

**HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING:
CHURCH, STATE, AND RUSSIA’S WAR ON UKRAINE**
Thursday April 27, 2023

Testimony of:

Most Reverend Borys Gudziak

Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States
Head, Department of External Church Relations, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
President, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv Ukraine

**Chairman Wilson,
Co-Chairman Cardin,
Ranking Members Cohen and Wicker,
Distinguished Members of the Commission
and dedicated staff:**

Allow me to express deep gratitude for the prophetic work that you and your predecessors have been conducting for almost half a century by monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords, especially regarding their human rights provisions. **You improve the lives of hundreds of millions.** Thank you for your gracious invitation to testify before you about Russia’s war on Ukraine and the spiritual roots of Ukrainian resilience and resistance.

Along with facts, citations, and figures allow me to share reflections on spiritual realities experienced by Ukrainians today. Besides going to Ukraine six times since February, 2022 I have been privileged to visit ten countries receiving Ukrainian war refugees and to listen to their heartrending accounts.

In the mid 1940s after the Soviet conquest of western Ukraine, Stalin liquidated the visible structures of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Its leadership was killed, imprisoned, or exiled to Siberia. The clergy was arrested, tortured, and murdered. All church buildings were confiscated, transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church or transformed into dance halls, agricultural warehouses, or machine shops. My mentor Patriarch Joseph Slipyj (1892–1984), the head of the Church, spent 18 years in the Gulag and in 1963 was exiled from the Soviet Union to Rome. He became the voice of the silenced martyrs in the free world.

Patriarch Josyf traveled the world witnessing to the fact that the persecuted but unbowed Church is alive. He often repeated that “the evil will not last forever.” **Most analysts expected that the Soviet Union would endure for decades.** Some considered his witness to be the senescent fancy of a man traumatized by years of detention and abuse. But he, of course, was right, and we students were too young *not* to believe him. He had faith and hope, and he shared it. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church — illegal and in the catacombs for more than 40 years — emerged in 1989 with

singular moral authority to play a seminal role in the social transformations occurring in post-Soviet Ukraine. Josyf Slipyj's words and witness reinforce our courage today when we read and hear about the devastating crimes against humanity in Bucha, Borodianka, Irpin, and Izyum, and the personal accounts of those tormented under Russian occupation in Ukraine.

Since 2014, and ever more starkly since February 2022, we are reminded that a centuries-long struggle continues against colonial forces seeking to eliminate Ukrainian identity, church life, and the very right for Ukrainians to exist. About his desire to advance such intentions the Russian president has been repeatedly explicit. The patterns and methods of empire — tsarist, communist, Putinist — remain fundamentally the same. They are evil; but, **in Slipyj's words this evil will not last forever. We need to do our part so it does not.**

What is the fate of Ukrainian Churches under Russian rule? Here is a sample from a regional context. The following simplified and abridged list regarding conditions under Russian occupation was provided by the relatively modest Donetsk exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church:

Saint Joseph Parish, Enerhodar – the priest had to flee, and all the building materials purchased to build the church were stolen.
Assumption of Anna Parish, Melitopol – the people gather without a priest.
Nativity of the Virgin Mary Parish, Melitopol – looted.
Ascension Parish, Lazurne – closed.
Sts Cyril and Methodius Parish, Polianivka - closed.
St Basil the Great Parish, Novovasylivka – closed.
Nativity of St John the Baptist Parish, Orlove – closed.
St Demetrius Parish, Sviatotroyitske – the people gather without a priest.
St Catherine Parish, Antonivka – the chapel was looted and transformed into a grocery shop.
The Transition of the Relics of St Nicholas Parish, Muratove – damaged
Nativity of the Virgin Mary Parish, Kreminna – destroyed.
Pentecost Parish, Rozdolivka – damaged

Seemingly dry facts and distant names, but so much excruciating human pain is connected with each of these attacks and losses. The general toll for all confessions throughout the country is shocking: the Russian invaders have destroyed or damaged some 500 houses of worship, so far... **Many priests and ministers have been arrested, detained, tortured, and reportedly, close to 30, have been killed. According to the papal nuncio in Kyiv, in the eastern most regions under occupation no Catholic priest, Roman or Greek, remains active.** They have all had to leave, been arrested, or had to go into hiding. Public Catholic sacramental ministry has been impeded.

