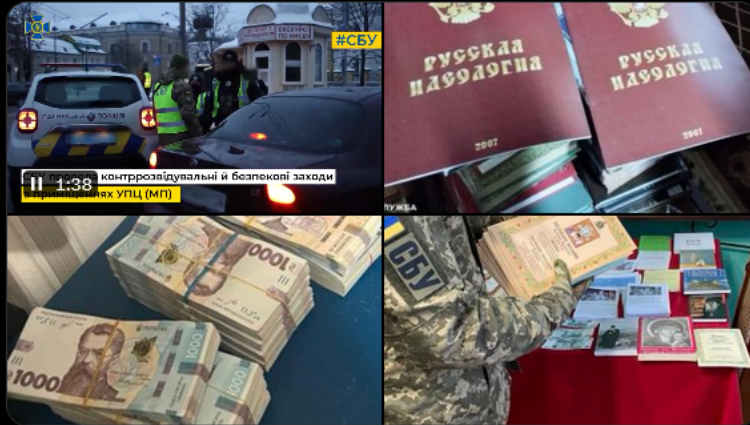


Russian authorities seize and repurpose sacred places in occupied territories. Here's a photo of an Evangelical church in Melitopol converted into a culture ministry promoting pro-Moscow propaganda.

Photo: Mykhailo Brytsyn

mai ke  
@maike809588

The SBU found pro-Russian literature, millions of cash and "doubtful" citizens of Russia during security measures in the premises of the UOC-MP. In more detail: • pro-Russian literature used in teaching at the seminary and parochial schools, including for propaganda of the.



10:01 AM · Nov 23, 2022

The Kyiv Independent  
@KyivIndependent

⚡ Priest of Moscow-linked church sentenced to 15 years for spying for Russia.

An abbot of the Kremlin-linked Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for spying on the Ukrainian military for Russia, Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) reported on Oct. 25.

SBU



7:21 PM · Oct 25, 2023 · 143.7K Views

In occupied Ukraine, local religious leaders who resist are murdered, arrested or disappeared without a trace. Many priests have been shot simply for refusing to work under the Moscow Patriarchy and Patriarch Kirill.

17/22

Russia's religious persecution in Ukraine against various religious groups that do not align with the Kremlin's political agenda is staggering. Dozens of brutal persecution cases - including torture, illegal deportations, disappearances - of Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Protestants, Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses have been documented since February 2022. Russia has been spreading misinformation and reversing the blame on Ukraine in order to continue exercising these abhorrent acts of human rights abuse and to use them to advance the Kremlin's political agenda.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL



# Europe

**Christian leaders  
killed, tortured,  
disappeared in  
occupied Ukraine**

 **Posted:** 21st March 2024



## Ukrainian Catholics experiencing 'total persecution' in Crimea



Fr. Mykola Kvych, naval chaplain in Sevastopol, blesses Easter baskets in 2013. | UGCC Information Department.



By Sonya Bilocerkowycz, Sofia Kochmar

Kyiv, Ukraine, Mar 18, 2014 / 15:10 pm

As the Russian president signed a bill to annex Crimea Tuesday, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the peninsula has been experiencing what a Church official calls "total persecution."

"At this moment all Ukrainian Greek Catholic life in Crimea is paralyzed," Fr. Volodymyr Zhdan, chancellor of the Stryi eparchy in western Ukraine, told CNA March 18.

In the last two years, Russo-American propaganda, led by @tuckercarlson and @robertamsterdam, has accused Zelenskyy of "persecuting Christians" in Ukraine by banning the Moscow Patriarchy in the country. Read more about this propaganda push here:



**Pekka Kallioniemi** ✓  
@P\_Kallioniemi · Follow



In today's #vatniksoup, I'll talk about the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) and how pro-Kremlin propagandists, oligarchs and lawyers are using its "persecution" as a tool to reduce support for Ukraine and its government.

1/20

### UOC-MP Metropolitan called Ukrainian authorities the "beast" at war with the saints

24.10.2023, 13:05 STATE



In his address, Metropolitan Yevlogy of the UOC-MP stated that the Ukrainian authorities are the "beast" engaged in a war against the saints and must conquer them.

4:01 PM · Mar 6, 2024



♥ 4.5K    💬 Reply    🔗 Copy link

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And in reality, the country Putin claims to be "saving" from the "godless West" is actually more religious than Russia. Ukrainians have higher church attendance and stronger faith-based values. Meanwhile, Russia suppresses real religious freedom.

19/22

When only 14% of your citizens go to church on a regular basis, 73 out of 100 marriages end in divorce, you've got 500 000 abandoned children, you're the European leader of children raised by single parents and abortions per capita, but you still managed to convince the leaders of the European alt-right that you're the true bastion of conservative values because of anti-LGBT laws and high levels of domestic violence.



