



**Centre for
Information
Resilience**

Faces of the occupation

How secular and religious collaborators shape life in Kherson

PART TWO: 'LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION' SERIES

By Sophia Freuden, Alona Shestopalova and Alex Sid

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The faces of the occupation: How secular and religious collaborators shape life in Kherson.

Kherson was the first major Ukrainian city to fall under Russian occupation in 2022. Since then, Russian authorities have used it as a test case for the forced assimilation of Ukrainian cities into Russia. Eight months later, and despite the effective counteroffensive launched by Kyiv, the region is still controlled by the Kremlin and its Ukrainian marionettes.

Following the Kremlin's so-called referenda and illegal annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson,¹ understanding who the leaders and enforcers of the illegal occupation are has become crucial. As such, this report gives both names and faces to the secular and religious collaborators who have shaped life in the Kherson region (Ukrainian: Херсонська область).

This is the second report in the Centre for Information Resilience's "Life Under Occupation" series. Through open-source investigations into the Russian occupation of Kherson, this piece contextualises the current power structure, explains how the occupying administration was created; uncovers the Russian actors enabling the occupation apparatus in Kherson; and examines the Ukrainian individuals who hold key positions in the occupying administration. Finally, the report analyses the particular collaborators within Kherson's Orthodox Church, providing transcriptions from video recordings that prove collaboration between three Kherson City churches and the occupying administration.

This series of reports provide policymakers, journalists and NGOs with reliable and verified information about the realities of forced Russian rule, and uncovers the Kremlin's playbook to consolidate power after illegally invading a territory. The previous report in the series, "Parallel Worlds: How Russia is Imposing a New Reality on Kherson" is available on CIR's website.²

¹ Kirby (1 October 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-63086767>

² Thomas, Carrasco Rodriguez, and Shestopalova (23 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.info-res.org/post/parallel-worlds-how-russia-is-imposing-a-new-reality-on-kherson>

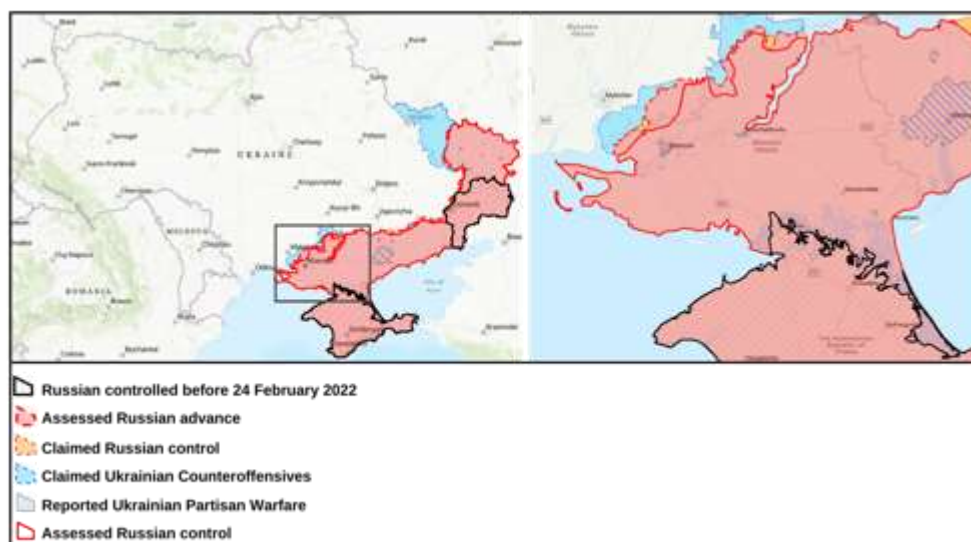


Figure 1: Map of the occupation of Kherson region as of 30 September 2022. Courtesy: Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project

PLEASE NOTE:

This report contains descriptions of graphic imagery / violence which some readers may find distressing. Additionally, where graphic footage has been verified by EoR investigators it is linked in the footnotes with the explicit warning of “graphic footage.”

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Chronology of Kherson's occupation: a snapshot into the power structure in the region

By Alona Shestopalova

The occupation of the Kherson region began during the very first days of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the afternoon of 24 February 2022, the Russian army, advancing from occupied Crimea, entered Henichesk, Kakhovka, and Nova Kakhovka (Ukrainian: Генічеськ, Каховка, Нова Каховка), among others.³ Several days later, after heavy battles near the Dnipro River,⁴ Russian forces entered the city of Kherson while the front line moved towards the Mykolaiv region.⁵

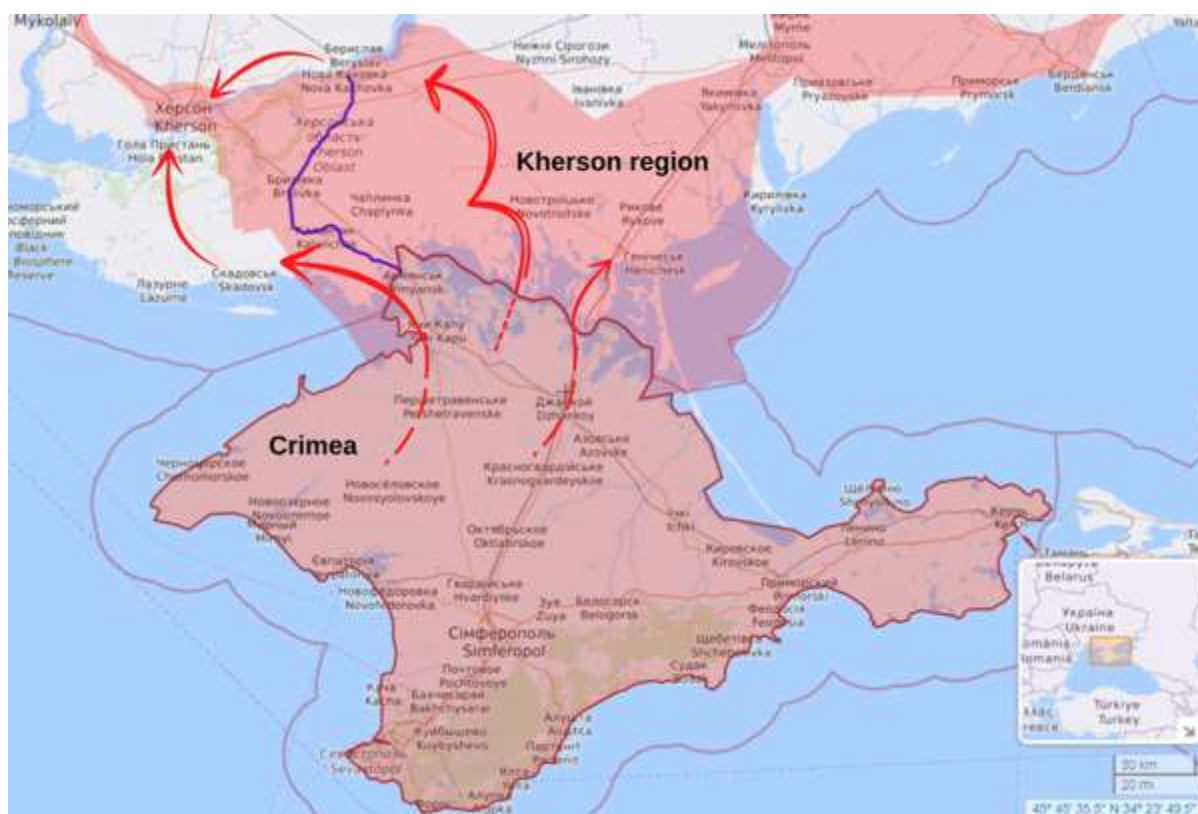


Figure 2: Map of the Russian occupation of the Kherson region from Crimea as of 1 March 2022. Courtesy: Liveuamap.⁶

³ Nikitenko and Antypenko (5 September 2022). Available at: https://most.ks.ua/news/url/okupatsijna_vlada_na_hersonschini_ho_tsi_ljudi_i_jak_voni_kerujut_regionom/

⁴ Antypenko (October 2022). Available at: <https://gnt.media/reportage/yak-tankisty-zvilnyayut-pivden/>

⁵ Kuryshko (5 March 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-60600814>

⁶ Liveuamap.com (1 March 2022). Available at: <https://liveuamap.com/en/time/01.03.2022>

Despite the recent Ukrainian counteroffensive resulting in the liberation of a number of villages in the north, most of the region is still under the control of the Russian army – eight months of occupation.

