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Ukrainian Muslims in the Context of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

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This article examines the processes of transformation in the Ukrainian Muslim community since the outset of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and also delves into shifts in the state's policy towards Muslims during this time. Since the conflict began in 2014, the state's stance towards Muslims has steadily improved. The main reason for this is the unequivocal pro-Ukrainian position taken by nearly all Muslim communities in Ukraine amidst the Russian invasion. The paper assesses the impact of Russian military aggression and the occupation of part of Ukraine's territory on the country's Muslim communities. It also highlights the ambiguous role of a number of Islamist movements taking an active part in the armed resistance to the invasion

Keywords: *Russian-Ukrainian War, Ukrainian Muslims, Imams-Chaplains, Volunteer Battalions, State-Confessional Policy.*

The Muslim community in Ukraine has a lengthy history, yet it has often been overshadowed by the dominant Christian denominations, primarily Orthodoxy. The onset of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, however, showed that Muslims constitute an essential part of Ukrainian society. This is particularly evident in the context of their active role in resisting the invasion.

According to the last general census in Ukraine, conducted in 2001, the number of Muslims by origin, commonly referred to as ethnic Muslims, was 436,000, or about 0.9% of the total population. The largest groups of ethnic Muslims were Crimean Tatars (248,000), Volga Tatars (73,000), Azeris (45,000), representatives of North Caucasian ethnic groups (14,000), Uzbeks (12,000), and Turks/Meskhetian Turks (about 10,000). Before the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian military-political conflict, Ukraine's largest Muslim community resided in Crimea. The Donetsk region had the second largest number of Muslims,

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followed by the Kharkiv, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia regions and the city of Kyiv.¹

Currently statistics on Muslims in Ukraine remain unavailable, with estimates ranging arbitrarily from 90,000 to 2 million people.² Nataliya Kochan notes a number of limitations to the registration of Muslim communities by authorities. First of all, official statistics do not reflect the real state of affairs, as the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” does not require the mandatory registration of religious communities as legal entities. Notably, more than half of the Muslim communities operating in Ukraine are not registered, and some have not come to the attention of state authorities. In addition, a significant portion of informal associations predominantly composed of Muslims and comprising legal and illegal migrants from the MENA region, Central Asia and South Asia remain largely unobserved by the state.³

As of January 1, 2022, seven Muslim religious associations were registered with the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience: the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine / RAMU (34 registered communities), the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “Umma” / RAMU-Umma (11), the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine “Akhmadie” (1), the Religious Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea / RAM ARC (2), the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine (0), the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea (0), the Religious Administration of Independent Muslim Communities of Ukraine “*Kyivskiy Muftiyat*” (2). In addition, the official statistics included “independent Muslim communities” (41) and “Shiite religious communities” (9).⁴

¹ Olexandr Bogomolov, Serhii Danylov, Ihor Semivolos and Halyna Iavorskaia, *Islamskaia identychnist' v Ukraine* [Islamic identity in Ukraine] (Kyiv: ID Stilos, 2006), 24.

² Nataliya Kochan, “Etnopolitychni aspekty formuvannia ta rozvytku islamu v Donbaskomu rehioni Ukrainy” [“The Ethnic and Political Aspects of the Development of Islam in Ukrainian Donbas region”], *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etno-natsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I.F.Kurasa NAN Ukrainy* 5(61) (September-October 2012): 324.

³ *Ibidem*, 323-24.

⁴ “Zvit pro merezhu relihiinykh orhanizatsii stanom na 1 sichnia 2022 roku” [“Report on the network of religious organizations as of January 1, 2022”], <https://dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Zvit-pro-merezhu-relihiinykh-orhanizatsiy-Form1-2022.xlsx>, accessed August 20, 2023.

With the onset of conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014, Muslim religious associations located in Crimea, as well as those in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, were no longer within the scope of Ukrainian legislation. Then, following the Russian invasion of February 2022, a large number of communities found themselves in occupied territory while their governance centers remained under Kyiv-controlled territory. This primarily concerns communities located in the Kherson region, which are predominantly composed of Meskhetian Turks who are members of the RAMU.

State policy towards Muslims

Uncertainty is a distinctive feature of Ukrainian public policy regarding Muslims. This uncertainty is part of a decades-old historical pattern, as there have been no registered Muslim communities in the Ukrainian SSR⁵ since the post-war period (specifically since 1951). Moreover, an unspoken rule within the Council on Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers perpetuated the notion that “there is no Islam in Ukraine.” A former employee of the Council recalled:

...our unspoken mythology asserted there was no Islam in Ukraine. That is, we all knew that there were communities, but information about them existed only at the level of memos and did not find its way into the statistical reports that we submitted to Moscow.⁶

After Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991, the emergence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from the underground and the split in Ukrainian Orthodoxy split became the central themes in religious life. At the same time, the “Islamic question” was consistently relegated to the background, despite growth and development in the Muslim community in Crimea. The sole exception was the recommendation made in 1992 to President Leonid Kravchuk by Arsen Zinchenko, the head of the Ukrainian Council of Religious Affairs, regarding the two competing

⁵ Denys Brylov, “Derzhavna polityka v radianskii Ukraini shchodo musulman v pisliavoiennyi period (za materialamy arkhivu Upovnovazhenoho Rady v spravakh relihiinykh kultiv pry Radi ministriv SRSR po URSR)” [“The state policy in Soviet Ukraine towards the Muslims in the post-war period (based on the archives of the Assignee of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults under the Council of Ministers of the USSR for the Ukrainian SSR)”], *Multyversum* 3–4 (December 2017): 175.

⁶ Interview with a former senior inspector of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR (on the condition of anonymity). The interview was taken by D. Brylov, on 10 September, 2015, Kyiv.

