



Комісія Людських та Громадянських Прав – Commission on Human and Civil Rights

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Honourable Sir,

The Commission on Human and Civil Rights was formed by the Ukrainian World Congress, the coordinating body for Ukrainian organizations outside Ukraine, for the purpose of monitoring the human and civil rights of Ukrainians outside Ukraine. In connection with your recent visit to Russia, we submit to you this memorandum on the present situation of the Ukrainian national minority in the Russian Federation.

Nearly ten years ago, in 2000, we wrote to your predecessor, the hon. Max van der Stoel, stating, inter alia, the following: "This memorandum is also an expression of our deep concern about the difficult situation of the Ukrainian minority in Russia, particularly with respect to the retention and development of its identity, language and culture. The attitude of the Russian authorities towards the Ukrainian minority can be characterized, in one sentence, as benign neglect, at the best, and outright hostility, at worst. Certainly there is little in the policy and actions of the Russian Government that can be viewed as supportive of the Ukrainian minority in Russia". In that memorandum we summarized the status of the Ukrainian minority and its culture in the Russian Federation under the following headings:

1. Secondary school instruction.
2. Ukrainian studies at the post-secondary level.
3. Ukrainian-language press and periodicals.
4. Other forms of mass-media.
5. Libraries.
6. Ukrainian Churches in Russia

Unfortunately High Commissioner van der Stoel, who visited some Ukrainian communities in Russia and met with some of their representatives, in his recommendations to the Government of the Russian Federation did not, in our opinion, address adequately the lamentable situation of the multi-million Ukrainian minority in the RF with respect to the matters raised in our memorandum. The subsequent response of the Russian Government to the High Commissioner's modest recommendations was little more than an acknowledgement of their receipt.

Today, nearly ten years later, the situation of the Ukrainian minority in the Russian Federation is, if anything, even worse. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is the almost complete absence in Russia of schools and other educational institutions in which the Ukrainian language and culture is taught. We append a table prepared by the Association of Ukrainians in Russia (Объединение украинцев России) which shows this lamentable state of affairs (in contrast to the numerous educational institutions for the Russian minority in Ukraine).

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend that the Government of the Russian Federation provide funding to establish Ukrainian language and culture courses in public schools in cities and towns in the Russian federation with a sizable Ukrainian population and that this be done in cooperation with the Association of Ukrainians in Russia and the Federal National-Cultural Autonomy "Ukrainians of Russia" (Федеральная национально-культурная автономия «Украинцы России»).

Permit us to elaborate on some particular issues:

General Situation

According to the 2002 census 2.94 million Ukrainians lived in the Russian Federation (2% of the total RF population). By comparison the 1989 census gave the Ukrainian population in Russia as 4.36 million (3% of the total RF population). It is likely that the next population census in the RF will show a further decline of the Ukrainian minority of Russia. (More detailed information on the demographic situation of Ukrainians in Russia is given on the site <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/506/29/> .)

A principal factor in the process of this population decrease is, in our opinion, the lack of cultural and educational infrastructure for the Ukrainian minority (churches, libraries, cultural centres, Ukrainian-language educational facilities and press as well as premises for Ukrainian organisations). None of the Ukrainian organisations, registered with the Russian authorities, has the necessary facilities; local Russian authorities state that the requisite premises can be leased commercially, but this is beyond the means of community organisations of the Ukrainian minority. Without the necessary infrastructure it is next-to-impossible for the Ukrainian minority to preserve its culture. This situation is a reflection not only of the difficult economic situation in the RF but, more importantly, of the negative attitude of the Russian authorities towards the efforts of the Ukrainian minority to preserve its national identity. Russian authorities decline to register Ukrainian religious communities and do not permit the establishment of Ukrainian-language sections within the existing library system. The Russian authorities conduct numerous inspections of Ukrainian organisations, at times requiring full translations into Russian of all their internal documents. The branches of the officially registered Ukrainian National-Cultural Autonomy are not adequately funded by the Russian Government. The security service of the RF attempts to control organizations of the Ukrainian minority in Russia. The strained relations between the Governments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as between the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate), the negative stereotyping of all things Ukrainian in the Russian media, the growth of neo-fascist and right-wing radical organizations in the country all exacerbate the difficult situation of the Ukrainian minority in the RF.