After the sham referenda held between 23-27 September 2022 in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, the Kremlin's plans for a “Russian Kherson” seem more tangible than ever.⁷

⁷ Kirby (30 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-63072113>

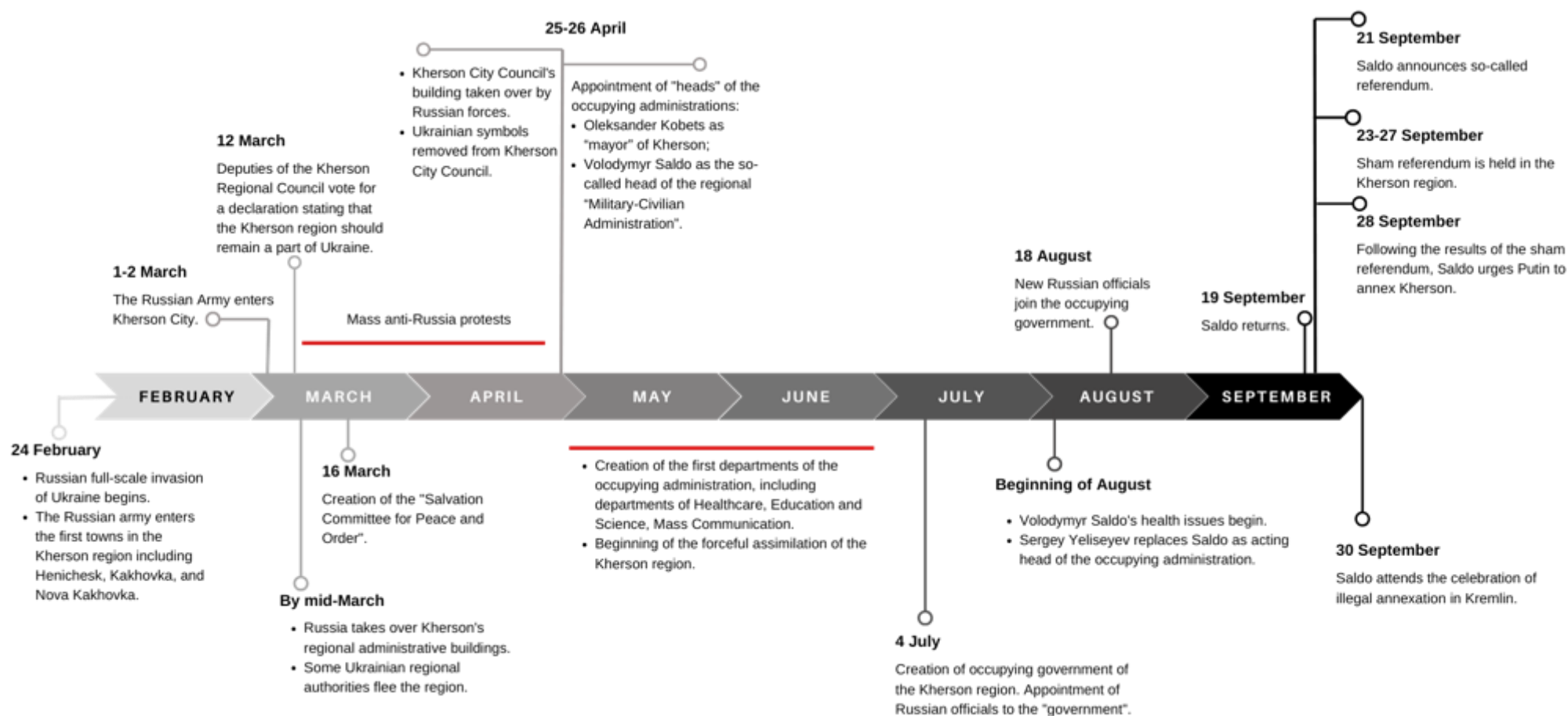


Figure 3: Timeline of the occupation of the Kherson region (data from 24 February to 30 September 2022).

At first, Russian forces did not create any non-military institutions to rule the region. Kherson's online newspaper '*MOST*' described the situation in the first weeks of the occupation in the following terms:

"In the first couple of weeks after Russian forces took almost complete control over Kherson region, the region was ruled either by the Ukrainian authorities or there was anarchy. [...]. The main responsibility for essential services in the settlements was on the Heads of the local administrations, their closest circle among the deputies and local executive institutions."⁸

By the second week of March, a number of the representatives of the regional authorities, including the Head of the Kherson regional administration, Hennadiy Lahuta (Ukrainian: Геннадій Ларута), fled the region,⁹ and the Kherson regional administration's (Kherson ODA) building fell under the control of Russian armed forces.¹⁰ At that time, the first conversations about a staged referendum took place, including discussions about the creation of the so-called "Kherson People's Republic."¹¹ On 12 March 2022, in parallel to these discussions, the deputies of the Kherson regional council (elected in 2020) conducted an online session of the council, where the deputies voted for a declaration stating that the Kherson region was, is and will remain a part of Ukraine and no other scenarios are supported by the people of the region nor by its legitimate authorities.¹²

On 16 March 2022, in the occupied Kherson regional administration building, several people gathered and established the Russia-controlled "Salvation Committee for Peace and Order." Kyrylo Stremousov (Ukrainian: Кирило Стремоусов),¹³ the self-proclaimed Head of this committee, explained the need to create such an organisation:

"In the current situation, we are in the city of Kherson, where the authorities of the region, in fact, completely ceased to exist ... but we have to live further, to develop

⁸ Nikitenko and Antypenko (5 September 2022). Available at:

https://most.ks.ua/news/url/okupatsijna_vlada_na_hersonschini_hto_tsi_ljudi_i_jak_voni_kerujut_regionom/

⁹ Klochko (13 June 2022). Available at: <https://glavcom.ua/news/shcho-mer-hersona-dosi-robit-v-okupovanomu-misti-golova-ova-pro-povedinku-kolihajeva-852703.html>

¹⁰ MOST (3 March 2022). Available at: https://most.ks.ua/news/url/rosijani_zajnali_budivlju_hersonskoji_oda/

¹¹ Ukrinform (12 March 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-ato/3427588-na-hersonsine-agressor-gotovit-referendum-po-sozdaniu-hnr-deputat-oblsoвета.html>

¹² Kherson regional council (12 March 2022). Available at: <https://khor.gov.ua/2022/03/12/35328/>; https://glavcom.ua/pub/pdf/78/7885/rishenia_kherson.pdf

¹³ The more detailed information about Kyrylo Stremousov is given in the third section of the report devoted to Ukrainian collaborators.

relations and to prepare an institution capable of taking the responsibility for establishing order.”¹⁴

Stremousov added that for him the priority was the relations with Russia.¹⁵ More detailed information about members of the Committee is given in the section of this report devoted to collaborators of the occupation.

Throughout March and April 2022, locals took part in mass peaceful anti-Russia protests with Ukrainian flags in the city of Kherson and in other settlements of the region. These protests were acknowledged by the Russia-controlled communication channels.¹⁶



Figure 4: Ukrainians protesting against Russian occupation in the city of Kherson, March 2022.¹⁷

The protests were sometimes dispersed by Russian military personnel with force, including shooting.¹⁸

Russia further asserted control in the region at the end of April 2022. Unlike Lahuta, the Head of the Kherson region, Ihor Kolykhaiev (Ukrainian: Ігор Колихаєв), the Head of the city of

¹⁴ “Администрация Херсонской области” (18 March 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/4

¹⁵ Yankovsky (18 March 2022). Available at: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/rossiya-ukraina-voyna-khersonshchina-kollaboranty/31759680.html>

¹⁶ “Администрация Херсонской области” (27 March 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/514

¹⁷ Суспільне Херсон (13 March 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/suspilnekherson/9260?single>

¹⁸ Українська правда (21 March 2022). Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/03/21/7333302/>;

Bilash (24 March 2022). Available at: https://lb.ua/society/2022/03/24/510785_viyaska_rf_vlashtuyut_hersoni.html

Kherson (elected in 2020), remained in the city. Kolykhaiev officially reported to Ukrainian authorities of the state and regional level that on the evening of 25 April 2022, unknown armed masked men entered the Kherson city council building.

The armed men removed the city council's security personnel, put new guards in their positions, and took the keys. They also removed Ukrainian state symbols from the building, such as the Ukrainian flag, explaining that "the city is under the control of the Russian Federation."¹⁹



Figure 5: Facebook post where Ihor Kolykhaiev made his reports about the occupation to Ukrainian authorities publicly available. Screenshot of Kolykhaiev's Facebook page.²⁰

¹⁹ Kolykhaiev (26 April 2022). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/kolykhaiev.igor>

²⁰ Ibid.