This should not be a surprise to those that know the historical precedents. **Every Russian occupation of Ukrainian territory from the end of the eighteenth century to the present—be it tsarist, communist, or Putinists—has led to the banning and destruction of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Those of other faith communities, at one time or another, have suffered persecution and prohibitions.**

Here is a sampling of torment meted out to Ukrainian Protestants:

On March 19, 2022, the Russian military, which captured the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region arrested (kidnapped) the evangelical bishop of the Word of Life Church, Dmytro Bodyu, a US citizen, and held him captive for eight days.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhgLwc2mla0>

The pastor of the Evangelical Church "Light of the Gospel" in Balaklia, Kharkiv region, Oleksandr Salfetnikov was kidnapped by Russian soldiers on May 17, 2022. He was severely beaten and tortured in the commandant's office (комендатура) and for some time was on the verge of life and death in the intensive care unit.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QNYatj_qIU

On June 19, 2022, the occupiers kidnapped the pastor of the "Source of Life" Protestant Church, Valentin Zhuravlov in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. Armed Russian military detained in the city center during a joint prayer of believers of different churches for the end of the war in Ukraine. In October 2022, it was reported that Zhuravlov had been released.

<https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/valentin-zhuravlov>

The Melitopol Christian Church is one of the most modern and beautiful buildings in the city. The Russian forces occupied this building among the first. Pastor Viktor Sergeev was later declared a terrorist by the Russian authorities. And the building was first ransacked, and later completely confiscated to open a fake Ministry of Youth and Sports. Later, it was used as a regional branch of the "Young Guard of United Russia"

<https://slovoprosovo.info/bili-tak-scho-ridniy-batko-ne-vpiznav-sina-pastor-iz-melitopolya-rozpoviv-pro-zvirstva-armii-rosii/>

On September 11, 2022, armed Russian forces broke into the Evangelical Christian Grace Church in Melitopol during congregational prayer. The Russian military recorded the parishioners' ID data, fingerprinted and photographed male members of the community, took their documents, and accused them of having "connections with the United States." After that, the occupiers announced that they would "nationalize" the church. The occupiers arrested two pastors of the congregation. The head pastor of the Church of Evangelical Christians Mykhailo Britsyn ended up in prison. He is still detained.

<https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/mykhailo-britsyn>

As Serhiy Moroz, deputy head of the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists, said, the Russian military occupied three Baptist prayer houses in the Kherson region. Since the military took away all the property and transformed some of

them into barracks, the faithful do not have the opportunity to pray there. As of October 2022, the prayer houses were standing but had been looted.

The Ukrainian religious landscape

A leading sociologist of religion, Jose Casanova, professor at Georgetown University, in his writings has amply illustrated how **much more religious pluralism and respect for freedom of conscience there is in Ukraine than in Russia.** A key feature of the Ukrainian religious landscape is the diversity and network of churches and organizations of different faiths. According to the Department of Religions and Nationalities of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, at the beginning of 2014, 35,646 individual religious communities (churches, houses of worship) were officially registered in Ukraine, while only 29,831 organizations operated in the Russian Federation, which has approximately 30 times the territory and four times the population of Ukraine. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations created in 1996 brings together 16 Churches and confessions in a unique multi-religious body that represents 90 percent of all Ukrainian believers. All religious organizations have equal rights in Ukrainian society. None of the Churches ever developed a monopoly, never became a state church, with the privileges claimed by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the Russian Federation. **In Russia, despite the nominal constitutional declaration of freedom of conscience, a rigid hierarchical model of state-church relations has been created. This has led to restrictions on religious freedom, including the banning or juridical delegitimization of certain religious communities.**

