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Information about societal attitudes towards Jewish people throughout Ukraine

A report by the *United States Department of State* under the heading 'Societal Abuses and Discrimination' states:

"The country made some progress in relations with its Jewish communities; however, members of marginal populist and nationalist parties and organizations continued to make occasional extremist, intolerant, and anti-Semitic statements. An estimated 103,600 Jews lived in the country, comprising approximately 0.2 percent of the population, according to government census data and international Jewish groups. However, local Jewish leaders estimated the number of persons with an ethnic Jewish heritage to be as high as 370,000.

There were a number of acts of anti-Semitism, some involving vandalism of Jewish property. According to Viacheslav Likhachev, a human rights monitor and authority on anti-Semitism in the country, there were 17 incidents of vandalism during the first 11 months of the year. This compared with 13 such incidents in 2008 and 20 in 2007.

The trend toward a decrease in attacks against Jews continued. According to a report published by the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress and edited by Likhachev, "Anti-Semitism in Australia and Eurasia 2008/2009," there was one anti-Semitic attack in the first 11 months of the year, as compared with five in 2008 and eight in 2007." (United States Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Human Rights Reports: Ukraine*)

This report also states:

"In late August unidentified attackers painted swastikas on the walls of Jewish Charity Center in Melitopol. Local police did not find offenders and described the incident as hooliganism.

On September 13, Nazi symbols were painted on the front door of the Kyiv office of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. On October 26, unidentified vandals splashed paint on the monument marking the birthplace of prominent Rabbi Menachem Schneerson in Mykolayiv.

In November the prosecutor's office in Odesa opened a criminal case into alleged publication of anti-Semitic articles by ZUBR (For Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia), a marginal radical organization. Members of the Odesa Jewish

community had called on the prosecutor's office to investigate the group, which had published the materials in its newspaper, ZaZUBRina, and on its Web site.

Hate speech against Jews was combined with hate speech against other groups in several incidents. Anti-Semitic articles continued to appear in small publications, though their number and circulation continued to decline.” (ibid)

It also states:

“On July 26, a district court in Crimea convicted a man of hooliganism in the 2007 beating of Benjamin Wolf, the chief rabbi of Sevastopol. The assailant was also ordered to pay the rabbi 5,000 hryvnia (approximately \$620). Local Jewish leaders protested the ruling on the grounds that the man should have been charged with inciting ethnic and religious discord because he was motivated by the rabbi's appearance.

Jewish community leaders in Kherson again complained that Serhiy Kyrychenko, a member of the city council, continued to spread anti-Semitic propaganda. In 2008 Kyrychenko made frequent appearances on a local radio show VIK, accusing Jews of robbing the Ukrainian people, plotting to enslave them, and planning to exterminate Slavs. On August 17, the Kherson prosecutor's office began a criminal investigation into the broadcasts and numerous anti-Semitic publications in the local VIK newspaper” (ibid)

A report by the *United States Department of State* under the heading ‘Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom’ states:

“Anti-Semitic violence continued to be a problem and was part of an overall increase in violent hate crimes during the reporting period. According to the Congress of Ethnic Communities and Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine (Vaad), there were four victims of three anti-Semitic incidents in 2008 with no deaths.

On September 13, 2008, a group of youths shouting anti-Semitic abuse assaulted Vinnytsya Rabbi Shaul Horovitz, his young son, and a friend. Police arrested the attackers. A local court ordered the attackers to pay a fine for committing an act of "hooliganism." (United States Department of State (26 October 2009) *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – Ukraine*)

This report also states:

“On May 25, 2009, unidentified attackers painted swastikas on the walls of the Jewish Charity Center in Feodosia. Representatives of the Center attributed lack of progress in investigation of the case to lax attitude of local police toward previous anti-Semitic incidents.” (ibid)

A report by *Amnesty International* under the heading ‘Violent Attacks By Non-State Actors On Ethnic, Religious And Racial Minorities’ states:

“The Ukrainian authorities do not keep official statistics on the number of reported racist incidents, nor on the number of convictions for racially motivated crimes. However, monitoring carried out by the press and by international NGOs working with refugees, migrants and Jewish communities in Ukraine indicates that there has been an alarming rise in violent attacks against foreign nationals and ethnic and religious minorities over the last two years.” (Amnesty International (July 2008) *Ukraine: Government must act to stop racial discrimination*, pg.15)

In a section titled ‘Failure Of Police To Respond Adequately’ this report states:

“During the first week in July 2007, Jews in Zhytomyr were subjected to verbal abuse, threats and insults every day as they left the synagogue after evening prayers. Members of the Jewish community reported the incidents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the SBU, asking them to take action before the young men acted on their threats. On 9 July a group of young people attempted to attack the Chief Rabbi of Zhytomyr, Central and Western Ukraine, Shlomo Wilhelm, but were prevented from doing so by the synagogue security guard. After the rabbi had left, the young men attempted to break into the residence of a Jewish girls’ school located on the synagogue grounds. The police arrived after the youths had left.

Members of the Jewish community complained again about these events on 10 July to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the SBU. The SBU first replied that the events were disturbances of public order and did not fall within the competency of the SBU because there was no racist element to the crime. Only after Jewish community representatives wrote again, pointing out the anti-semitic nature of the acts, was an investigation opened. However, it was closed again because the events were not considered to constitute a crime, and because “objective analysis showed that there were no anti-semitic or xenophobic groups active in the Zhytomyr area”.(ibid) (pg. 24-25)

A report by the *Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ)* under the heading ‘New Report Shows Record Number of Attacks on Minorities in Ukraine’ states:

“Throughout the month of March, vandals in Lviv painted swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti on Jewish sites, including a synagogue and a Holocaust memorial.

On March 4, vandals struck a Jewish cemetery in Berdichev, painting swastikas and damaging a fence. Police detained four suspects, one of them the leader of a local neo-Nazi gang. Sources within the Jewish community allege that local police asked them to characterize the incident as an ordinary, non-hate crime when talking to the press.” (Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ) (30 April 2008) *New Report Shows Record Number of Attacks on Minorities in Ukraine*)

This report also states:

“On April 2, police, SBU and foreign ministry officials held a roundtable in Kiev with NGOs on "Problems of Fighting Racism in Ukraine." MVD officials announced that they will soon create special units to investigate racist violence in Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa, Lviv, and Lugansk. An SBU official, Nikolai Kalashkin, said that there were around 100 incidents of xenophobia in Ukraine last year, around 20% of which were directed against the Jewish community.” (ibid)

A report by *Freedom House* under the heading ‘Political Rights and Civil Liberties’ states:

“The constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally well respected. There are some restrictions on the activities of foreign religious organizations, and all religious groups with more than 10 members must register with the state. There was a spike in anti-Semitic acts in the fall of 2007, and Jewish leaders blamed the government for failing to mount a strong response...” (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 - Ukraine*)

References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any

particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

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Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

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United Kingdom Home Office

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