Kolykhaiev also detailed how the occupying administration's first appointments were made. He reported that on the morning of 26 April 2022:

“a person wearing the uniform of the armed forces of Russian Federation entered [the newly seized building of the Kherson city council], this person was the colonel. He was accompanied by a person wearing civilian clothing. The person in the uniform was Russian military officer Viktor Leonidovich Bedrik (Russian: Виктор Леонидович Бедрик), who introduced himself as the military commandant of the Kherson region. Bedrik read aloud his order #11 appointing Oleksandr Yuriiiovych Kobets (Ukrainian: Олександр Юрійович Кобець) as the “Head” of Kherson city administration.”²¹

Kolykhaiev wrote that despite Russian armed forces appointing a new person as the Head of the city of Kherson, Kolykhaiev considered himself to be the only legal and legitimate Head and asked Ukrainian state authorities to provide him with further instructions for actions.²² Kolykhaiev stayed in Russian-occupied Kherson at least up until the end of June 2022, when he was kidnaped by Russian forces. Since then, his whereabouts remain unknown.²³ The Association of Ukrainian Cities has issued an appeal urging his release.²⁴

The occupying authorities' Telegram channel shared the same facts revealed by Kolykhaiev. On 26 April 2022, the channel posted a video confirming that Ukrainian symbols were removed from the Kherson city council building,²⁵ as well as a video recorded by Kyrylo Stremousov where he displayed one of the orders signed by Bedrik.²⁶ On 27 April 2022, the channel also announced the appointment of the heads of the occupying administration.²⁷

The Telegram also channel announced that Oleksander Kobets would serve as the new “mayor” of Kherson and explicitly informed citizens that he was appointed for this position by the order of the officer of Russian armed forces.²⁸ Volodymyr Saldo (Ukrainian: Володимир Сальдо)²⁹ was appointed to the position of the of the so-called head of the “Military-Civilian

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ukrinform (28 June 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3517105-mer-hersona-kolihaev-vidmovivsa-spiivpracuvati-z-rosijskou-vladou.html>

²⁴ Association of Ukrainian Cities (23 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.auc.org.ua/novyna/asociaciya-mist-ukrayiny-zaklykaye-vsih-doluchytysya-do-zvilnennya-zahoplenyh-u-polon-meriv>

²⁵ “Администрация Херсонской области” (26 April 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1357

²⁶ “Администрация Херсонской области” (27 April 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1373?single

²⁷ “Администрация Херсонской области” (27 April 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1388

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The more detailed information about Volodymyr Saldo is given in the third section of the report devoted to Ukrainian collaborators.

Administration” (Russian: “Военно-гражданская администрация”) of Kherson region. Stremousov was proclaimed deputy head of the occupying administration. The role of these individuals is analysed in the following section of this report.³⁰

As no legitimate administrations of the regional and Kherson-city level collaborated with Russia, the buildings of the Kherson’s institutions were captured by Russian forces, while the existence of the legitimate officials was simply ignored: instead of those officials, Russia appointed new ones, “replacing” the legitimate institutions and creating a parallel power structure.

³⁰ “Администрация Херсонской области” (28 April 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1426

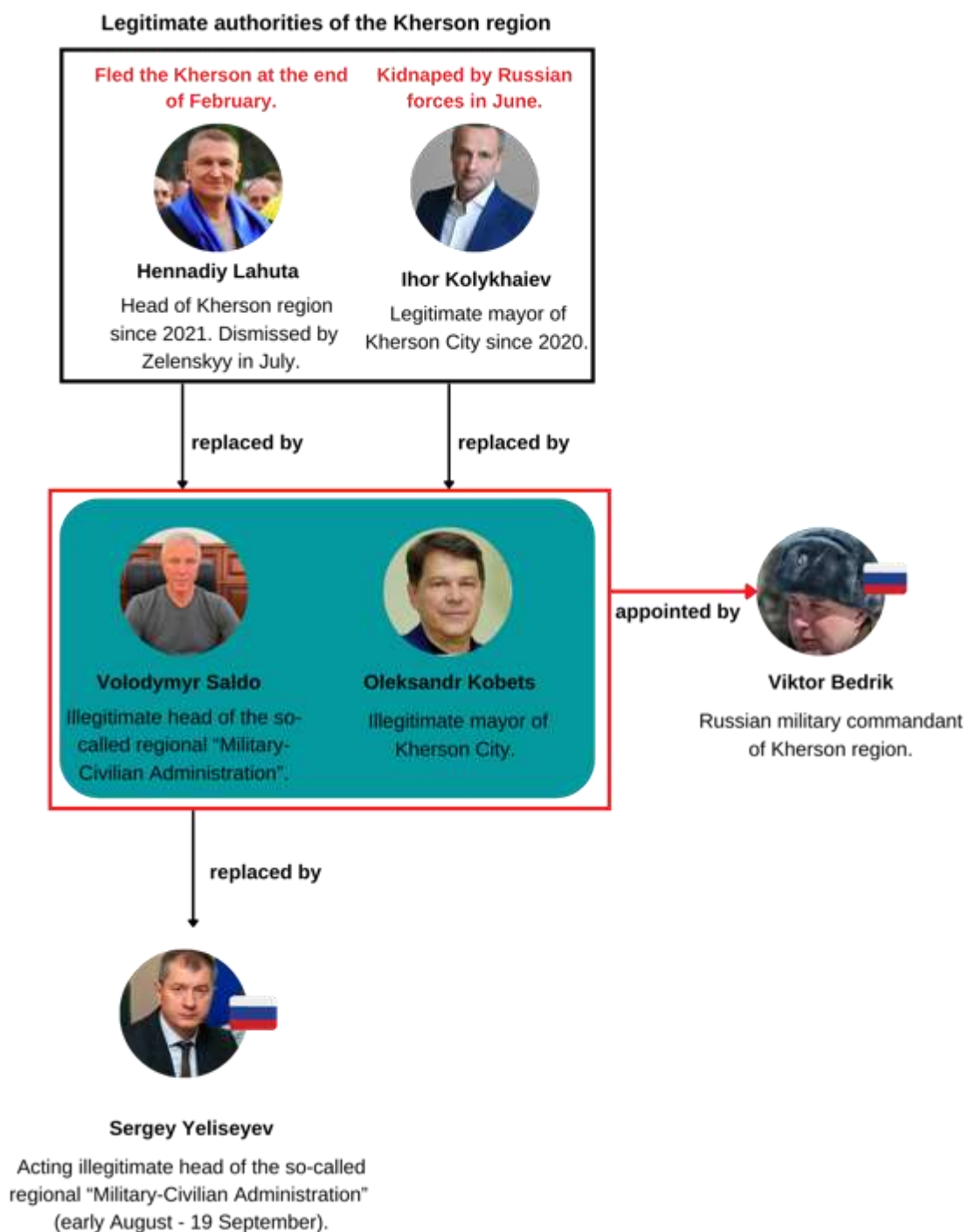


Figure 6: Power structure of Kherson's Military-Civilian Administration as of October 2022.

In the following months, several other "Deputy Heads" were appointed.³¹ Additionally, several specialised departments of the Kherson region's occupying administration were created in May-June 2022, including a Department of Education and Science and a Department of

³¹ "Администрация Херсонской области" (17 June 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2368

Healthcare. Following a decree signed by Saldo, the occupying administration's Telegram channel announced the Department of Healthcare's commencement of activities on 18 May 2022.³² Vadym Ilmiiev (Ukrainian: Вадим Ільмів) was appointed Head of the Department.³³ By the end of summer, this Department was sometimes referred to as the "Ministry of Healthcare" in the occupying administration's communication channels, while Ilmiiev was interchangeably called either "Head of the Department of Healthcare" or "Minister of Healthcare."³⁴

On 4 July 2022, Stremousov recorded a video where he compared Russian actions in Kherson to God's actions in the Bible, and announced that he and Saldo had a meeting with Sergey Vladilenovich Kiriienko (Russian: Сергей Владиленович Кириенко), the First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia.³⁵ Later that day, the occupying administration's Telegram channel announced the creation of the Kherson regional "government". Most of the appointees to the occupying government were Russian citizens.³⁶

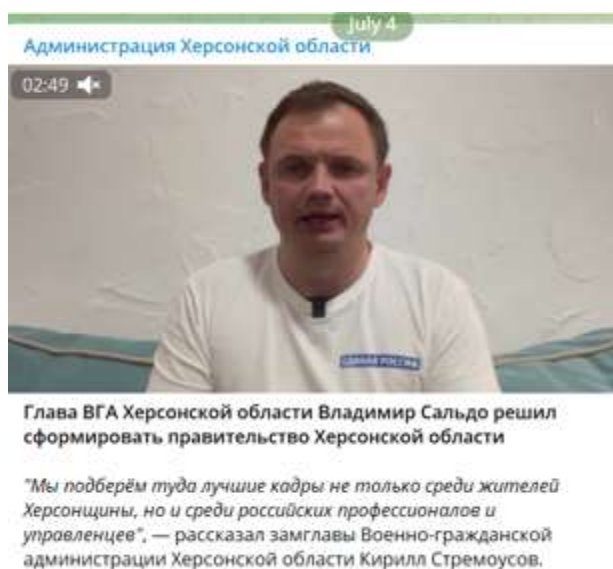


Figure 7: Stremousov announcing the creation of the occupying government of the Kherson region.³⁷

Wearing a t-shirt with the name of Putin's party, United Russia, printed on it, Stremousov explained the need for Russian citizens in the so-called government of the region by calling Russians "great professionals."³⁸ Stremousov also declared that the process of integrating the

³² "Администрация Херсонской области" (12 June 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2338

³³ "Администрация Херсонской области" (18 May 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2074

³⁴ "Администрация Херсонской области" (29 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/minzdrav_Kherson/203

³⁵ "Администрация Херсонской области" (4 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2437

³⁶ "Администрация Херсонской области" (4 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2439

³⁷ "Администрация Херсонской области" (4 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2441

³⁸ Ibid.

occupied territories of the Kherson region into Russia was continuing.³⁹ Four officials were appointed to the occupying government on 4 July.

After the announcement that Saldo had health-related problems in early August, Sergey Yeliseyev, a Russian Head of the then recently-created occupying government, became the acting Head of the whole occupying administration of the region. On 18 August 2022, during Saldo's absence, three more Russian officials were appointed to the occupying government.⁴⁰ Information about the Russian officials occupying the Kherson region is given in the third section of this report.