At this time there is no special government ministry that would be responsible for national minorities in the multinational Russian Federation. This complicates notably the ability of national minorities to communicate with the Russian authorities, which results in the absence of approved educational programmes and methodology, as well as lack of Government

personnel responsible for the well-being of national minorities and experienced in dealing with them. This situation is indicative of the intent of the Russian Government to assimilate the national minorities.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it establish a separate Ministry of National Minorities that would be responsible for assisting the national minorities with the preservation of minority languages and cultures. The High Commissioner should recommend to the Russian Government that it establish programmes to counter prejudice and discrimination against Russia's national and religious minorities and to promote education of the population at large about the national minorities and their value for the Russian Federation.

Killings and assaults

During the past seven years three leading members of the Ukrainian minority in the Russian Federation were killed and one was severely injured in an assault. (see <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/2179/98/>, <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/1715/56/>)

Mr. Volodymyr Poburynnyi, (Владимир Побуринный) aged 32, an activist and sponsor of the Ukrainian Society "Mriya" was shot and killed on November 19, 2002 in the town of Teikovo, Ivanovskaia obl. (Тейково, Ивановская обл.). Mr. Poburynnyi was a businessman who was responsible for the local (Ukrainian) Sunday school. As far as we know, there was no criminal investigation into this killing nor were any charges laid.

The physician Anatoliy Kril (Анатолий Крыль) was brutally assaulted by unknown persons in Vladivostok (Владивосток) on April 1, 2004, when he was returning from a practice of the Ukrainian choir "Horlytsia" of which he was the director. He died in a hospital on April 3, 2004 as a result of the beating. Mr. Kril was a member of the registration group of the St. Nicholas Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate) in Vladivostok (according to Russian law a religious community can be established by a group of twenty persons, who must be registered as such by the authorities).

A criminal investigation of the killing of Mr. Kril was opened on May 17, 2004 after protests of Ukrainian organization and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. On November 20, 2006 the investigating procurator of the Pervorechenskii district of Vladivostok announced that the case (No. 780722) was being closed on the basis of item 1, point 1, article 208 of the U. P. K. (Уголовно-процессуальный кодекс) of the Russian Federation, since it was not established who the assailants were. Our Commission believes that the killing of Mr. Kril is connected to his work in the local Ukrainian community and in the St. Nicholas Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate (a denomination which is oppressed in the RF). The authorities showed no interest in investigating this crime thoroughly, as is evident from the delay in opening a criminal investigation and its subsequent closure.

Natalia Kovaliova (Наталья Ковалева), the co-chair of the Ukrainian organisation "Bat'kivska Strikha" in Tula (г.Тула), RF, and member of the Auditing Committee of the Federal National-Cultural Autonomy "Ukrainians of Russia" was assaulted in Tula on July 19, 2006. She was severely beaten with a metal rod near the office of the firm "Gobza", which she co-owned with her husband Volodymyr Senyshyn (Владимир Сенишин). She suffered severe wounds to her face and her right eye. Her teeth were broken and her scalp was damaged. She received a concussion to her head and internal bleeding in the brain. She barely escaped with her life and

underwent a seven-hour neurosurgical operation. According to her husband V. Senyshyn, the Procurator's office showed little in the matter. Shortly after the assault an officer of the FSB (Russian Security Service – Федеральная служба безопасности) appeared in the “Gobza” office and spoke to V. Senyshyn for a few hours about details of the activity of “Bat’kivska Strikha”. Towards the end of the conversation the FSB officer explained that he is investigating community organizations regarding “the possibility that they might be financing terrorist organisations”. Despite numerous appeals by community organisations, including the Association of Ukrainians in Russia, as well as our Commission, the investigation is, at this time, closed and the matter has not been resolved. Our Commission did not receive a reply to our letter to President Putin regarding this matter.