Muslim religious centers active in Ukraine at the time. These were the Main Mukhtasibat Administration of Ukraine (as of 1993 called the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine) and the Qadiyat of Muslims of Crimea (as of 1994, the Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea). As Zinchenko pointed out in his memo: “The Council on Religious Affairs believes it is necessary to support the status of the Main Mukhtasibat Administration in Kyiv as the central spiritual institution for Ukrainian Muslims.”⁷

At the national level, the Council supported the Main Mukhtasibat Administration in Kyiv, while the regional Crimean authorities supported the Qadiyat and its head, Seitcelil Ibrahimov. Chervonnaya offers an interesting explanation of this support:

A young “effendi” [*Seitcelil Ibrahimov – DB*], who graduated from the Spiritual Muslim Madrassah in Bukhara (which was packed with KGB agents during the Soviet era who kept an eye on every move students made), may have been considered by the Crimean leadership and its Russian separatist forces as an alternative (and ideally, controllable) figure constituting a political counterweight to the radical leadership of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People while also fostering the autonomization and distancing of the peninsula from Ukraine.⁸

The next attempt to structure public policy on religion, including that of Ukrainian Muslims, took place in December 1996. President Leonid Kuchma created the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), an independent religious public association representing 95 percent of Ukraine’s religious network and serving as the main (sometimes sole) partner of the Ukrainian government in state-confessional dialogue.⁹ Three Muslim religious centers active at that time joined the Council: the Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea / RAMC (Simferopol), the RAMU (Kyiv), and the Spiritual Center of

⁷ Brylov, “Sufijskaya transnacionalnaya kommunikativnaya set al-Ahbash na postsovet-skom prostranstve: primer Ukrainy” [“Al-Ahbash Transnational Sufi Network in the Post-Soviet Space: a Ukrainian Case Study”], *Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya: Ekonomicheskie i socialnye peremeny* 2 (May 2018): 189.

⁸ Svetlana Chervonnaya, “Organizaciya musulmanskoj zhizni v Krymu. Istoriya Duhovnogo Upravleniya musulman Kryma” [“Organization of Muslim life in the Crimea. History of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea”], http://old.iea.ras.ru/books/11_KRIM4/100320041501_6.htm, accessed August 20, 2023.

⁹ Brylov, Tetiana Kalenychenko and Andrii Kryshtal, “The Religious Factor in Conflict Research on the Peacebuilding Potential of Religious Communities in Ukraine,” Analytical Report (PAX, 2021), 11.

Independent Muslim Communities of Ukraine¹⁰ (after 1999 called the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine, Donetsk).¹¹

Although the representatives of the Muslim community joined the UCCRO, there was still no clear policy towards Muslims. As Mykola Kiryushko notes, public administration had no clear understanding of what Islam constituted and how to approach it from a policy perspective. Was it a traditional Ukrainian religion, or an obscure new tradition of a less desirable character? One thing was clear — local officials had two distinct ways of approaching Christianity (primarily Orthodoxy) and Islam: they took a *partnering* attitude toward the former and a *segregating* attitude toward the latter.¹²

Crimean Muslims, facing difficult economic and legal circumstances after repatriation, found this attitude of central and regional authorities particularly distressing. In terms of religion, a significant stumbling block was the question of at least a partial return of waqf lands, and a resolution to this issue remained elusive throughout the entire period of independence. The problem of returning mosques previously taken away from Muslims, as well as the construction of new mosques and Islamic schools, was no less serious. This situation led to frequent conflicts with the local non-Tatar population and with authorities who delayed the return of religious buildings — a situation not unique to Crimea but observed in other regions of the country as well. For example, as a report of the Office from the Commissioner for Religious Affairs in Crimea notes, “the issue of the transfer of former places of worship to Muslims or the construction of new mosques in Crimea is resolved extremely slowly.”¹³

Some new Tatar mosques were built literally “on blood,” as took place in the autumn of 1990 in the village of Koreiz, where land got “squatted” to erect a mosque. When the police and employees of the local sovkhoz (state farm), instigated by the administration, tried to destroy the “squatter,” the mosque’s desecration and destruction sparked intense anger among the Crimean Tatars. According to Chervonnaya, in their

¹⁰ All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. *Zbirnyk dokumentiv 1996–2021* (Kyiv: Media svit, 2021), 22.

¹¹ The Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine membership in UCCRO has been suspended since January 24, 2013.

¹² Mykola Kiryushko, “Optimizaciya religijnoyi politiki derzhavi shodo islamu ta musulman: zagalni pryncypy” [“Optimizing the State’s Religious Policy Toward Islam and Muslims: General Principles”], *Derzhava i pravo* 47 (2010): 690-91.

¹³ Central State Archive of Ukraine. F.4648. Opt. 7. D. 551. S. 1.

outrage they, “showed the most desperate resistance to the pogromists, organizing a comprehensive defense armed with bottles containing a flammable mixture and placing a stone at the site of the destruction as a sign of the foundation of the Koreiz mosque.”¹⁴

Rather than developing a comprehensive notion of Islamic public policy, the state’s relations with Ukrainian Muslims were reactive and often sporadic. This meant that relations between government agencies and Islamic communities stemmed from individual interpretations of “state interests” by public officials - often shaped by their sympathies and antipathies – rather than being guided by a comprehensive public policy. In such cases, the state was drawn into intra-Muslim conflicts, becoming involved in the confrontation rather than acting as an arbiter.¹⁵

For example, in 2009, the State Committee of Ukraine for Nationalities and Religions initiated the creation of the Council of Representatives of Spiritual Administrations and Centers of Muslims of Ukraine under this Committee. The inaugural meeting of the Council was attended by the Chairman of the State Committee for Nationalities and Religions, Oleksandr Sagan. Other participants included Committee staff and representatives of three Islamic organizations: the RAMC (Deputy Chairman Aider Ismailov), the RAMU-Umma (Mufti Said Ismagilov and Chairman Igor Karpishen), and the Religious Administration of Independent Muslim communities of Ukraine “Kyiv Muftiate” (Deputy Head of the Administration Shavkat Samitov and the imam of the “Kyiv Muftiate” Ildar Khuzin). The stated purpose of the Council was to assist in the development of the Muslim ummah both at the national and regional levels, fostering mutual understanding and respect among all Muslim organizations in Ukraine. Its objectives also included coordinating interactions and dialogue between Islamic communities (including spiritual administrations and centers) and public authorities.¹⁶

¹⁴ Svetlana Chervonnyaya, “Mecheti v Krymu” [“Mosques in Crimea”], http://old.iea.ras.ru/books/11_KRIM4/100320041501_9.htm, accessed August 20, 2023.