On 19 September 2022, Saldo returned to his role as the “Head” after a one-and-a-half-month absence.⁴¹ On the second day of reportedly being back in the office, Saldo announced that the Kherson regional occupying administration had decided to hold a so-called referendum on the merger of the Kherson region into Russia. He also announced the creation of volunteer battalions in the Kherson region that would support Russian forces in the “Special Military Operation.”⁴² Saldo appealed to Russian President Putin, explaining the need to hold a “referendum” to combat the threat of “aggressive neo-Nazi politics of Ukrainian leadership against the inhabitants of [Kherson] region.”⁴³

On 28 September 2022, after the results of the sham referendum in the Kherson region, Saldo addressed Putin again, asking him to “take” the Kherson region into Russia as a new constituent entity by signing an international agreement between the Russian Federation and the Kherson region.⁴⁴

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ “Администрация Херсонской области” (18 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2928

⁴¹ “Администрация Херсонской области” (19 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3398

⁴² “Администрация Херсонской области” (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3418

⁴³ “Администрация Херсонской области” (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3427

⁴⁴ “Администрация Херсонской области” (28 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3688



Figure 8: Image of the official address to Russian President Vladimir Putin by Volodymyr Saldo, Russia-appointed “Head” of the Kherson region.⁴⁵

On 30 September 2022, Volodymyr Saldo was one of four “Heads” of Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine to take part in the Kremlin’s celebrations of the illegal annexation of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk by Russia.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Kremlin.ru (30 September 2022). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>

The insiders: collaborators, defectors and enablers of the occupation from within

By Sophia Freuden

While legitimacy is the standard that most governments—democratic or authoritarian—seek to solidify their rule, those that are occupying actively contested territory may settle with obedience. That appears to be the goal of the Russian-installed occupying administration in Kherson region. This government is the self-titled “Military-Civilian Administration,” a structure that is part military-led and part civilian-led.

The military aspect of the occupying administration, helmed by Russian military personnel, is opaque and ostensibly has ultimate control over the civilian aspect of the administration. While the Russian officials appointed by the Kremlin likely hold true power over the Kherson region, this part of the report focuses on the civilian-led segments of the administration and, more specifically, on the Ukrainian collaborators and defectors that comprise these segments.

It is these Ukrainian collaborators and defectors that allow the occupying administration to compel obedience from residents of the Kherson region. Familiar names and faces, particularly politicians who had been active in the area prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine,⁴⁷ add a sense of continuity between the Ukraine-led government and the Russia-installed government that now seeks to consolidate its hold on the region and neighbouring areas.

The occupying administration is divided into regional and municipal governments. Both of these levels have heads and deputy heads who oversee the operations of their respective governments. Additionally, the regional level government has individuals who lead departments dedicated to specific services such as health, education and youth affairs, and policing.

While the work these individuals reportedly do is more transparent than that of the military-led aspect of the occupying administration, it is at times opaque and disorganised. Indeed, it is often difficult to tell who among alleged collaborators and defectors is actually alive, active in

⁴⁷ For examples of such politicians, see Volodymyr Saldo and Kyrylo Stremousov later in this section of this report.

the job they have officially been assigned, or even exists to begin with. This has made investigating details about the occupying administration's activities, including the sham referendum, challenging. The disorganised and uncertain nature of the occupying administration is discussed in greater detail throughout this report.

This section of the report details the primary Ukrainian collaborators and defectors; their involvement in the sham referendum; and the deaths and injuries of collaborators.

All three parts focus on people and activities inside the Kherson region, though will touch on those inside neighbouring areas and Russia as needed.

Primary Ukrainian collaborators and defectors

Ukrainian collaborators and defectors are Russia's vectors to reach the local population in Kherson. Although prior to the invasion either a majority or strong plurality of southern Ukrainians held positive attitudes towards Russia,⁴⁸ public opinion in southern Ukraine has experienced a volt face since the outbreak of the full-scale war earlier this year. Majorities or strong pluralities now support Western-oriented initiatives such as Ukrainian accession into the European Union and NATO.⁴⁹ Despite this, some Ukrainians have joined the Russian cause.

In the Kherson region, a small group of Ukrainian collaborators and defectors has emerged as the primary organisers of the transition from Ukrainian to Russian control. Chief among them is Volodymyr Vasylyevich Saldo, head of the Kherson region Military-Civilian Administration (the occupying administration or MCA), and former mayor of the city of Kherson.⁵⁰ Other important individuals include: Kyrylo Serhiyovych Stremousov, Deputy Head of Kherson region occupying administration; Kateryna Yuriivna Hubareva (Ukrainian: Катерина Юріївна Губарева), Deputy Head of Kherson region occupying administration; and Oleksandr Yuriiovych Kobets, Head (mayor) of Kherson. In addition to these collaborators, a number of Russian enforcers have been sent to Kherson region to further the work of the MCA and the occupied municipalities in Kherson region. While the roles of these Russian

⁴⁸ Druckman (15 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-self-defeating-invasion-turns-southern-ukrainians-away-from-russia/>; and Statista (November 2021). Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1008033/ukraine-public-opinion-toward-russia-by-region/>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The city of Kherson is the administrative centre of Kherson region.

enforcers—especially Yeliseyev—are important, this section of the report will focus on Ukrainian collaborators and defectors.⁵¹

Volodymyr Vasylyevych Saldo (aka Vladimir Vasilievich Saldo)⁵²



Figures 9 and 10: Headshots of Volodymyr Saldo.⁵³

Saldo is a Ukrainian collaborator from Kherson serving as head of the occupying administration. While it is unclear exactly who chose him for this role, Russian authorities are responsible for his appointment.⁵⁴ He served as mayor of Kherson from 2002 to 2012 and has been an intermittent member of Kherson City Council from 1998 up until the Russian invasion of the Kherson region earlier this year.

Saldo also served as a People's Deputy—a member of parliament—in the past. Due to his activities in support of the Russian invasion, Saldo is an individual of interest to the Ukrainian government and the international community; indeed, he has been sanctioned by the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Japan.⁵⁵

If the posts made to both his personal Telegram channel as well as the Kherson region occupying administration channel are to be believed, Saldo is leading the region through its transition from a Ukrainian region to an annexed territory. This includes important decisions

⁵¹ For more information on these and other Russian enforcers, please see section “Russian soul of the occupation” of this report.

⁵² When individuals are presumed to be or originally have been Ukrainian citizens, their names are spelled in this report with Ukrainian spelling rules and conventions. Likewise, Russian citizens' names are spelled according to Russian spelling rules and conventions. Because names are often spelled either way in press reports and social media posts, both spellings are listed here for clarity.

⁵³ Photos from Ona2011 for Wikipedia with a [CC BY-SA 2.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) (cropped for clarity), taken in 2013; and Владимир Сальдо (19 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/145. Taken in September 2022.

⁵⁴ Meduza (27 April 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/04/27/ria-novosti-ob-yavilo-o-naznachanii-v-hersoni-i-hersonskoy-oblasti-novyh-rukovoditeley>; and Reuters (28 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/separatist-leader-asks-putin-incorporate-luhansk-region-into-russia-2022-09-28/>.

⁵⁵ War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>; and Eisen et al. (September 2022). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-brookings-sanctions-tracker/>.

such as the appointment of a variety of personnel working in the occupying administration as well as decisions regarding the “referendum” that happened in the Kherson region.⁵⁶ Because of the aforementioned opacity and disorganisation inherent in the occupying administration, it is difficult to ascertain how much power Saldo truly has.

His disappearance from public view for much of August and September 2022 due to an alleged poisoning compounded this uncertainty. Regardless, his presence within the occupying administration—even if symbolic—lends the occupiers an increased capacity to subdue resistant Ukrainians with pro-occupation narratives on social media and a familiar face.

Kyrylo Serhiyovych Stremousov (aka Kirill Sergeyevich Stremousov)



Figures 11 and 12: Headshots of Kyrylo Stremousov.⁵⁷

Stremousov is a Ukrainian collaborator originally from the Donetsk region, who has become a highly visible member of the occupation regime, as the self-proclaimed Head of the Salvation Committee for Peace and Order and Deputy Head of the occupying administration. He frequently posts on his personal Telegram channel and has made numerous appearances on Russian state-controlled media. Ukrainian and Western media have described him as an often unsuccessful dilettante of a variety of professions, including entrepreneurship, journalism, activism, and politics. In 2020, he espoused anti-vaccination and anti-quarantine views during the earlier stages of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. For several years, Stremousov has supported Russia and a Russia-oriented trajectory for Ukraine.⁵⁸ Like Saldo, Stremousov is

⁵⁶ See for example Владимир Сальдо (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/147; and Администрация Херсонской области (4 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2439.

