

Struggling to Believe: Ukrainian Orthodox Church Under Pressure in Crimea Ukraine

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A prayer service on the occasion of the 24th anniversary of Ukrainian independence is held on August 24, 2015, in the Cathedral of Volodymyr and Olha in Simferopol.

By Tony Wesolowsky, Crimea Desk, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, Apr 18, 2018 When Russia seized control of Crimea in 2014, its forces* took control of key military and government sites on the Ukrainian peninsula. They also targeted another institution -- the branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is centered in Kyiv and not Moscow. The Russian forces singled out the churches, looting some, while calling their leaders "Nazis" and "rozkolniki," or "those who broke away," a reference to the church's split with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church -- Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). Today, leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church -- Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP), as it is formally known, say the de facto authorities in Crimea are persecuting what is left of their church, pushing them to the brink of oblivion. "The Russian occupation authorities have done everything so that the religious atmosphere on the peninsula is similar to theirs [Russia]; that is, loyal and controllable," Archbishop Yevstratiy (Zorya), an official spokesman of the church, said in a recent interview with RFE/RL. Archbishop Klyment, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate in Crimea, told RFE/RL that eight churches and four priests were all that's left of their church on the Black Sea peninsula. […] [https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia ...-to-survive/29175307.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia...-to-survive/29175307.html)