¹⁵ Brylov, “Transformatsiya ukraïnskoi ummy v uslovyakh sotsyalno-polytycheskoho kryzysa” [“Transformation of the Ukrainian Ummah under conditions of socio-political crisis”], *Neprykosnovennyi zapas* 138, no 4 (August 2021): 143.

¹⁶ “Council of Representatives of Spiritual Administrations and Centers of Muslims of Ukraine established at the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions,” https://old.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=216%3A1&-catid=34%3Aua&Itemid=61&lang=uk, accessed September 12, 2023.

Those who founded the Council believed that the cooperation it would bring in and among the country's Islamic communities would foster social harmony and the improvement of state-confessional relations. The RAMU and the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine – representing the majority of Muslims in Donbas, who comprise the second largest number of communities in the country after the Crimean Muftiate, did not join this Council.

The Council was established in order to organize the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and the related distribution of Hajj quotas between various Muslim organizations, as well as to mediate conflict between different Muslim centers in Ukraine. Moreover, according to Oleksandr Sagan, the former chairman of the State Committee of National Religions and one of the founders of the Council, members of the new body tried to prevent the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea from joining (contrary to Article 5 of the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”), citing a potential increase of tension in the peninsula.¹⁷ Thus, the Council actually became a party to the conflict between the Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea, which claimed a religious monopoly among Crimean Tatars, and the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea. Since its establishment, the activity of the Council has been sporadic. Following the liquidation of the State Committee for Religious Affairs in 2011, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, which assumed the functions and powers of the dissolved Committee, did not reinstate cooperation with the Council.

As of 2023, the representatives of the Ukrainian Muslim community in the UCCRO collectively constitute the RAMU and the RAM ARC, the latter established in 2017. Despite the fact that the RAM ARC was initially not a member of the UCCRO, on July 18, 2023, it was admitted to the Council in place of the RAMC, a change reflecting the position of the Ukrainian authorities:

After the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the implementation of the decision by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine to ban the activities of religious organizations affiliated with centers of Russian influence in Ukraine, the membership of the Religious Administration

¹⁷ Kalenychenko, “Ukraine Islamic vector: Ukrainian Ummah’s reason for being,” https://risu.ua/en/ukraine-islamic-vector-ukrainian-ummah-s-reason-for-being_n75193, accessed September 10, 2023.

of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (RAMC), representing Ukrainian citizens residing in Crimea who adhere to Islam, was reinstated to the UCCRO on July 18, 2023.¹⁸

Ukraine’s Muslim Community since the Beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

The year 2014 brought notable changes to Ukrainian Islamic public policy. The impetus for these changes stems from the pro-Ukrainian position of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, as well as the resettlement of tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars from Crimea due to religious persecution by the Russian occupation authorities. This demographic includes those affiliated with the Salafist community or supporters of the Islamic Liberation Party (*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, hereby HT), the latter banned by Russia. A March 2014 report by the Anti-Discrimination Center Memorial documented a surge in human rights abuses immediately following the annexation of Crimea. These violations included numerous cases of abductions, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, tortures, and extrajudicial executions of representatives of the Crimean Tatar people. In 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in its Resolution, stated that the cumulative effect of the repressive measures of the Russian authorities against the Crimean Tatars since the annexation constituted a threat to the very existence of this community as a separate ethnic, cultural and religious group.¹⁹

Muslims in other occupied regions of the country have also faced persecution. For example, in Donetsk, a community center affiliated with the RAMU was closed in May 2016 on charges of “ties with Western intelligence services and funding from Ukraine”. Several members of the community were arrested, and religious literature on the rules of performing namaz, marriage, and other related topics was seized.²⁰ Subsequently, in June 2018, the community center of the RAMU-Umma in Donetsk was also closed, and seven other mosques and cultural centers in Donetsk

¹⁸ “Religious Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea,” <https://vrciro.org.ua/en/council/member/ayder-rustemov>, accessed August 20, 2023.

¹⁹ “The Discrimination and Persecution of Crimean Tatars in 2014-2022,” <https://adcmemorial.org/en/articles/the-discrimination-and-persecution-of-crimean-tatars-in-2014-2022/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

²⁰ “The DPR MGB conducts an anti-terrorist operation,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysUUPFZCZv8>, accessed September 10, 2023.

and Luhansk regions were destroyed or damaged in a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022.²¹

Despite disagreements between Crimean Tatar religious groups and the predominantly secular Mejlis prior to 2014 (in particular between the Mejlis and HT),²² a cooperative dynamic has developed among them in the aftermath of the Russian occupation.²³ This has come about as a result of the protection afforded these groups at the national level by the Mejlis leadership, in particular through the Commissioner for the Crimean Tatar People under the President of Ukraine. In contrast to the Mejlis, these religious groups have benefited from an influx of human resources due to the mass migration of their followers to the Kyiv-controlled territories (commonly referred to as “mainland Ukraine”).