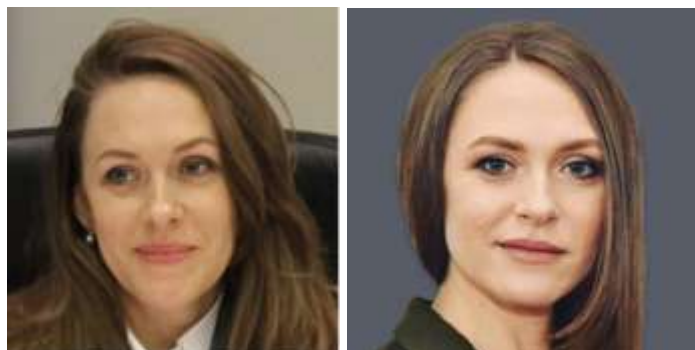
⁵⁷ Photos from Кирилл Стремусов (2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill; and Кирилл Стремусов (9 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/286.

⁵⁸ Tsinitzin (11 May 2022). Available at: <https://telegraf.com.ua/ukraine/2022-05-11/5704854-svyazi-s-kriminalom-pod-prikrytiem-media-cto-izvestno-pro-gaulaytera-khersonshchiny-kirilla-stremousova>; and Skorkin (16 May 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/05/16/meet-the-collaborators>.

well-known to the Ukrainian government and is sanctioned by several others, including the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Switzerland.⁵⁹

Because of his numerous posts and appearances in Russian media, Stremousov is one of the most discussed collaborators in Ukrainian and Western media. His actions are deeply scrutinised by his detractors. A prominent scandal arose in late August in which Stremousov filmed a video of himself allegedly in the Kherson region, stating that the skies were clear of fighting and bombing, when in fact he was in Voronezh, Russia, as confirmed by open source geolocation.⁶⁰ This started rumours that he had fled Russia out of fear for his own safety—the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive in the area had gained significant traction and partisan activity in the region has been relentless. Through the geolocation and chronolocation of these videos and photos, CIR investigators can confirm that he returned to the Kherson region.⁶¹

Kateryna Yuriivna Hubareva (aka Ekaterina Yurevna Gubareva; Katerina Yurevna Gubareva)



Figures 13 and 14: Headshots of Kateryna Hubareva.⁶²

According to Ukrainian media, Hubareva is a Ukrainian collaborator from the Kherson region. She has spent much of her time since the 2014 Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine in either Russia or the occupied Donetsk region.

⁵⁹ War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>; and Eisen et al. (September 2022). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-brookings-sanctions-tracker/>.

⁶⁰ STERNENKO (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/sssternenko/7987>.

⁶¹ Meduza (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/news/2022/08/30/zamglavy-okkupatsionnoy-administratsii-hersonskoy-oblasti-kirill-stremousov-vylozhil-video-o-mirnom-nebe-nad-hersonom-ono-bylo-zapisano-v-voronezhe>; and Van Brugen (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-kherson-counteroffensive-kirill-stremousov-fled-russia-1738042>; Кирилл Стрёмосов (25 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/383; and Кирилл Стрёмосов (5 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/281.

⁶² Photos from Губарева Катерина (14 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/k_gubareva/222; and Губарева Катерина (12 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/k_gubareva/215.

While in the Donetsk region, she became involved in the government of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic.⁶³ She currently serves as a Deputy Head of the Kherson regional occupying administration and while not as prominent as Saldo or Stremousov, is one of the most visible collaborators. Hubareva often makes appearances on both local and Russian media that support the occupying administration.⁶⁴ She is sanctioned by the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, and Japan.⁶⁵

Oleksandr Yuriiovych Kobets (aka Aleksandr Yurevich Kobets)



Figures 15 and 16: Headshots of Oleksandr Kobets.⁶⁶

The less prominent and visible an individual is on social media and in the press, the more uncertain information becomes about them. This is the case for Kobets, who is a Ukrainian collaborator serving as Head (mayor) of Kherson as part of the occupying administration operating at a municipal level. Unlike the individuals discussed prior to this, Kobets does not have a personal, publicly viewable Telegram channel, nor does the Kherson municipality have an active, official Telegram channel. *Meduza* reported he was a former chauffeur to Ihor Kolykhaiev, the legitimate mayor of Kherson, while *The Moscow Times* reported that he served as a Soviet KGB agent in the past.⁶⁷ *Ukrainska Pravda* confirmed his KGB history, while casting doubt on Kobets' alleged employment by the mayor of Kherson, stating that this particular detail had not been confirmed at the time that the article was published.⁶⁸

⁶³ Gazeta.ua (20 May 2014). Available at: <https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/people-newspaper/ zena-gubareva-stala-ministrom-doneckoj-narodnoj-respubliki/558698>; and War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>.

⁶⁴ See for example Губарева Катерина (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/k_gubareva/257; and Губарева Катерина (14 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/k_gubareva/222.

⁶⁵ War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>; and Eisen et al. (September 2022). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-brookings-sanctions-tracker/>.

⁶⁶ Photos from VGA (27 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3662; and Официальный сайт Администрации города Херсон (2022). Available at: <https://kherson-gov.ru/schema-administracii/kobec-aleksandr/>.

⁶⁷ Skorkin (16 May 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/05/16/meet-the-collaborators>; and The Moscow Times (28 April 2022). Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/04/28/russian-occupied-kherson-names-new-leadership-amid-pro-ukraine-protests-rocket-attacks-a77519>.

⁶⁸ Kizilova (25 May 2022). Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/05/25/7348519/>.

Interestingly, Kobets' KGB service is listed in his biography on a website that claims to be the official website of the Kherson municipal occupying administration.⁶⁹ Kobets is mentioned several times on the Kherson regional occupying administration's Telegram channel as well as 'Glavnoe v Kherson' (Russian: Главное в Херсоне, "The Main Thing in Kherson"), a pro-Russia Telegram channel with over 100,000 subscribers. Kobets is sanctioned by the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Switzerland.⁷⁰

Secondary Ukrainian collaborators and enablers

While the four aforementioned collaborators are perhaps the most important and visible among those of Ukrainian provenance, dozens more are named as part of the occupying administration. There are two broad groups that are discussed here: "heads" of municipalities in the Kherson region; and "heads" of departments of the Kherson regional departments and councils. It is essential to note that due to the lack of prominence and visibility of some of these individuals, their identities, roles, or even genuine existence cannot be verified according to the methodology established in this report.⁷¹

Municipalities of the Occupying Administration

In addition to Kobets, the following individuals serve as the Head of their respective municipalities within the occupying administration.

- Volodymyr Leontyev (Ukrainian: Володимир Леонтьев, aka Vladimir Leontiev) – Nova Kakhovka District.⁷²
- Serhiy Mykolayovych Shvaiko (Ukrainian: Сергий Михайлович Швайко, aka Sergey Nikolaevich Shvaiko) – Skadovsk Municipal Okrug.⁷³

⁶⁹ Официальный сайт Администрации города Херсон (2022). Available at: <https://kherson-gov.ru/schema-administracii/kobec-aleksandr/>. For the other, alleged official website of Kherson municipal occupying administration, see: Официальный сайт Администрации города Херсон (2022). Available at: <https://kherson.khogov.ru/>.

⁷⁰ War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>; Eisen et al. (September 2022). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-brookings-sanctions-tracker/>; and The UK Sanctions List (26 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list>.

⁷¹ See for example the sources cited for Volodymyr Leontyev, head of Nova Kakhovka district.

⁷² Администрация Новой Каховки (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_NovayaKahovka/3450; Администрация Херсонской области (21 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3442; The Moscow Times (12 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/07/12/7-killed-in-ukrainian-shelling-of-occupied-kherson-pro-russian-forces-say-a78268>; and Barron's (12 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.barrons.com/news/ukrainian-shelling-kills-seven-in-occupied-kherson-pro-russia-forces-01657607707>.

⁷³ Администрация Херсонской области (21 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3434; and Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3501.

- Olena Terskykh (Ukrainian: Олена Терських, aka Yelena Terskikh) – Henichesk District.⁷⁴
- Pavlo Ihorevych Filipchuk (Ukrainian: Павло Ігоревич Філіпчук, aka Pavel Igorevich Filipchuk) – Kakhovka District.⁷⁵ Sanctioned by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.
- Yuriy Hrihorovych Bochko (Ukrainian: Юрій Григорович Бочко, aka Yuriy Grigorevich Bochko) – Novotroitske.⁷⁶
- Andriy Mykhailovych Kostyuk (Ukrainian: Андрій Михайлович Костюк, aka Andrei Mikhailovich Kostyuk) – Berislav.⁷⁷

Departments and Councils of the Occupying Administration

- Tetiana Oleksandrivna Kuzmych (Ukrainian: Тетяна Олександрівна Кузьмич, aka Tatiana Aleksandrovna Kuzmich) – head of the Department of Education and Science of Kherson region.⁷⁸ Sanctioned by the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Japan.⁷⁹
- Vadym Ilmiyev (Ukrainian: Вадим Ілмійєв, aka Vadim Ilmiyev) – head of the Department of Healthcare of Kherson region.⁸⁰
- Alla Viktorivna Barkhatnova (Ukrainian: Алла Вікторівна Бархатнова, aka Alla Viktorovna Barkhatnova) – head of the Department of Social and Labor Policy of Kherson region.⁸¹ Sanctioned by Canada.

⁷⁴ Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3513; Администрация Херсонской области (27 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3673.