On December 24, 2006, Mr. V. Senyshyn, the co-chair of the Ukrainian community organisation “Bat’kivska Strikha” and member of the Council of the Association of Ukrainians in Russia was killed in Tula. He was assaulted at the same locations as Nataliya Kovaliova. He was severely beaten with baseball bats by two swarthy men. Mr. Senyshyn's skull was cracked and he died after a few hours in a critical care facility. Once again, despite numerous appeals by community organisations, including the Association of Ukrainians in Russia and as our Commission, the investigation of the killing of Mr. Senyshyn is, at this time, closed and the matter has not been investigated. Our Commission, as before, did not receive a reply to our letter to President Putin in this regard.

In our opinion, the murder of three Ukrainian community activists in Russia and the assault on another, none of which have been solved, indicate that Ukrainian community activists in Russia live under threat to their lives and that the Russian authorities do not provide them with the requisite security. This is a serious breach of human rights. Of all countries in which there are active Ukrainian communities (and there are dozens of such) only in Russia do such inexcusable transgressions take place.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it take measures that all killings of activists of national or religious minorities be thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators be brought to justice.

Ukrainian Educational Centre in Moscow

In March 2008 the municipal authorities in Moscow closed the Ukrainian Educational Centre (Украинский образовательный Центр) which functioned at School No. 124 since 1995. (The Centre comprised three small rooms of 30, 18 and 8 square metres respectively.) The Centre served as a place of education of Ukrainian children in their heritage subjects, as well as a meeting place for various community clubs. The reason given for the closing of the Centre, which existed for over ten years with authorisation of the Central District Administration of Moscow, was the absence of documents authorising the existence of the Centre. According to a letter from the leaders of the Centre to the President of the RF, D. Medvedev, “The Association of Ukrainians in Russia, the regional organisation ‘Ukrainians of Moscow’ and the pedagogical collective of the Ukrainian Educational Centre wrote repeatedly to the Central District Administration of Moscow and to M-me Ovseichik (Овсейчик), the Principal of School No. 125, regarding the Ukrainian Educational Centre. Regrettably, the Central District Administration of Moscow, in its reply, did not address any of the specific requests addressed to it, while M-me Ovseichik did not respond in writing and rather tactlessly declined to discuss the

matter in person". In the opinion of our Commission the Municipal authorities first declined to deal with the Ukrainian Educational Centre and thereafter decided that it should be closed because of the absence of registration documents. After the closure of the Centre, officers of the FSB (Federal'naiia sluzhba bezopasnosti, Federal Security Service) questioned the teachers of the Centre about the details of their activity.

As a consequence of the Centre's closure, Ukrainian community organisations in Russia forfeited about 25,000 US dollars that had been invested into renovation and equipment for the Centre. Mr. Valeri Semenenko (Валерий Семененко), the co-chair of the Association of Ukrainians in Russia has tried unsuccessfully for over a year to meet with representatives of the Central District Administration of Moscow in order to find a resolution to the matter of the Centre's closure. In the opinion of our Commission, illegitimate pressure is being put on Ukrainian educational activity in Moscow, thereby abrogating the Ukrainian community's human rights.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it take steps to ensure that adequate funding be made available to support school and other educational programmes for national minorities, to facilitate the preservation and development of their languages and cultures.

Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow

A Library of Ukrainian Literature has existed in Moscow (currently located at 31 Trifonovskaya St.) since 1989. This library comprised the largest collection of Ukrainian-language books in Russia (some 50,000 volumes) and was the only significant Ukrainian library in Russia. The staff of the Library consisted of knowledgeable people deeply interested in Ukrainian culture, among them Mr. Yuri Kononenko (Юрий Кононенко), a principal founder of the Library. The Library of Ukrainian Literature served also as a venue for exhibitions of art, concerts and Ukrainian community celebrations. In March 2007, the Moscow municipal authorities appointed a new director for the Library, namely M-me Natalia Sharina (Наталья Шарина), a person without knowledge of the Ukrainian language and very limited knowledge of Ukrainian literature. Shortly thereafter eight members of the staff of the Library resigned, citing moral pressure from the new leadership. M-me Sharina, the Director of the Library, did not renew Yuri Kononenko's contract, as a result of which he left the Library. Among the new staff hired by N. Sharina are people with little knowledge off Ukrainian and two of them, Mr. Sergei Sokurov (Сергей Сокуров) and Mr. Bogdan Bezpalko (Богдан Безпалько), have published disparaging comments about Ukraine and the Ukrainian language and history on the internet (cf. <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/2163/86/> and <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/2255/39/>).