The country’s first official Islamic association to represent Salafis was the Association of Muslims of Ukraine (AMU), founded in 2014 in Kyiv by migrants from Crimea. The association is led by Suleiman (Elimdar) Khayrullayev, a graduate of the Islamic University in Riyadh. One of AMU’s main partners is the Crimean Tatar Land Society of Kyiv, whose board of trustees includes the leadership of the Mejlis.²⁴

As the Mejlis lost its influence on the RAMC, which adopted a pro-Russian stance from the outset of the annexation, Mejlis leadership decided to establish a new muftiate. As Mustafa Dzhemilev stated: “Our mufti turned out to be an unreliable person.... For this reason, we decided to create a muftiate here (*in mainland Ukraine – DB*) that would reflect the thoughts and wishes of the Crimean Tatars.”²⁵

²¹ “Russian attacks on Religious Freedom in Ukraine,” <https://irf.in.ua/p/96>, accessed September 10, 2023.

²² Valentina Napadysta, “Subiekty krymskotatarskoho natsionalnoho rukhu: stratehiia i taktika vtillennia ideinykh priorytetiv u politychnomu konteksti nezaleznoi Ukrainy” [“The subjects of the Crimean Tatar national movement: strategy and tactics embodiment ideological priorities in the political context of independent Ukraine”], *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh ta etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I. F. Kurasa* 87, no 1 (2017): 276.

²³ “Represii v Krymu spryiaiat dialohu Medzhlisu i «Khizb ut-Takhrir» – Amzaiev” [“Repressions in Crimea contribute to dialogue between Mejlis and Hizb ut-Tahrir – Amzaiev”], <https://ua.krymr.com/a/news/27574034.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

²⁴ “Muslims celebrated the great holiday of Eid al-Adha,” <https://amu.org.ua/news/musulmani-vidsvyatkuvali-velike-svyato-kurban-bayram>, accessed September 10, 2023.

²⁵ “A Crimean muftiat will be established in mainland Ukraine,” <https://web.archive.org/web/20220401183659/https://old.qha.com.ua/ru/politika/na-materik>

On November 19, 2016, a congress of representatives from a various Crimean Tatar Muslim organizations convened in Kyiv. The congress established the RAM ARC, with the aim of fostering unity and collaboration among all Crimean Tatar Muslims in mainland Ukraine. Mufti Aider Rustemov, who headed the Committee of Muslim Spiritual Values in the Land Community of Crimean Tatars in Kyiv since 2015, assumed the role of Mufti. The Congress also established the Council of Ulema, serving as the supreme religious assembly and functioning as the coordinating and supervising body of the muftiate. The Council consisted of eleven people, nine of whom possessed a religious education, while the remaining two were either members of the Mejlis members or veterans of the Crimean Tatar national movement. The head of the Association of Muslims of Ukraine, Suleiman Khayrullayev, was named chairman of the Ulema Council.²⁶

With the official backing of Kyiv and, above all, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko himself, the Mejlis (along with the new Crimean muftiate under its control) has played an expanding role in reshaping the Ukrainian Muslim community and altering the status quo. This is particularly evident in the Kherson oblast, a traditionally important region for the RAMU in which roughly half of its communities are concentrated (this includes Crimean Tatars who lived there prior to 2014 as well as the Meskhetian Turk community). Mejlis activities in the region, including the opening of a regional office, has led to conflict between the supporters of the two organizations.²⁷

Disagreement has since been rife between representatives of the local Mejlis (comprised of Khersonians, who include Crimean Tatars historically from the region) and the Crimean Tatar Land Society in the Kherson region, consisting of Crimean Tatars who left Crimea after 2014. Among the latter, a significant number of activists represent Islamic movements (primarily HT).²⁸

ovoi-ukraine-budet-sozdan-krimskii-muftiyat-video/153278/, accessed September 10, 2023.

²⁶ “The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea was established in Kyiv,” <https://investigator.org.ua/topnews/190850/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

²⁷ Serhii Danilov, “Regionalna identichnist krimskih tatar i turkiv-meshetinciv v Hersonskij oblasti” [“Regional Identity of Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks in the Kherson Region”], *Shodoznavstvo* 80 (2017): 55.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 61.

There have been other changes in public policy concerning the Muslim community. In particular, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine issued Order № 875, which from October 2019 allowed Muslim women to be photographed for identity documents in hijab.

With the election of President Volodymyr Zelensky, there has been a notable shift in state religious policy (including Islamic communities). In contrast to his predecessor Poroshenko, who emphasized the religious aspect of Ukrainian independence by focusing on the autocephaly of Ukrainian Orthodoxy (an approach which led to the politicization of the religious sphere), Zelensky has tried to emphasize his impartiality towards all religious denominations from the very beginning of his tenure. He held a separate meeting with the leaders of the Muslim community of Ukraine, urging the muftis to help unite and consolidate Ukrainian society.²⁹

On July 30, 2020, President Zelensky signed Decree No. 303/2020 “The issue of determining the status of certain religious holidays.”³⁰ This decree directed the Cabinet of Ministers to consider granting official status to particular religious holidays, including those most important to Muslims, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. It also introduced a provision recommending employers allow employees a day off to observe these holidays based on their religious affiliation. The government deliberated this issue with the UCCRO and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory before submitting the draft bill to the Verkhovna Rada.

With the outbreak of the Russian invasion in February 2022, public policy concerning Muslims became even more favorable. To a large extent, this shift was due to Muslim opposition to the Russian invasion, a stance characterizing the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian Muslims across ethnic groups. In addition, Muslims joined the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and volunteer battalions. Currently, the largest Muslim contingents in the AFU are the Crimean

²⁹ Kostia Andreykovets, “Zelensky met with muftis of Ukraine. Talked about peace between believers of different religions,” <https://babel.ua/ru/news/29637-zelenskiy-vstretilsya-s-muftiyami-ukrainy-govorili-za-mir-mezhdu-veruyushchi-mi-raznyh-religiy>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³⁰ “Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 303/2020 «The issue of determining the status of certain religious holidays»,” <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3032020-34557>, accessed September 10, 2023.