⁷⁵ Администрация Херсонской области (21 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3446; Администрация Херсонской области (8 May 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1758; War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/sanction-person/19922/>; and U.S. Department of Treasury (15 September 2022). Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20220915>.

⁷⁶ Администрация Херсонской области (21 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3462; and Администрация Херсонской области (24 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3536.

⁷⁷ Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3486; Администрация Бериславского района (27 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/berislavinfo/717>; and Администрация Бериславского района (22 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/berislavinfo/92>.

⁷⁸ Администрация Херсонской области (24 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3522; Администрация Херсонской области (17 June 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2364;

⁷⁹ War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/>; and Eisen et al. (September 2022). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-brookings-sanctions-tracker/>.

⁸⁰ Suspilne Novini (18 May 2022). Available at: <https://suspilne.media/240881-okupacijna-vlada-priznala-tak-zvanogo-nacalnika-oblasnogo-departamentu-ohoroni-zdorova-vadima-ilmieva/>; Ukrinform (18 May 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3486451-na-hersonsini-nacalnikom-oblupravlinna-ohoroni-zdorova-stav-soratnik-medvedcuka-zmi.html>; and Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3496.

⁸¹ Most (16 September 2022). Available at: <https://most.ks.ua/news/url/rakethnim-udarom-po-sudu-v-hersoni-poranena-kolaborantka-alla-barhatnova/>; War & Sanctions (2022). Available at: <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/sanction-person/5990/>; Shoaib (17 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-ukraine-himars-to-strike-officials-kherson-2022-9>; and Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3480.

- Maryna Zakharova (Ukrainian: Марина Захарова, aka Marina Zakharova) – head of the Central Election Commission of Kherson region.⁸²
- Volodymyr Antonovych Ovcharenko (Ukrainian: Володимир Антонович Овчаренко, aka Vladmir Antonovich Ovcharenko) – head of the Public Council of Kherson region.⁸³
- Serhiy Olehovych Suvorov (Ukrainian: Сергій Олегович Суворов, aka Sergey Olegovich Suvorov) – head of the Inspectorate of Agricultural Supervision of Kherson region.⁸⁴

Notes on Information Verification & the Disorganisation of the Occupying Administration

The less prominent and visible individuals listed above are difficult to verify and investigate, a condition that is exacerbated by the poorly organised, opaque, and inconsistent occupying administration. Several of the collaborators are mentioned only sparingly in the occupying administration's official Telegram channels. Interestingly, much of their activity and visibility is tied to the recent sham referendum that took place in the Kherson region. Many of the collaborators who were absent from Telegram suddenly took to the platform to express support for the referendum, vote in it, or even have a hand in organising it.⁸⁵ One notable example is Maryna Zakharova, the Head of the occupying administration's Central Election Commission. Mention of her only exists after the referendum was formally announced in late September, though she is now mentioned in more than ten posts.⁸⁶ She has no public personal Telegram channel. Given extensive discussion of the referendum months before it happened and the ostensible importance of her role, it is peculiar she was not mentioned earlier and more frequently. This points to the haphazard, impromptu, and constantly shifting nature of the occupying administration and its activities.

⁸² Администрация г. Алешки (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Alyoshki/826; and Администрация Херсонской области (22 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3472.

⁸³ Кирилл Стремоусов (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/344; and https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2703; Voitovych and Lister (20 September 2022). Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-09-20-22/h_f5a145333c976022374acc2d8e9cb9e1.

⁸⁴ Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3504; This article suggests he is real and is being investigated by the Security Service of Ukraine for collaborationism with the occupying administration: Most (30 August 2022). Available at: https://most.ks.ua/news/url/kolishnomu_top_chinovniku_derzhkoinspektsiji_na_hersonschini_sergiju_suvorovu_povidomili_pro_pidozru_u_kolaboratsionizmi/.

⁸⁵ For example, see Terskikh: Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3513; also Shvaiko: Администрация Херсонской области (23 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3501; also Kostyuk: Администрация Бериславского района (27 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/berislavinfo/717>.

⁸⁶ Zakharova's earliest mention is: Администрация Херсонской области (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3426. Other mentions include: Администрация Херсонской области (22 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3472; and Администрация Херсонской области (28 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3698.

Collaborators' Involvement in the Referendum

Several of the Ukrainian collaborators discussed above were involved in the planning and execution of the sham referendum that took place in the Kherson region between 23-27 September 2022. Like much of the occupying administrations' activities, the referendum was a disorganised and opaque matter.

The most publicly active individuals in the referendum were Kyrylo Stremousov, Volodymyr Saldo, Maryna Zakharova, and Volodymyr Ovcharenko. Stremousov and Saldo were frequently cited in both Russian and Ukrainian media stories regarding the referendum, while Zakharova and Ovcharenko both held positions associated with the referendum. It is important to note that while these are the most involved Ukrainian collaborators according to open sources, several Russian enforcers and foreign observers were heavily involved in the referendum. Only the Ukrainian collaborators are discussed in the section of the report.⁸⁷

Stremousov was at the forefront of the discussion on the annexation of the region within the occupying administration, becoming its default mouthpiece on the matter, particularly while Saldo disappeared from public view in August and September 2022 due to an alleged poisoning.⁸⁸

Saldo's involvement, while secondary to Stremousov's, was important given his role as Head of the occupying administration. The sham referendum happened in theory because of Saldo's dual declaration of intent to host the referendum and request to the Russian government to accept the legitimacy of the referendum.⁸⁹ Saldo also sent an appeal to Vladimir Putin on 28 September 2022 with the results of the referendum, formally asking that the Kherson region be allowed to join Russia.⁹⁰ Hypothetically, Saldo could have been responsible for organising much of the referendum, including appointing individuals to plan and execute the concrete logistics of it. Unfortunately, details of the day-to-day organisation of the referendum are generally difficult to find via open sources.

Zakharova, as was mentioned above, is the Head of the occupying administration's Central Election Commission and became suddenly important to the occupying administration in the few days between the referendum's announcement and its execution. On 27 September 2022,

⁸⁷ For information on the Russian enforcers, see section "Russian soul of the occupation."

⁸⁸ See next section of the report for more information on this.

⁸⁹ Владимир Сальдо (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/148.

⁹⁰ Владимир Сальдо (28 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/160.

Zakharova issued a signed declaration containing the results of the sham referendum. In this declaration, she states that 571,001 residents of Kherson region voted in the “referendum” and that 497,051 of them—over 87%—voted to secede from Ukraine and join Russia.⁹¹

Lastly, Ovcharenko's role, although minor, was notable in that, as head of the Kherson region's Public Council, he led one of the few concrete steps of the “referendum” well ahead of when it was formally announced. In late July, the Public Council of the Kherson region—helmed by Ovcharenko—organised a forum called “Kherson is together with Russia” (Russian: “Херсон вместе с Россией”).⁹² Among others, Ovcharenko and Saldo were speakers at the forum.⁹³ The forum was allegedly attended by over 1,000 so-called delegates who unanimously voted in favour of a declaration that Kherson join Russia.⁹⁴ This event was a preamble to the eventual declaration issued by the Public Council and signed by Ovcharenko on 20 September 2022 that stated the immediate need to organise a referendum on joining Russia.⁹⁵

The role of opposition and partisan movements in the referendum will be more extensively covered in the next report of the series.

(Dis)organising the “Referendum”

The referendum in the Kherson region, despite being heavily discussed by collaborators, was hastily organised. The primary reason for this, as referenced elsewhere in this report, was that the Ukrainian collaborators, particularly those embedded in the civilian side of the occupying administration, do not have real power over significant decisions and matters in the Kherson region.

The Russian government is organised in a highly top-down structure; the same applies to the occupying administrations the Russian government has propped up in the occupied territories of Ukraine. It cannot be understated how determinant decisions coming from high-ranking echelons in the Russian government are for the goings-on in the Kherson region and other

⁹¹ Администрация Херсонской области (28 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3698.

⁹² Администрация Херсонской области (30 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2681.

⁹³ Администрация Херсонской области (30 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2689; and Администрация Херсонской области (1 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2689.

⁹⁴ Администрация Херсонской области (1 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2708. Note the usage of “ethnic Russian” (Russian: “русский”) as opposed to “politically Russian” (Russian: Российский), the version used in much of the Russian government's characterization of Russia including its formal title, Russian Federation (“Российская Федерация”). While many collaborators in Kherson region have been careful to avoid excessively stigmatizing Ukrainian culture and language, ethnic—and often ethno-nationalistic—undertones persist in the efforts of the collaborators and Russian enforcers alike. For additional mention of the allegedly unanimous results of the forum, see: Администрация Херсонской области (1 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2703.

⁹⁵ Кирилл Стремозов (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/344

occupied territories. Indeed, much of the organisation of the referendum in the Kherson region was done by the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation (CEC RF).⁹⁶ On 26 September 2022, the United Kingdom announced sanctions on Nikolay Bulayev, the head of CEC RF, for the commission's involvement in the sham referendums in occupied regions of Ukraine.⁹⁷ The commission's involvement is further evidenced by the fact that individuals originally from Kherson who were living in Tatarstan or other areas of Russia could also vote, despite not being physically present in the Kherson region.⁹⁸ Ultimately, the order for the synchronous, sham “referenda” held across Russia-occupied regions of Ukraine came all the way from the Kremlin.