## Ukrainian is more believing than 20 years ago, survey says

10-02-2022 Eastern Europe CNE.news



*Priests and believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church attend a prayer service held at the St. Vladimir's Hill in downtown Kyiv on 28 July 2021. Orthodox believers marked the 1033rd anniversary of Kievan Rus Christianization. Photo EPA, Sergey Dolzhenko*

**Two-thirds of Ukrainians call themselves believers. In the past 20 years, religiosity has grown by just under 10 per cent. The country experienced a 'religious peak' in 2014.**

Russia is one of the least religious countries in the world. Church attendance is low, and many Russians identify as Orthodox in name only, without actively practicing their faith. The state promotes Orthodoxy as a cultural tool, not a true religious revival.





Despite Kremlin rhetoric about “traditional values,” polls show that only a small fraction of Russians regularly attend church. For many, Orthodoxy is more of a national identity than a deeply held faith. In other words, it’s just a “Potemkin Faith”.

21/22

Another criterion to count religious populations in Russia is that of "religious observance". Based on this principle, very few Russians would be religious. It has been found that between 0.5% and 2% of people in big cities attend [Easter](#) services, and overall just between 2% and 10% of the total population (3 to 15 million people) are actively practising Orthodox Christians. The proportion of practising Muslims among ethnic groups which are historically Islamic is larger, 40% to 90% depending on the group, and yet smaller than any assumption based on the ethnic principle.<sup>[30]</sup>

Ukraine, instead, is actually a Christian, conservative country. If it weren't for the billions spent in Kremlin propaganda, any serious right-wing conservative would be siding with Ukraine, not Russia. But the MAGA “Christ is King” gang are not very good Christians, either.

22/22

#### DEGREE OF RELIGIOSITY, TRUST IN THE CHURCH

Although with the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression, the share of citizens who call themselves believers rose from 68% at the end of 2021 to 74% in November 2022, in 2023–2024 it decreased (to 70.5% in 2023 and 68% in 2024 — from 85% of residents in the West of the country to 55% in the East).

The country's West is traditionally characterized by a higher level of religiosity (85% here called themselves believers), the East — lower (55%). However, compared to 2000, the share of those who consider themselves believers in the Central, Southern and Eastern regions has increased, while in the Western region it has not changed. Hence, the difference between the regions in the share of believers is decreasing.

Traditionally, the level of religiosity is higher in older age groups, compared to younger ones (in 2024, the share of believers was the lowest among 18–24 year-olds — 52%, in other age groups — from 61% to 76%).

There are more believers among women compared to men (76% and 58%, respectively). The share of believers is higher among villagers (76.5%) than among citizens (63.5%).

The Church is trusted by the majority of Ukrainian citizens. However, compared to 2010, when the level of public trust in the Church was record high (72.5%), now, it is lower — 62.5%. The residents of the Western regions trust the Church the most (78% of respondents). In the Southern regions, 62% trust it, in the Central regions — 61%, and the lowest level of trust in the Church is recorded in the Eastern regions, where only a relative majority of respondents (47%) expressed trust in it, which is only 8% higher than the share of those who do not trust it.

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OPINION > INTERNATIONAL  
THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

## Russia is waging a war against religious freedom in Ukraine

BY KNOX THAMES, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 04/18/24 7:30 AM ET



Les Kazayev/Getty Images Ukraine via Getty Images

**LVIW, UKRAINE — MARCH 30:** Priests hold the big candle symbolizing the light of Christ's resurrection overcoming the darkness of the tomb in front of the Latin Cathedral during the Easter vigil as part of the Holy Week celebrations on March 30, 2024 in Lviv, Ukraine. This year Catholic believers celebrate Easter on Sunday, March 31, a month before the Orthodox date.

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## Andrew Tate, Benny Johnson and the crisis of biblical masculinity

By Jenna Ellis, Op-ed contributor | Wednesday, January 15, 2025



An Inside Edition report published on YouTube on Dec. 30, 2022, features a video Andrew Tate took of himself with a pizza box. | Youtube/Inside Edition

In an era of fragmented values and the rise of social media influencers, Andrew Tate has emerged as a polarizing figure. A self-proclaimed champion of masculinity, he offers young men a version of strength defined by materialism, dominance and self-interest. Recently, [Benny Johnson's podcast](#) provided Tate a platform to disseminate his views, framing him favorably as a voice for disenfranchised men.

From a biblical worldview, however, both Tate's philosophy and Johnson's endorsement warrant serious critique — not only for the sake of truth but for the sake of the countless young men seeking direction in a confusing world.

The 2nd edition of “Vatnik Soup — The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation” is officially out!

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## THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION



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