Tatars³¹ and Azeris,³² each numbering 500 individuals. In addition, during the initial months of the war, when the AFU experienced an acute shortage of personnel with combat experience, Chechen volunteer units with extensive experience an armed confrontation against the Russian military played a crucial role in meeting the military's needs.

Muslim Religious administrations have actively engaged in humanitarian efforts to assist those affected by the hostilities. For example, the RAMU provides aid to impacted civilians through its communities, particularly in Odesa, Poltava, and Kyiv. The Kyiv Mosque "Ar-Rakhma" has played a pivotal role as a refuge for the residents of the surrounding areas during the initial months of the conflict, and it has also sheltered Muslim refugees arriving from the regions of Ukraine affected by the hostilities (about half of the muftiat member communities are located in the occupied areas of the Kherson region). Humanitarian aid to victims of the war is also provided by the RAM ARC in collaboration with the AMU (which unites Salafist communities) and the RAMU-Umma with the Congress of Muslims of Ukraine (close to the European "Muslim Brotherhood").³³ The ex-Mufti of RAMU-Umma, Said (Serhiy) Ismahilov, became widely known after volunteering for the Territorial Defense Forces (TrO) and serving as a driver in the paramedic brigade.³⁴

Military chaplaincy has witnessed significant growth, particularly due to the inclusion of Muslim volunteers, among them individuals from the North Caucasus (such as Chechens, one of the peoples of Dagestan). These volunteers, who have previously engaged in armed resistance against Russian authorities, form a distinct category among combatants. The first

³¹ "About 500 Crimean Tatars are now fighting in the ranks of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and volunteer battalions," <https://kherson.rayon.in.ua/news/575881-blizko-500-krimskikh-tatar-zaraz-voyuyut-u-lavakh-zsu-ta-dobrovolchikh-batalyonakh-zarema-barieva>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³² "About 500 ethnic Azeris are fighting in the Ukrainian Armed Forces," <https://zerkalo.az/v-ryadah-vs-ukrainy-voyuyut-okolo-500-etnicheskikh-azerbajdzhantsev/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³³ Kalenychenko and Brylov, "«Whoever saves one life saves the world entire»: Ukrainian religious denominations during the war," <https://obsreligion.cnrs.fr/bulletin/whoever-saves-one-life-saves-the-world-entire-ukrainian-religious-denominations-during-the-war-english-version/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³⁴ Carlotta Gall, "«We Are Accidentally Alive»: A Muslim Cleric Reflects on His War Experience," <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/15/world/europe/ukraine-russia-muslims.html>, accessed September 20, 2023.

imam-chaplain appeared in 2014 due to the need to bury a Muslim killed in fighting in eastern Ukraine.

The RAMU-Umma established the Department of Military Chaplaincy of Muslims of Ukraine. In 2016, after a meeting between the Mufti of the RAMU-Umma, Said Ismahilov, and then-Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Viktor Muzhenko, this chaplaincy service was officially registered with the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. Given the small number of Muslims in the military who are scattered across different units, the conflict zone was divided into sectors. An imam-chaplain was assigned to each sector, where they travelled between military units as needed in order to provide assistance to their coreligionists.³⁵

According to Said Ismahilov, a distinctive aspect of military chaplaincy in Ukraine is the existence of chaplains working on a volunteer basis, including imams-chaplains. He attributed this situation to the relatively small and dispersed Muslim presence in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which makes it impossible to assign a separate imam-chaplain to particular unit with Muslims soldiers³⁶. This is due to the fact that there are no more than a few Muslim soldiers in the unit, while most of the other soldiers in the unit are mostly Christians. Muslim chaplains are therefore obliged to traverse the entire front in order to offer their services.

According to the Mufti of the RAM ARC, Aider Rustemov, “currently there are five Muslim chaplains (imams) in the Armed Forces who work side by side with chaplains of other faiths and help each other in a coordinated manner. In fact, there are many more, but there are certain problems with their registration.”³⁷

The participation of President Zelensky along with the leaders of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people in the iftar (evening fasting during

³⁵ “Kudy yde musulmanska umma Ukrainy pislia ahresii Rosii?” [“Where does the Muslim Ummah of Ukraine go after Russia’s aggression?”], <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/polityka/kudy-yde-musulmanska-umma-ukrayiny-pislya-agresiyi-rosiyi>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³⁶ “Kapelan mozhe vykonuvaty sotsialne sluzhinnia, ale peredusim vid noho ochikuiut sluzhinnia dukhovnoho” [“A chaplain may perform social ministry, but above all he is expected to perform spiritual ministry”], <https://umma.in.ua/ua/node/2247>, accessed September 10, 2023.

³⁷ “Muftii Krymu: V lavakh ZSU ye piat musulmanskykh kapelaniv” [“Mufti of Crimea: there are five Muslim chaplains in the ranks of the AFU”], <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/3774666-muftij-krimu-v-lavah-zsu-e-pat-musulmanskih-kapelaniv.html>, accessed September 15, 2023.

the fasting month of Ramadan) marked a historic moment for independent Ukraine. The president's participation in the event, taking place in the Birlik Crimean Tatar Cultural Center in the Kyiv region, served as a symbolic acknowledgment of the significant role played by Muslims in Ukraine. Ukrainian Muslim servicemen, mostly Crimean Tatars, as well as Azeris,³⁸ Volga-Ural Tatars, and Ukrainians who converted to Islam were present at the occasion. Among them were chaplains, paramedics, volunteers, and others. Speaking at the iftar, the head of state said:

Today, we initiate a tradition for Ukraine – that of Iftar – at the official level. Together with our soldiers, our heroes, the present Muslim soldiers; together with the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people and with representatives of the entire Muslim community of Ukraine. And in this way, we demonstrate that Ukraine values every person and every community. Diversity upheld by respect is part of the character of an independent Ukraine. May our character always remain strong and spur the people on to good deeds. Ukraine is grateful to the Muslims of our country and to everyone in the global Muslim community who, like us, seek peace and protection from evil.³⁹

Zelensky also reminded the attendees that it was with the occupation of Ukrainian Crimea and its repression of Crimean Muslims that Russia began its attempt to subjugate Ukraine.