In November, 2007 M-me Sharina and Mr. Bezpalko threw out as garbage a rich collection of newspapers; thousands of newspapers and journals were destroyed, including rare publications from the 19th century. According to report, books of Ukrainian historians that were not in line with the accepted Russian historiography started to disappear from the Library. According to the Union of Ukrainians of Russia, under N. Sharina's leadership the Library's programme started to include topics with an anti-Ukrainian political content. We have also received information that under the new leadership the Library is removing books on Ukrainian history, especially books which present history differently from the officially approved version of Russian historiography (cf. <http://glavred.info/archive/2009/05/18/183902-0.html>).

In November of 2006, the Library of Ukrainian Literature was picketed by members of the chauvinistic Russian youth group “Myestnyie” («Местные»), who shouted derogatory anti-Ukrainian slogans and doused the entrance to the Library with some sort of liquid (<http://kobza.com.ua/content/blogcategory/51/86/50/50/>).

Our Commission is concerned that the Moscow municipal authorities have commenced upon a programme of incremental liquidation of the Library of Ukrainian Literature, which is arguably the principal institution of Ukrainian culture in the Russian Federation.

It is imperative that the Russian authorities take steps to ensure that the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow be staffed by qualified people with knowledge and respect for the Ukrainian language and culture, that the collection be renewed, protected and expanded. We request that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend such a course of action to the Government of the Russian Federation.

Collections of Ukrainian-language books in public library in the Russian Federation

In Voronezh oblast (Воронежская обл.) there is an active branch of the Federal National-Cultural Autonomy “Ukrainians of Russia” as well as a regional Ukrainian community organisation “Pereveslo” («Перевесло»). Mr. Dmytro Denysenko (Дмитрий Денисенко), a journalist who is the deputy-head of “Pereveslo” has been petitioning local authorities for over five years to establish a Ukrainian-language books section and readers’ club in one of the city libraries. Mr Denisenko has offered to donate to the library over a hundred Ukrainian-language books from his own collection. The local authorities continuously delay making a decision about this matter, citing their lack of experience with such matters. This case is a typical example of how local Russian authorities react to requests by Ukrainian communities to establish Ukrainian-language collections in public libraries of the RF.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it establish a programme of including Ukrainian-Language publications in public libraries of the Russian Federation wherever there is a sizeable Ukrainian minority and/or demand.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Russia

A Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate was established in Noginsk, Moscow region (г. Ногинск, Моск. обл.), in 1994. It was based at the Bogoyavlenskii Sobor (Богоявленский собор) in 1994-97. In October 1997 the parishioners were forcibly evicted with the help of 100 members of the OMON (Special unit of Russian interior forces). The parish was forced to move to the Sviato-Troitskii church (Свято-Троицкий храм) (17 Sovietskoi Konstitutsii St - Советской Конституции, 17). (The violations of human rights and religious freedoms during this period were described in our letter to then OSCE High Commissioner Van der Stoel. Metropolitan Adrian (Starina) (Адриан (Старина)) who has jurisdiction over the parish in question took part in a meeting with HC van der Stoel during the latter’s visit to Moscow in 2000. The Sviato-Troitskii parish, which is officially registered in the RF, is unable to obtain legal ownership of the Sviato-Troitskii church, even though it has been holding services in the church building for over ten years. In effect this parish exist under threat of eviction by local authorities at any time. The parishioners, Ukrainian community organisations

and our Commission have appealed to President (now Prime Minister) Putin several times, but without any discernable results.

Another parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Adrian (Starina) is registered in Moscow (the St. Panteleymon Parish - Парафія на честь Великомученика і цілителя Пантелеймона). The pastor, Rev Evgenii (Udaloi) (Евгений (Удалой)) has requested that the City of Moscow provide **the parish** with venues for religious services or provide them with plots of land on which they could construct church buildings, but all such requests have been declined.