What this top-down structure means for the collaborators on the ground in the Kherson region is that they are at the whim of high-level Russian authorities. They could not have staged a referendum—even an illegitimate one—without the green light from the Kremlin. This power dynamic explains in part the haphazard nature of the referendum in the Kherson region, including the bizarrely inconsistent statements from Stremousov and others regarding the referendum.

For months, the referendum seemed imminent, if statements from Stremousov and others were to be believed.⁹⁹ Suddenly in early September, an indefinite pause on preparations for the referendum was announced citing security challenges. At that point, mention of the referendum all but disappeared from the Telegram channels of key collaborators and the occupying administration alike. Those channels had been making reference to the referendum every few days, if not multiple times a day, until that point.

For example, Stremousov discussed pausing the referendum on 5 September 2022, the day the pause was announced.¹⁰⁰ This post was the last of his about the referendum until September 20, when the sham referendum was announced. Stremousov's channel was then filled with numerous posts every day about the referendum, despite fifteen consecutive days of silence on the matter.¹⁰¹ Sergey Yelisseyev, the Russian enforcer then acting as Saldo's

⁹⁶ Главное в Херсоне (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/hercon_ru/3115.

⁹⁷ The UK Sanctions List (26 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list>.

⁹⁸ Antonov (21 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/amp/5571743>.

⁹⁹ For example, see: Кирилл Стремоузов (25 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/240; Кирилл Стремоузов (26 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/242; and Кирилл Стремоузов (29 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/242.

¹⁰⁰ Кирилл Стремоузов (5 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/280.

¹⁰¹ For example, see: Кирилл Стремоузов (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/343; and Кирилл Стремоузов (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/Stremousov_Kirill/344.

temporary replacement, exhibited a similar silence followed by a flurry of posts about the referendum.¹⁰²

If Stremousov, Yeliseyev, or others in the Kherson region were actually responsible for deciding when the so-called referendum took place, it is reasonable to expect their messaging to be more consistent—or at least somewhat present—during the pause. That local leaders such as Stremousov and Yeliseyev were not in charge of the timing of the referendum discredits explicit statements from Russian officials that claim the referendum was not up to Russia and that those in the Russian-occupied territories needed to decide whether or not to join Russia for themselves.¹⁰³

Deaths and Injuries of Collaborators

This section focuses on the impact partisan activity—sabotage committed by anti-Russian resistance in Ukraine—has had on collaborators and their activities in the Kherson region. In addition to the ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive in the Kherson region, partisan activity adds an element of chaos to life in the area, particularly for collaborators of the occupying administration. Death threats against and bounties on the lives of collaborators have been well-documented since the early days of the occupation.¹⁰⁴ As this section will detail, no person has too small a role to be targeted by partisans. If the alleged poisoning of Volodymyr Saldo is credible, no target has too big a role, either.

Key individuals killed or injured from partisan activity:

- Volodymyr Saldo: On 4 August 2022, Saldo posted to his personal Telegram channel that he was being hospitalised and that Sergey Yeliseyev would take his place as interim head of the occupying administration.¹⁰⁵ While Kyrlo Stremousov initially claimed that Saldo's condition was simply due to overworking, the Russian Ministry of Defence announced on 20 August that they were investigating Saldo's case as a potential poisoning via a neurotoxin.¹⁰⁶ Saldo was completely absent from public view

¹⁰² Администрация Херсонской области (5 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3155; Администрация Херсонской области (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3415; and Администрация Херсонской области (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3418.

¹⁰³ For examples of such a statement, see Peskov: TASS (8 August 2022). Available at: <https://tass.com/politics/1490817>; and The Moscow Times (21 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/07/21/kremlin-eyes-sept-15-referendum-for-captured-ukraine-regions-bloomberg-a78366>.

¹⁰⁴ For example, see Karmanau (9 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/russian-occupied-areas-face-growing-ukrainian-resistance>; and Meduza (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/08/30/collaborationist-officials-targeted-and-killed-in-ukraine-s-occupied-territories>.

¹⁰⁵ Владимир Сальдо (4 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/98.

¹⁰⁶ Владимир Сальдо (5 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/100; and TASS (20 August 2022). Available at: <https://tass.com/russia/1496269>.

from early August until he had recovered and returned to the Kherson region in September. To date, It remains unclear whether the Russian Ministry of Defence's allegations were legitimate, but the multitude of other cases of partisan attacks on collaborators in occupied territories of Ukraine, including in the Kherson region, make the allegations believable.

- Oleksiy Ivanovych Kovalyov: Kovalyov was a former People's Deputy in the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada when he defected to the occupying administration in Kherson region. On 28 August 2022, Kovalyov died from a gunshot wound. He was previously wounded in a separate assassination attempt earlier in June. Kovalyov had been serving as deputy head of the Kherson regional occupying administration at the time that he was killed.¹⁰⁷
- Pavlo Slobodchikov (Ukrainian: Павло Слободчиков): Slobodchikov had been serving as an assistant to Saldo when he was shot dead on 20 March 2022.¹⁰⁸
- Valeriy Kuleshov (Ukrainian: Валерий Кулешов): Kuleshov was a close associate of Stremousov and a pro-Russian blogger. He was shot and killed on 20 April 2022.¹⁰⁹

Several other collaborators in the Kherson region have been injured, typically via explosions detonated at their homes or cars. Ukrainian and Western media outlets have covered these injuries extensively.¹¹⁰

Even if unsuccessful, partisan activity in the region serves to deter potential collaborators from cooperating with the occupying administration and is intended to frighten and punish those already colluding with it. Because the occupying administration has been repeatedly victimised by partisan activity, its legitimacy and ability to coerce obedience from the population have been tarnished, though clearly not completely weakened. Partisan activity will be covered more deeply in the next report of the series.

¹⁰⁷ BBC (29 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-62717841>; and State Bureau of Investigation (6 July 2022). Available at: <https://dbr.gov.ua/news/narodnomu-deputatu-oleksiyu-kovalovu-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-u-derzhavnij-zradi-ta-posobnictvi-derzhavi-agresoru-video>.

¹⁰⁸ Meduza (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/08/30/collaborationist-officials-targeted-and-killed-in-ukraine-s-occupied-territories>; and Karmanau (9 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/russian-occupied-areas-face-growing-ukrainian-resistance>.

¹⁰⁹ Ukrainska Pravda (20 April 2022). Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/04/20/7340903/>; and Novoe Vremya (20 April 2022). Available at: <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/v-hersone-ubili-blogera-valeriya-kuleshova-foto-50235401.html>.

¹¹⁰ For examples, see: Meduza (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/08/30/collaborationist-officials-targeted-and-killed-in-ukraine-s-occupied-territories>; and Kramer (17 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/17/world/europe/ukraine-partisans-insurgency-russia.html>.

The outsiders: the Russian soul of the occupation

By Alona Shestopalova

As areas that have not been occupied by Russian forces have retained their Ukrainian authorities and institutions (including Southern regions of Ukraine or regions bordering Russia) it is clear that without a full-scale military invasion, Kherson would have retained its original Ukrainian authorities and institutions as well.

Even though Russian armed forces are in de-facto control of the region (prior to the September counter offensive), the main planners and enablers of the Russian occupation are far from the battlefields. Similarly, the role of Kherson's Russia-established "Military-Civilian Administration" and municipal-level "administrations" is not to make decisions but to act on behalf of the Kremlin.¹¹¹

The question of who is *really* behind the Russian occupation of the Kherson region is crucial, although difficult to answer. Independent Russian media and Ukrainian media agree on the assumption that Sergey Vladilenovich Kiriienko, the First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia is one of those figures, if not the main one. *Meduza* described Kiriienko's position as follows:

"During the war, the head of the Kremlin's internal political bloc, Sergey Kiriienko, managed to get closer to President Vladimir Putin and to expand the scope of his power. Now he curates the self-proclaimed DNR and LNR, as well as the territories of the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops."¹¹²

The exact responsibilities of a "curator" of the occupied territories are unclear, not least because like the Russian occupation itself, "curation" of the occupation is done in breach of international law.