One might say that the increased consideration of Ukrainian Muslims on the part of the state (especially Crimean Tatars) was part of a broader policy aimed at the Muslim world. In particular, President Zelensky established the new role of a special representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa⁴⁰, as well as an Advisory Council on the interaction of Ukraine with Arab and Muslim states⁴¹ which included not

³⁸ According to anecdotal reports from the Azeri diaspora, the largest number of Muslim fighters killed on the Ukrainian side during the Russo-Ukrainian war have been Azeris, most of whom are AFU soldiers. This stands in contrast to Chechens, who have mainly fought in volunteer battalions.

³⁹ “Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Today we are starting the tradition of Iftar at the official level manifesting that Ukraine values every community,” <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-sogodni-mi-zapochatkovuyemo-tradiciju-iftaru-na-of-82157>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴⁰ “President: Ukraine is changing its policy towards Africa and seeks closer cooperation with African countries,” <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/glava-derzhav-ukrayina-zminyuye-svoyu-politiku-shodo-afriki-76881>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴¹ “Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 622/2022 «On the Advisory Council on Cooperation between Ukraine and Arab and Muslim States»,” <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/6222022-43793>, accessed September 10, 2023.

only state representatives but also scholarly experts. On May 19, 2023, Zelensky became the first president in Ukrainian history to deliver an official speech at the Summit of the League of Arab States. His speech highlighted the increased focus and attentiveness of Ukrainian authorities towards Muslims and the Islamic world. He also appealed to Muslim solidarity by drawing attention to the persecution of Crimean Tatars by Russian authorities in Crimea, emphasizing that the majority of the victims were Muslim. He then called for dialogue between Arab countries and Ukraine, drawing attention to the fact that Russia is not as strong as it once was.⁴²

Representatives of Ukrainian Muslim associations have also played a role in shaping the attitude of Muslim countries toward the Russo-Ukrainian war. In particular, at the beginning of the hostilities, Sheikh Akhmed Tamim, Mufti of the RAMU, appealed to Muslims worldwide to support Ukraine. Later, Yahya Cholil Staquf, the leader of the world's largest Muslim organization "Nahdatul Ulama",⁴³ and the Grand Imam of the Egyptian Al-Azhar University, Ahmed el-Tayeb,⁴⁴ both of whom have close ties with the RAMU, called for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine. The European Council of Muslim Leaders (EULEMA) responded to Tamim's call by showing their support for Ukraine.⁴⁵ Under the leadership of Sheikh Aider Rustemov, another Ukrainian Muslim association, the RAM ARC, maintained close ties with the Turkish Department of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and regularly raised the issue of increasing support for Muslims in Ukraine in the face of Russian military aggression.⁴⁶

⁴² "Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the participants of the Arab League Summit," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgYLvb2Lk8U&t=31s>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴³ Amy Chew, "Russia and Ukraine jostle for support of world's largest Islamic group, Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama," <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3170667/russia-and-ukraine-jostle-support-worlds-largest-islamic-group>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴⁴ Ahmed el-Tayeb, "My message to world leaders," https://twitter.com/alimamal_tayeb/status/1502985867601891329?s=20&t=4l1emijrvrgM3TJB741IAA, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴⁵ "Prayer for Ukraine," <https://www.eulema.org>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴⁶ "Front religijnoi diplomatii" ["The frontline of religious diplomacy"], <https://www.dumk.org/2023/01/10/front-religijnoi-diplomatii/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

enemy of my enemy ...

Another crucial factor contributing to the aforementioned policy changes regarding Muslims has been the emergence, in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian military and political conflict, of a set of new groups representing Islamic movements. These groups mainly comprise natives of the North Caucasus, including many who were previously involved in military actions in the North Caucasus and the Middle East. When these groups faced expulsion from their home countries, channels for illegal migration and transit to EU countries of various groups of post-Soviet Muslims (*muhajirs*), who first passed through Turkey for various reasons, emerged in Ukraine. According to one representative of the Muhajir movement, Turkey offered those expelled on suspicion of participating in terrorist activities and who held Russian citizenship (or hailed from post-Soviet countries) passage to a third safe country of their choice. This led to a significant influx of this group into Georgia and Ukraine.⁴⁷

Several factors have contributed to the concentration of Islamists from the former Soviet Union in Ukraine. These include:

1. the prevalence of the Russian language, which make it easier for ex-USSR natives to adapt;
2. the similarity of bureaucratic structures and services to those of other ex-Soviet countries (for instance, immigration services);
3. the war with Russia, which has led supporters of radical movements to believe that Ukraine will not extradite them to Russia.⁴⁸

Moreover, natives of the North Caucasus have participated in the fight against Russia – first in the east of Ukraine since 2014; and since February 2022, in almost all parts of the Russo-Ukrainian front. This mainly includes people who had gained combat experience either at home during the First and Second Chechen Wars or in the Middle East as part of the armed anti-Assad opposition or in ISIS.