The St. Nicholas parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate was registered in Vladivostok in the fall of 2003. (At the beginning of the 20th century a majority of the population of the Far East of Russia consisted on Ukrainian settlers.) Rev. Valentin Melnik (Валентин (Мельник)), the prior of the parish, approached the City of Vladivostok on several occasions with the request that the parish be provided with premises for church services or a plot of land on which the parish could build a church. Unfortunately, these requests came to naught due to opposition of local bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the absence of premises, the St. Nicholas Parish is unable to practice its religious activities and Rev. Valentin (Melnik) was obliged to move to another region of the RF. Our Commission also knows of cases of refusal of registration of Ukrainian parishes in St. Petersburg, Omsk and Chelyabinsk, though we have no written documentation in this regard.

Our Commission is of the opinion that the religious freedoms of the faithful of Ukrainian churches, in particular of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, and of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, are being violated in the RF. The discriminatory 1997 RF legislation “On the freedom of conscience” does not help the situation.

The intolerant and anti-Ukrainian atmosphere, which is pervasive in the Russian media, makes it very difficult for members of the Ukrainian minority in Russia to practice the religion of their choice and heritage. This situation is in stark contrast with that in Ukraine, where there are thousands of freely active parishes subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Additional, detailed information about Ukrainian churches in Russia is available on <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/2366/31/> (in Ukrainian), where “The Noginsk Document”, prepared by our Commission <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/573/34/> (in Russian), as well as “The Testimony of the Parishioners of the Bogoyavlenskii Sobor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (Noginsk)” <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/574/34/> (in Russian) are also available.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it take steps to ensure that the religious communities of Ukrainian religious denominations be allowed to practice their faith freely, and that local authorities of Noginsk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Vladivostok and throughout Russia place no barriers for the registration of their parishes but assist them with provision of premises and facilitate the building of churches. We also request that the High Commissioner investigate laws of the Russian Federation regarding religion and recommend to the Russian Government that all religious denominations be treated equally under the law and in practice.

Ukrainian-language media in Russia

Several dozen Ukrainian-language newspapers were published in Russia by local Ukrainian communities in the 1990s. These local newspapers were published monthly or quarterly with typical print runs of a thousand. Almost all of these papers have ceased to be published due to a lack of funds. Ukrainian-language publications in Russia have received no support from local authorities, with the sole exception of the authorities of Samara (Самара). There are a number of Ukrainian internet sites in Russia, but none receive any financial support from Russian authorities (nor, for that matter, from the Government of Ukraine).

Our Commission has prepared a report on the Ukrainian-language media in Russia, which is published (in Ukrainian) on <http://kobza.com.ua/content/view/1486/29/>.

Our Commission requests that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities recommend to the Government of the Russian Federation that it provide financial and other support for the Ukrainian-language media in Russia, including, in particular, for the “Ukrainskyi Ohliad” (“Ukrainian Review”, Moscow), the bulletin of the FNKA (Federal National-Cultural Autonomy)

In conclusion, it is evident that improvement in the state of the Ukrainian minority in Russia requires a change of paradigm in the RF, namely the implementation of a tolerant and democratic model for the development of national minorities in Russia. The Government of the RF should introduce a “Federal programme of support of the Ukrainian culture in Russia” as was proposed at the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Congresses of Ukrainians of Russia. A high profile Ministry of National Minorities should be established in the Russian Federation.

It is important that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities make more frequent visits to Russia and that he remain in contact with Ukrainian cultural and human rights organisations in Russia. This would be very helpful in assisting the Ukrainian minority in Russia in its efforts to preserve and develop its language and culture.

We hope that in submitting your recommendations to the Government of the Russian Federation, you will include those requested in our letter. Above all, we hope that the recommendations will be substantive and will be directed at taking at least the first steps towards correcting the extremely unsatisfactory state of the Ukrainian national minority in Russia with respect to the preservation and development of its culture and language.

Sincerely yours,



Jurij Darewych
Chairman of the Commission on Human
and Civil Rights, Ukrainian World Congress



Vasyl' Kolomatsky
Chairman of the Committee on
the Ukrainian Community in Russia

Enclosures