The Russian war

With the Russian aggression against Ukraine that began in 2014, the Catholic Church was hit hard. The chancery of the Donetsk Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was ransacked. The bishop was forced to move out of his city into the unoccupied part of his diocesan territory. The communities of religious sisters were forced to leave. Many of the priests, for example, those who had served as chaplains for the Ukrainian military, faced death and had to flee. In Crimea, several religious groups, flourishing before 2014, have disappeared or left, and many of them presumably will never come back to an occupied Crimea, even if present hostilities cease. **Crimean Tatars, the indigenous population of Crimea, mostly Sunni Muslims, are particularly oppressed.** In Soviet times they were deported from Crimea to Central Asia. They were able to return to their ancestral land after *perestroika*. In independent Ukraine, up until the Russian annexation, the Crimean Tatar community flourished.

Since the full-scale invasion of February 2022, it is worth repeating, some 500 religious buildings and sites have been destroyed in Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression. Internationally, some conservative Christians view Putin as a protector of Christian values and of the Orthodox faith. Can you defend values by killing their carriers? Churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate) have suffered the most from Russian aggression – at least 143 have been destroyed or damaged. For example, the Sviatohirsk Lavra, a monastic stronghold of Russian Orthodox influence in Eastern Ukraine, was severely shelled and

damaged. A plurality of the civilians killed by the invaders in eastern Ukraine are baptized members of the Moscow Patriarchate jurisdiction.

In Mariupol, the city of Mary, the building housing the Caritas (Catholic Charities) Foundation with a Greek Catholic chapel were destroyed. A tank fired twice at it, killing two accountants inside. Some people were trapped but were later rescued. The priest was forced to leave Mariupol, and reportedly his house and the nearby chapel were destroyed.

Occupied territories

Presently, Russia controls about 17% of Ukraine's territory.

In the beginning, I noted the difference in the religious landscapes of Russia and Ukraine. Russian occupational forces do not understand the Ukrainian religious situation. *"They are perplexed by Ukrainian religious diversity. If something is incomprehensible, it causes a traditional imperialistic reaction, it must be destroyed, and everything else must be unified,"* states Ihor Kozlovskyy a Ukrainian religious scholar who on January 27, 2016 in Donetsk was arrested, tortured, and spent 700 days in detention, until he was released as part of a prisoner exchange.

He has described **a pattern in the Russian regime's treatment of religious organizations in occupied territories.**

- 1. Military pressure on religious organizations and repression: from the seizure of religious buildings to imprisonment and executions.**
- 2. Control (interrogations of priests and ministers, coercion to collaborate)**

He speaks openly about the arrests, grilling of clergy, and torture to "break, intimidate, or destroy a person." Kozlovskyy predicts that occupation authorities will follow the pattern established in 2014 in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where Russian authorities deregistered "disloyal" religious communities and banned their activities.

The occupiers view religious leaders and communities, that are not affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church, as agents and centers of freedom, trust, authority (about 70% of Ukrainians say they trust church leadership), and Ukrainian identity (mainly Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine but it is also true of other religious denominations in Ukraine). Therefore, they are under constant attack. Control over religious leaders is a way to control the population and legitimize the occupation.

A Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest from Melitopol whose community is under occupation and who was forced to leave testified that the Russian FSB and military authorities while interrogating him pressured him to divulge what people say during Confession. <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/svyashennik-ugkc-yakogo-deportovali-z-melitopolya-/?fbclid=IwAR3d9Y2wj8yBBcMY6VGfeXVEdAuhZdtQwXWAMMNdx8wqVTTHDkFnhTvVVEk>

In areas under constant attack, the religious landscape is being physically eroded. Religious buildings are being destroyed, and communities are disappearing as believers leave their communities *en masse*. For example, the Jewish minority, although not officially targeted, has

diminished considerably. Tens of thousands of Jews were forced to leave, and hundreds have died. American born Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, head of a Kyiv synagogue and a prominent leader in the Ukrainian Jewish community for over 30 years, believes that **the Jewish community will not recover its numbers. The Greek Orthodox community in Mariupol and in the south of the Donetsk region – a unique ethnic minority that lived there for hundreds of years – is almost totally eradicated.** We will hear more from another witness about the Protestant communities persecuted by the Russian forces. I can testify that I am inspired by the witness of the Ukrainian Protestant denominations, for example, by that of my friend, the evangelical pastor from Mariupol, Hennadiy Mokhnenko.