It is important to note that at both the beginning of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and after the Russian invasion in February 2022, there was a high demand for fighters with combat experience on

⁴⁷ Mahomed Tuayev, “Experts: The risks of assassination attempts and extradition are growing for the Chechen underground in Turkey,” <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/285362/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁴⁸ Zakir Magomedov, “To Kyiv, where they don’t persecute Salafists,” <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/v-kiev-gde-ne-presleduyut-salaftov/28548032.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

the Ukrainian side. Given how precious such experience was in this context, its character was often overlooked. Ukrainian Muslims and combatants from the North Caucasus who joined Ukrainian ranks typically consider the fight against Russia, whom they associate with anti-Islamic and anti-Chechen policies, and against pro-Russian forces in the so-called ORDLO (“Separate Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions”), to be a defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf*).

It is noteworthy that at the outset of the conflict in 2014, the stances of central and regional authorities at times diverged significantly concerning assistance from representatives of such groups. A notable example is the situation with Chechen volunteers. According to Andriy Herhert (also known as “Cherven” — June in Ukrainian), deputy commander of the Ukrainian Volunteer Army (UDA) and commander of the 8th separate UDA “Aratta” battalion, anti-Russian Chechens were invited to Ukraine by Ihor Kolomoysky, at the time chairman of the Dnipro regional State Administration. He wanted them to counter pro-Russian forces in the region, including “Kadyrov Chechens”:

Kolomoysky played it smart. As far as I understand, <...> he financed the arrival of Isa Munayev,⁴⁹ a Chechen brigadier general from Europe with whom my guys came and whom I did not know before.⁵⁰

However, a controversy ensued shortly thereafter. French Senator Nathalie Goulet, head of the Senate Commission of Inquiry into the organization and financing of militant jihadist networks in France and Europe, claimed that jihadist training camps were operating in the Dnipropetrovsk region.⁵¹ According to Goulet, there were no Ukrainians in this boot camp, but “people from the Caucasus, natives of Central Asia, Chechens, and Turks.” Goulet named the head of Ukraine’s Security Service SBU, Vasyl Hrytsak,⁵² as her source of information. Apparently, he passed this information on because of his disapproval for the extremely

⁴⁹ Isa Munayev is a Chechen field commander and a participant in both Chechen wars. In Ukraine, he led the Dzhokhar Dudayev International Peacekeeping Battalion, which consisted mainly of Chechens.

⁵⁰ “Interview with Andriy Herhert (commander «Cherven»),” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJkjXDqPHwk>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵¹ “Terrorisme: que peut la démocratie?” <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/agora/terrorisme-que-peut-la-democratie-8229937>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵² Alla Lazareva, “Are there jihadist camps near Dnipropetrovsk? About conversations with Natalie Goulet,” <https://tyzhden.ua/World/162250>, accessed September 10, 2023.

influential oligarch governor Ihor Kolomoysky choice of allies during the ongoing anti-terrorist operations at the time, but lacked the influence to sway his decisions.

Over time, the presence of such “unofficial” groups of Muslim migrants in Ukraine became less and less tolerated by state structures. A dramatic change occurred after the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, when President Poroshenko announced that he had received information about “possible ties of Islamic terrorists with those in Ukraine.”⁵³

Cases of extradition of ISIS-related suspects to Russian security forces or other countries have increased. For example, high-profile cases include the extradition of Ingush Timur Tumgoev⁵⁴ to Russia by the Ukrainian General Prosecutor’s Office in 2018, and the deportation to Belarus of a group of 12 Dagestan natives headed by Shamil Abdulkarimov in 2020.⁵⁵ The most famous case is the capture and detention of a high-ranking ISIS commander in Ukraine, Tsezar Tokhosashvili, and operation carried out jointly with the Georgian and U.S. intelligence services.⁵⁶

Moreover, it is worth noting the consistency of this policy, which began during Poroshenko’s term and has been continued by Zelensky. In particular, on May 21st, 2021, Zelensky signed his Decree 203/2021 “On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of May 14th, 2021 «On the application of special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions)»,” which imposed personal sanctions, including on Muslim Cheberloevsky, the commander of the Sheikh Mansur Muslim volunteer battalion, and several fighters of this unit. The sanctions restrict banking operations, participation in the privatization of state property, the right to invest in Ukraine, and several other measures.⁵⁷

⁵³ “Poroshenko says terrorist threat in Ukraine is growing,” https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/poroshenko-zayaviv-pro-zrostantnya-terroristichnoyi-zagrozi-v-ukrayini-191105_.html, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵⁴ “Ingushetia native Tumgoev, extradited by Ukraine to Russia, was sentenced to 18 years in prison,” <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-tumgoev-sud/30021788.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵⁵ “Ukraine expelled a group of 12 natives of Dagestan to Belarus,” <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/31097750.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵⁶ Katerina Serhatskova, “One of the ex-leaders of the «Islamic State» was detained in Kyiv – SBU,” <https://hromadske.ua/ru/posts/v-kieve-zaderzhali-odnogo-iz-eksliderov-islamskogo-gosudarstva-sbu>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵⁷ “Chechen battalion fighters fall under Ukraine’s sanctions,” <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/31268492.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

At the same time, human rights organizations and journalists have questioned the validity of at least some of these extraditions and sanctions, believing that charges of terrorism and ties with ISIS are abused by Ukrainian security services for career purposes, “just in case”, or “for old times’ sake” and ties with the Russian *siloviki*.⁵⁸ However, after the Russian invasion in 2022, the Ukrainian authorities’ reconsidered their approach to anti-Russian Islamists, even implementing a “most favorable treatment” for certain groups. This applies foremost to Chechens, including both Ichkerians (veterans of the First Chechen War connected with the struggle for Ichkerian independence) and jihadists (participants in the Second Chechen War and in combat operations in the Middle East, in Syria and Iraq).

