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Ukrainian Clergy Members Face Persecution in Russian-Occupied Regions – Reports

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A church in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. **Valentyn Stoliarchuk, Mykhailo Chubai / ArmyInform**

Dozens of Ukrainian clergy members in occupied Ukraine have faced persecution by the Russian military since Moscow launched its invasion last year, according to an investigation by the independent news outlet Vyorstka, citing media reports and civil rights organizations.

At least 43 clergy members have faced persecution in the Kyiv, Donetsk and Kherson regions, according to the investigation, among which eight were taken prisoner, and five were killed. When taken prisoner, some were subjected to interrogations and even torture.

Vyorstka reported that one of the clergy members' bodies was found in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, where Russian forces have been accused of committing mass atrocities before their withdrawal in late March 2022.

At the same time, journalists found that 12 clergy members were forcibly deported, while 18

others were expelled from Russian-occupied territories.

The repression reached a total of 109 documented acts against the pro-Kyiv Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, and Muslims.

According to Vyorstka, the primary reasons behind the abuses were the religious figures' refusal to endorse the Russian occupying forces and their continued use of the Ukrainian language during religious services.

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