As a Ukrainian Greek Catholic archbishop, I will briefly present the situation of my Church in some of the exarchates that are currently partially occupied.

The Odesa Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

The Kherson region is a part of the Exarchate. Seven parishes are under occupation, three priests – one married and two monks - were detained and interrogated but at the moment can minister.

The Donetsk Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

Today, due to the pressure and persecution of the occupation administrations, the activity of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions, is completely impeded (including six parishes in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that have been occupied since 2014). Some parishes stopped functioning because they were in the areas of fierce fighting, e.g., Bakhmut.

The Donetsk deanery – 14 out of 14 parishes were forced to stop functioning (12 priests forced to leave).

The Zaporizhzhia deanery – 15 out of 22 parishes stopped functioning (9 priests left)

Two priests of the Zaporizhzhia deanery, Ivan Levytskyi and Bohdan Heleta, both members of the Redemptorist Order, were imprisoned in November 2022, and their whereabouts remain unknown.

The Kramatorsk deanery - 3 of 22 parishes stopped functioning (2 priests left)

Political influence of the Russian Orthodox Church

In the mind of the Kremlin and in the explicit words of the leader of the Russian Church, Patriarch Kirill, the assault on Ukrainians' freedom and dignity "is a metaphysical battle," for which the ROC provides ideological justification.

"Any war must have guns and ideas. In this war, the Kremlin has provided the guns, and I believe the Church is providing the ideas," states Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, an Orthodox priest and theologian who in the 2000s worked in the central offices of the Moscow Patriarchate and today is professor at Loyola Marymount University and director of the Huffington Ecumenical Institute.

The Russian Orthodox Church has always been a strong supporter of the Russian regime: in tsarist times, after Stalin revived and reorganized it in 1943 after 25 years of brutal Soviet persecution beginning in 1917, and now under Vladimir Putin, promoting his dream of restoring the Russian empire.

In 2012 Patriarch Kirill obsequiously addressed Vladimir Putin as follows: *“What were the 2000s then [after Putin came to power]? Through a miracle of God, with the active participation of the country’s leadership, we managed to exit this horrible, systemic crisis. I should say it openly as a patriarch who must speak only the truth, without regard for the political situation or propaganda. You personally played a massive role in correcting this crooked twist of our history.”*

The support of the Russian Orthodox Church has grown as the war has progressed, with Patriarch Kirill becoming one of the war’s most prominent promoters. In his sermons, he repeatedly refers to foreign forces as aggressors trying to divide neighboring countries [Russia and Ukraine], which he describes as “one people.” For him the aggression is a fratricidal struggle.

“Most of the countries of the world are now under the colossal influence of one force, which today, unfortunately, opposes the force of our people,” Kirill said, probably referring to the United States. *“All of our people today must wake up, wake up, understand that a special time has come, on which the historical fate of our people may depend.”*

“We do not want to fight with anyone, Russia has never attacked anyone,” Kirill said in his May 2022 sermon. *“It’s surprising when a great and powerful country does not attack anyone. It has only been defending its borders.”*

Such statements come after the discovery of the war crimes in Bucha, the carefully documented violent murders of innocent civilians, serial rapes; after the whole world witnessed the barbarity and unadulterated evil of the Russian invasion.

*“The church realizes that if someone, driven by a sense of duty and the need to honor his oath, stays loyal to his vocation and dies while carrying out his military duty, then he is, without any doubt, doing a deed that is equal to sacrifice. He sacrifices himself for others. And therefore, we believe that **this sacrifice washes away all the sins that a person has committed.**”* Patriarch Kirill’s sermon September 25, 2022.

Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States, His Grace Elpidophoros, called this statement a Jihadist-like promise. For him the hypocrisy of Kirill is dumbfounding: **“Russian mercenaries and soldiers murder, rape, kidnap, and loot with his blessing.”**

As the war continues, Patriarch Kirill’s cynicism has progressed:

“This is how it will be in Ukraine - there will be no trace of the schismatics, because they are fulfilling the evil, devilish will, destroying Orthodoxy in the Kyivan land.” (From Patriarch Kirill’s sermon on January 8, 2023.)

The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not a plan and the determination merely of President Putin promoted by the words of Patriarch Kirill. The support or at least acquiescence of the Russian Church and society is scandalously broad. Not one of the

approximately 400 bishops in Russia has spoken out against the war. The ROC clergy is a huge body including more than 40,000 full-time clerics, priests and deacons internationally. Only approximately 300—less than 1% and mostly those outside of Russia — have signed a joint public statement criticizing the war. Moreover, 700 university rectors, the leaders of 700 top academic institutions, signed a public statement supporting the war. Sociological surveys (to be taken with a grain of salt in a totalitarian society) indicate that President Putin’s approval rating in Russia is above 80% (as of March 2023) and that consistently over the last year approximately 70% of the Russian population has supported the war. **The contribution of the ROC to this consensus has been considerable and is damning.**

Russian theologian, Sergei Chapnin, former deputy editor-in-chief of the Moscow Patriarchate Publishing House, now at the Orthodox Christian Study Center of Fordham University, addressed the hypocrisy of the ROC bishops in an open letter (February 6, 2023). He reproached them for being **“embittered castle-builders swilling the cocktail of imperial myth, resentment, and unbelievably primitive eschatology... You stand by a man [Patriarch Kirill] who justifies war crimes and has betrayed the Church. You repeat his words, retell his criminal arguments.”** <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2023/02/06/open-letter-russian-bishops/>

Faith in action

Although this hearing centers on the Russian persecution of religion and national identity on the occupied territories and the Russian Orthodox Church’s ideological role in the aggression against Ukraine, I would like to conclude my testimony with a supplementary perspective, one that focusses **on the hope and faith of many in Ukraine and helps explain the fortitude of David’s stand against Goliath.**

There are various ways to look at the spiritual life. In the minds of many “religion” is readily measured by institutional and structural categories. Yet for a Christian the Church is not a building that can be destroyed or an organization that can be banned. It is the Body of Christ – a mystical phenomenon. We cannot speak about the Church without mentioning the foundation it is built on – faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is at the crux of the Church’s existence and activity. What we see happening in Ukraine brings us back to this core.

Facing dangers and risking their lives, many Ukrainians today ask themselves fundamental existential questions: about life, death, and eternity. The specter of death, an ever-present menace, leads to burning questions about the essence and criteria of life. People in Ukraine are constantly pushed to consider their fate and their faith. In Ukraine, there is a palpable belief in eternity. **Ukrainians are willing to risk their lives and the fear of death is not stopping them. The hope of eternal life overcomes this fear. For many, God has overcome death by His solidarity with humanity in its death.**

As the saying goes, in the foxholes there are few atheists. Today, Ukraine is one big foxhole. The priests and bishops with whom I regularly communicate have shared that during this month’s Easter services churches were full despite the fact that civil authorities encouraged people to avoid public places since the Russians target objects of the civilian infrastructure. **Sociological studies indicate that various indicators of religious belief and practice, the level of trust regarding**

churches and religious organizations, and their role in society at a time of war are for the most part generally stable or rising.