As mentioned earlier, several “Chechen” battalions have been known to be fighting on the Ukrainian side since 2014. In the second half of 2022, Akhmed Zakayev, a Chechen politician, field commander, and diplomatic representative of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (described as “the head of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in exile” by the Ukrainian media) began to regularly visit Ukraine. He declared in an interview with Ukrainian media that, “Today, the army of the Chechen state is being restored and revived in Ukraine”⁵⁹ as part of the International Legion of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Moreover, anti-Russian Chechens have received support from the Ukrainian authorities, as the latter has recognized the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (the name of independent Chechnya) as a territory temporarily occupied by Russia.⁶⁰

Most Chechen fighters hope to liberate their homeland after Ukraine’s victory, and with its help:

The situation in Russia will change, and we will move with weapons across Georgia into the mountainous regions of Chechnya and liberate them. In this way, we will gradually liberate city after city... Young

⁵⁸ Pavel Pieniżek and Alyona Savchuk, “Anna and Yusuf. How Ukraine and Poland use similar methods of fabricating religious terrorism – and why it is dangerous,” <https://zaborona.com/metody-fabrykacziyi-religijnogo-teroryzmu/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁵⁹ “Akhmed Zakayev: the Chechen army is being rebuilt in Ukraine,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrM19648gZI>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶⁰ “Draft Resolution on the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Recognition of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria as Temporarily Occupied by the Russian Federation and Condemnation of the Genocide of the Chechen People,” <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/40676>, accessed September 10, 2023.

people will rush to us along the mountain paths... It will be a national liberation movement.

Some Chechens hope to avenge Russia for the deaths of their relatives and the destruction of Chechnya:

I am a resident of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and have always felt this way. Our fathers taught us to shoot with hunting rifles when we were children. I will spend my whole life fighting against Russia. I will be taking revenge for the slaughtered Chechens. I will never forgive them [*Russians*], and if I have sons, they will continue to do so.⁶¹

In early October 2022, Rustam Azhiyev, better known as Abdul-Hakim Shishani,⁶² a field commander of the jihadist group Afnad al-Kavkaz, arrived in Ukraine to fight against Russian forces. Azhiyev and his squad became part of the Separate Battalion of Special Purpose (OBON) of the Armed Forces of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria which is in turn part of the International Legion of Ukraine of the Directorate General of Intelligence of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry,⁶³ reporting to Akhmed Zakayev. As Azhiyev noted, he attempted to come to fight in Ukraine in 2014, but at the time it was more difficult than in 2022, and the Ukrainian side did not feel compelled to accept help from Chechens who had fought in Syria. But the situation clearly changed after the Russian invasion:

We are allies. We report to the Ministry of Defense of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and to our political leaders, who signed an agreement with the Ukrainians to form a brigade of our people. The most important thing now is to open the way for them to enter Ukraine and solve the financial problems of our troops. By summer, we would like to gather about a thousand fighters. Here they will train and prepare for battle. It is an ambitious plan. The minimum plan entails 200-300 fighters. It is easier here than in Syria. We are here legally.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Lidia Mikhhalchenko, "Ichkeria has not yet perished," <https://stories.media/stories/2023/01/27/shche-ne-vmerla-ichkeriya/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶² Anzhelika Kaimova, "To fight Ichkeria back in Ukraine: Interview with Rustam Azhiev, commander of the Chechen detachment," <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/ot-voevatj-ichkeriyu-v-ukraine-intervjyu-s-komandirom-chechenskogo-otryada-rustamom-azhievym/32149004.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶³ "Chechen Volunteers Destroy russian Invaders in Bakhmut," <https://gur.gov.ua/en/content/chechenski-dobrovoltsi-znyshchuiut-rosiiskykh-okupantiv-u-bakhmuti.html>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶⁴ Marcin Mamoń, "Abdul Hakim: Nie myślćcie o nas, że jesteśmy terrorystami" ["Abdul Hakim: Don't think of us as terrorists"], <https://plus.dziennikpolski24.pl/ab->

Conclusion

Overall, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has demonstrated that despite their different origins, Muslims in Ukraine constitute a loyal community to the state. This loyalty is mainly due to the religious freedoms granted them by the Ukrainian state, in contrast to the persecution and discrimination Muslims often face in Russia. On the other hand, as part of the global Ummah, Muslims in Ukraine have to confront and resist a rather influential pro-Russian discourse prevalent in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

In most cases, this discourse does not favor Ukrainian Muslims, as they are either not well-known in many Muslim countries or are limited in their capacity to take a political stance before the global Islamic community. In the first case, the exception is Sheikh Ahmed Tamim, Mufti of the RAMU, widely known in the Islamic world as a signatory of the “Amman Message”⁶⁵ of King Abdullah II of Jordan and a representative of international Sufi networks. The second case refers to representatives of various international movements in the Islamic community of Ukraine who comfortably adopt a patriotic pro-Ukrainian position within domestic Ukrainian discourse. However, in the context of global Islamic discourse, they must adhere to the political positions of their respective movements.

The RAMU-Umma and the Congress of Muslims of Ukraine find themselves in a similar situation, as they bear close connections to the international “Muslim Brotherhood” movement and, notably, its Palestinian offshoot, Hamas. While maintaining a distinctly patriotic stance in Ukraine, they are forced to remain silent in global Islamic discourse regarding Hamas’ support for the Russian invasion.⁶⁶ In general, if the Russo-Ukrainian war drags on, one can continue to expect significant transformations in the Ukrainian Muslim community, especially considering the loss of numerous communities in the occupied Crimea, Donetsk, and Kherson regions.

dul-hakim-nie-myslcie-o-nas-ze-jestesmy-terrorystami/ar/c1-17197663, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶⁵ “The Grand List of Endorsements of the Amman Message and Its Three Points,” <https://ammanmessage.com/grand-list-of-endorsements-of-the-amman-message-and-its-three-points/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

⁶⁶ “Hamas explained the reasons for supporting Russia’s policy in Ukraine,” <https://islamnews.ru/2022/9/15/khamas-obyasnil-prichiny-podderzhki-spetsialnoy-voennoy-operatsii-na-ukraine>, accessed September 10, 2023.