

Statement of Evangelical Churches of Ukraine on Religious Persecutions in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions Wednesday, 23 July 2014 13:52

STATEMENT of Heads of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine on Religious Persecutions in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions

Since the activation of the Eastern Ukrainian separatist movements and the so-called declaration of Donetsk and Luhansk 'people's republic' (DNR, LNR), the Christians of eastern regions, especially of the Evangelical denominations, are increasingly becoming the victims of religious persecution.

The purposeful attacks of armed militants against Evangelicals are accompanied by abductions, beatings, torture, threats of execution, pogroms at the places of prayer meetings, captures of prayer houses, rehabilitation centers and other places of worship and ancillary facilities, inflicting harm on personal health and personal property of pastors and clerics.

During May – June 2014 [the facts of captured people and beating Evangelical pastors and ministers](#) took place in Slovyansk, Horlivka, Donetsk and Druzhkivka. Terrorists of DNR and LNR not only prevent religious activities of Evangelical Christians, but also capture the houses of worship to accommodate their own staffs, hospitals and gun emplacements. Such incidents have occurred repeatedly in Donetsk, Horlivka, Slov'yansk, Shakhtarsk, Druzhkivka, Torez in Donetsk Region and in Luhansk region as well.

Moreover, on June 14 in a terrorist attack which took place on a bridge in Mariupol militants of DNR murdered Sergiy Skorobahach, pastor of the Renewal Church, who was the chairman of the City Council of Churches.

The Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine condemns any religious persecution and discrimination of believers of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, whatever motives they use as their excuses.

Intolerance and hostility on religious ground are not inherent in the Ukrainian society in which over 50 representatives of various denominations peacefully and fruitfully cooperate during more than 20 years. Freedom of religion is the achievement of independent Ukraine, thanks to which inter-religious concord and harmony have been established in our country.

We call upon the international community, including the monitoring missions of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and the European Union to make efforts to prevent the continuation and escalation of religious intolerance in the territories of eastern Ukraine, controlled by the armed separatists. We are convinced that the whole world community must condemn the oppression of religious freedom in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, which reached up to the level of physical massacre of the dissidents, including the real threat to the life of Evangelical Christians in the east of Ukraine.

We ask believers all around the world to join our prayers for peace in the east of Ukraine, for stopping terrorism and bloodshed, for restoration of normal life and wholeness of the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Ukraine who live in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, regardless of their nationality, religion, language and worldview.

Signed by members of the Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine and promulgated in Kyiv on July 8, 2014:

- **Anatoliy Havryliuk**, Senior Bishop of the Center of Independent Charismatic Christian Churches of Ukraine (Full Gospel);
- **Valery Antonyuk**, Chairman of the Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian-Baptists;
- **Mykhailo Panocho**, Senior Bishop of the Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine;
- **Vasyl Raychynets**, Senior Pastor of the Union of Free Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine;
- **Serhiy Shaptala**, Chairman of the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Ukraine;
- **Serhiy Datsko**, Chairman of the Association of the Missionary Churches of Evangelical Christians of Ukraine;
- **Mykola Salamakha**, Deputy Senior Bishop of the Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church;
- **Vyacheslav Horpynchuk**, Bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church;
- **Anatoliy Kalyuzhny**, Senior Pastor of the Council of Independent Evangelical Churches of Ukraine.

Translated by Julia Vituk, edited by Rev. Vyacheslav Horpynchuk