The Razumkov Centre survey “War and Church the Religious situation in Ukraine 2022” is to be recommended: https://razumkov.org.ua/images/2023/02/13/2022_Religiya_ENGL.pdf

Measuring spirituality and gauging faith is a precarious exercise. Numbers do not necessarily reflect spiritual authenticity. Yet we can observe a certain process of conversion occurring within Ukrainian society. War accelerates change. President Zelensky, who was a thoroughly secular comedian, has taken on and, in fact, helped bring back into the international discourse a language of principles and values. His statements often include the language of faith. Soldiers and civilians near the frontline always welcome military chaplains. The Churches and religious organizations (with exception of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church associated with the Moscow Patriarchate) have enjoyed high approval ratings in Ukraine. The level of trust in “the Church” in February-March of this year was at 70% (the Army is trusted by 96% of the population, the President by 83%, the parliament by 51%). <https://credo.pro/2023/03/341940>

But there is another measure of faith – solidarity.

And Ukrainians of all faiths and walks of life pass this test with flying colors. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40.

After one of my trips to Ukraine, I landed in New York City and was struck by a realization sparked by what I encountered in the Big Apple: the homeless on the streets. **In Ukraine I did not see such destitution despite the fact that 14 million people were forced from their homes. Poles, Romanians, Germans, Italians, Canadians, Americans, and people of scores of countries generously have offered hospitality to over 8 million Ukrainians. At the same time, Ukrainians of modest means managed to lodge and otherwise accommodate some 6 million internally displaced persons. One does not see many refugee camps in Ukraine.** There are no reports of starvation in Ukrainian-controlled territories. The network of connections and support within society turned out to be stronger than Russian missile attacks, which this past winter were geared to freeze Ukrainian urban populations. Yet nobody froze. Symbolically, the quickly created community shelters where people could get a warm meal, charge their phones, and spend time during the most violent attacks when Russians targeted power plants and electrical grids came to be called “hubs of invincibility.”

Today, mutual sacrifice among Ukrainians is a great spiritual testimony. Hundreds of thousands are ready to give their lives and volunteer to join the army, and millions are donating funds to support the defense of the country. In the first year of the full-scale war, more than 33.96 billion hryvnias (one billion USD) have been donated by average Ukrainian citizens to the accounts of the National bank and the country's three largest funds for military support. There are countless smaller funds and ones that focus exclusively on humanitarian aid. The culture of giving has become part of the fabric of Ukrainian society. Almost everyone is involved in contributing to the purchase of vehicles, drones, tourniquets, personal protective gear, and to accommodate those who have lost everything.

In Ukraine, there is faith in action. The four basic principles of the Catholic Church’s social teaching: 1.) respect for God-given human dignity, 2.) solidarity, 3.) subsidiarity, and 4.) the pursuit of the common good are manifest in Ukraine’s courageous resilience and defense. The Church has played a central role in proposing and inculcating these principles so strongly embraced during the war crisis.

I started with the testimony of Patriarch Josyf that evil would not last forever. It won’t if we all continue to confront it resolutely and with critical understanding of the dangers this war brings to the United States and to the world.

Josyf Slipyj was indeed right.

Between 1939 and the mid 1980s, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was reduced from almost 3,000 priests to some 300 whose average age surpassed the life expectancy of males in the Soviet Union. Those 300 priests were able to minister to only 1% of the pre-World War II Greek Catholic population. In the natural realm, their cause seemed hopeless. They were destined to die out. Today, three decades after the fall of the USSR, the UGCC has revived and has 3,000 priests again. Some of them, like the Redemptorists from Berdyansk, Fathers Ivan and Bohdan, are called to be martyrs. Not necessarily to die or be killed, but to witness. The word “martyr” derives from the Greek *martyria*, which means *witness*—to stand steadfastly for principles and to be ready to sacrifice for them.

Forty years ago, the Helsinki Commission’s work contributed to the freedom of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics and to the liberation of many other people of faith who were subject to Soviet communist oppression. These efforts need to be remembered and lauded. They need to continue and intensify in the circumstances of the Russian war against Ukraine and against the international order of democracy, justice, and freedom.

It is essential to monitor closely the consequences of the Russian invasion. The crimes against religious liberty must be identified, fully investigated, and condemned. Concerted efforts need to be exerted to ensure the religious and general freedoms of the people of Ukraine.

Ultimately, they are giving their lives also for ours.