¹¹¹ Skorkin (14 May 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/05/14/narodnye-mery-i-kovid-dissidenty>

¹¹² Pertsev (8 June 2022) Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/06/08/vitse-korol-donbassa>



Figure 17: Sergey Kiriyenko.¹¹³



Figure 18: Sergey Kiriyenko and Vladimir Putin.¹¹⁴

Kiriyenko is one of the central figures of the current Russian regime. In recent decades he held numerous positions in the Russian government, including Prime Minister of Russia in 1998, and in Russian state corporations. For years Kiriyenko was the Head of Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation.¹¹⁵ This year, Kiriyenko has even been discussed as one of the possible successors of Putin.¹¹⁶

Meduza reports that its sources in the Kremlin reveal that Andrey Veniaminovich Yarin (Андрей Вениаминович Ярин), one of the people working for Kiriyenko (*podchinennyy Kiriyenko*), is in control of the “Military-Civilian Administrations” in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Yarin is also said to be in charge of coordinating visits of Russian deputies and governors to the occupied territories.¹¹⁷ Both Andrey Yarin and Sergey Kiriyenko are under international sanctions for their involvement in the “use of chemical weapons in the attempted assassination of Alexey Navalny.”¹¹⁸

In June 2022, Boris Yakovlevich Rapoport (Russian: Борис Яковлевич Рапопорт),¹¹⁹ another Kremlin official was reportedly recruiting individuals to work for the “administrations” in the Kherson region and other Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine. In the past, Rapoport had experience with “crisis management” in the context of elections inside Russia, including ensuring that pro-Kremlin candidates won elections.¹²⁰ Recently, the department where

¹¹³ “Администрация Херсонской области” (4 July 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2438

¹¹⁴ Проект (29 April 2020). Available at: <https://www.proekt.media/narrative/koronavirus-piar-putina/>

¹¹⁵ Kremlin.ru. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/175/biography>

¹¹⁶ Pertsev (22 May 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/05/24/dovolnyh-pochti-net>

¹¹⁷ Pertsev (28 July 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/07/28/kak-edinaya-rossiya-prevratilas-iz-partii-vlasti-v-partiyu-voyny-i-kakuyu-rol-v-etom-sygrali-smotryaschie-ot-kremlya>

¹¹⁸ Council of the EU (15 October 2020). Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/10/15/use-of-chemical-weapons-in-the-assassination-attempt-on-alexei-navalny-eu-sanctions-six-individuals-and-one-entity/>

¹¹⁹ Reportedly, Rapoport was one of Russian officials curating self-proclaimed pseudo republics of Donetsk and Luhansk back in 2014. Source: Mk.ru (15 December 2014). Available at: <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/12/15/boris-rapoport-uzhe-v-2013m-v-priemnoy-surkova-visela-karta-na-kotoroy-krym-byl-chastyu-rossii.html>

¹²⁰ Pertsev (9 June 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/06/09/kak-utverzhdavut-istochniki-meduzy-kreml-hochet-ob-edinit-okkupirovannye-territorii-ukrainy-v-novyiy-federalnyy-okrug-v-sostave-rf>

Rapoport worked expanded its voting-related activities. It was reportedly closely working on the organisation of the sham referendum in Russia-occupied regions of Ukraine, while Alexander Dmitrievich Kharichev (Russian: Александр Дмитриевич Харичев), the head of the department, was the close ally of Sergey Kiriienko in “curating” the occupied territories.¹²¹

In August, Kiriienko visited the region. According to Stremousov, the Deputy Head of the “Military-Civilian Administration”, the Russian official visited the office of the Russian bank in Kherson, local pharmacies, shops where Russian products are sold, places where locals get Russian SIM cards, and offices where Russian passports are issued. Reportedly, as a result of the meeting, the occupying authorities decided to substantially increase the number of Russian passport offices.¹²²

As written above, on the day of the meeting with Kiriienko, Volodymyr Saldo (Head of the Kherson occupying administration) announced the creation of the Kherson occupying government and appointed four new officials:

- Sergey Vladimirovich Yeliseyev (Russian: Сергей Владимирович Елисеев)
- Vladimir Aleksandrovich Bespalov (Russian: Владимир Александрович Беспалов)
- Mihail Leonidovich Rodikov (Russian: Михаил Леонидович Родиков)
- Oleksiy Ivanovich Kovalyov (Ukrainian: Олексій Іванович Ковальов).

In August 2022, three more officials joined the Kherson occupying government:

- Evgeny Viktorovich Nemtinov (Russian: Евгений Викторович Немтинов)
- Semyon Alekseevich Mashkautsan (Russian: Семён Алексеевич Машкауцан)
- Alexey Viktorovich Katerinichev (Russian: Алексей Викторович Катериничев)

All above-listed “government officials” except for Oleksiy Ivanovich Kovalyov were Russian citizens who previously served as officials in Russia and/or the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula.

¹²¹ Pertsev (5 August 2022). Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/08/05/podderzhki-konechno-malo>

¹²² Ibid.

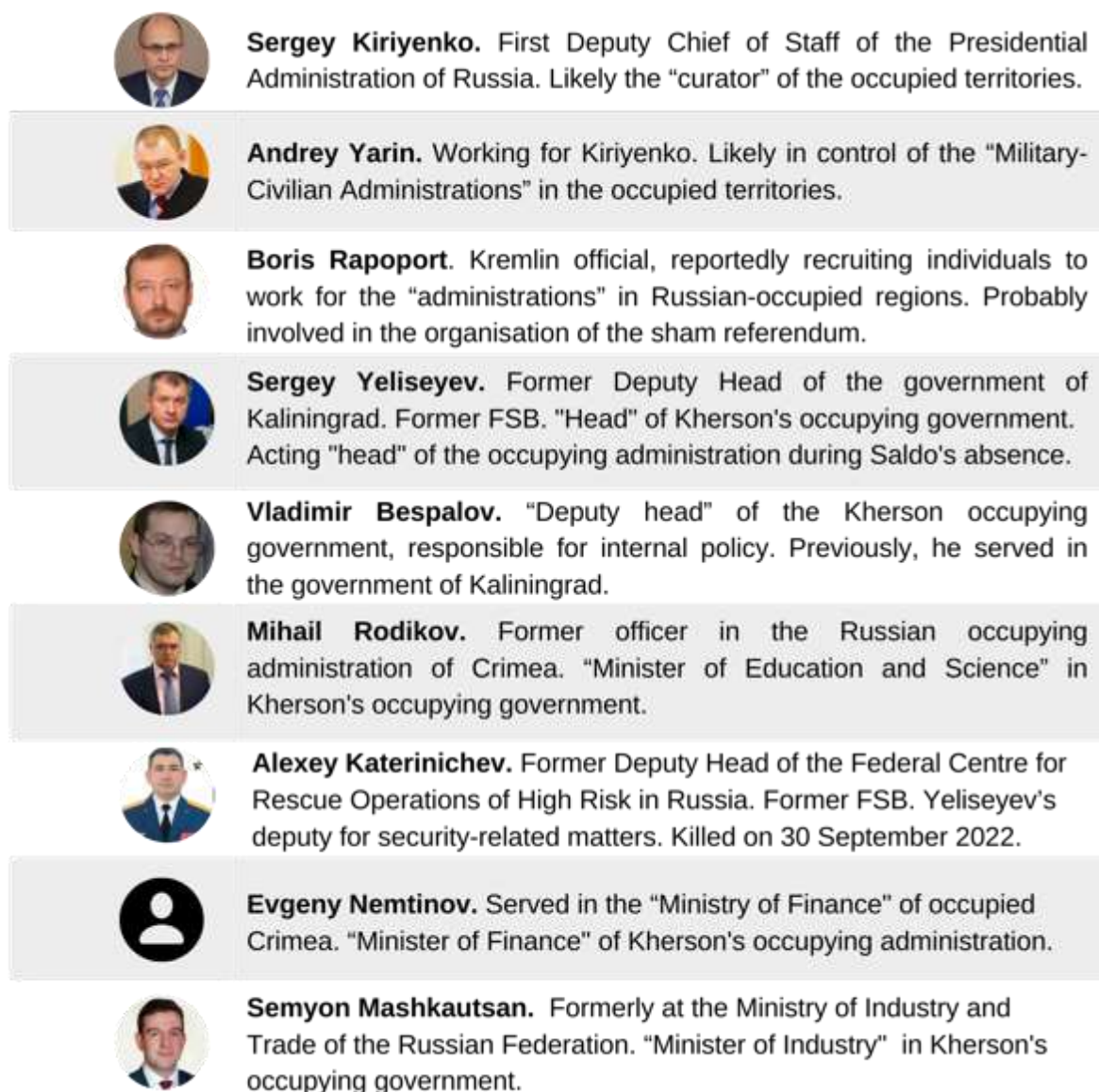


Figure 19: Key Russian officials in the Kherson region.

Sergey Vladimirovich Yeliseyev, the Head of Kherson's occupying government, was the Deputy Head of the government of the Kaliningrad region (the Russian semi-exclave between Poland and Lithuania) and previously served in the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB).¹²³

Prior to the Deputy Head position, he had worked as the Chief Federal Inspector for the Kaliningrad region.¹²⁴ The Russian Federation appoints and sends Chief Federal Inspectors to ascertain whether the policies in specific Russian regions are in line with the Kremlin's

¹²³ Коммерсантъ (4 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5446623>

¹²⁴ Калининград 24 (9 June 2017). Available at: <https://kaliningrad-city24.ru/news/politics/glavnym-federalnym-inspektorom-po-kaliningradskoj-oblasti-naznacheni-eks-sotrudnik-fsb/>

policies. Thus, Yeliseyev has experience in inspecting whether specific regions are operating in line with Putin's decisions. In 2017, when the acting governor of the Kaliningrad region was speaking about Yeliseyev's role as Chief Federal Inspector,¹²⁵ he said: "It is important for us to strengthen the presidential control, and I really hope that ... Mr Yeliseyev will be our good assistant in this sense."¹²⁶

In 2022, **Sergey Yeliseyev** was sanctioned for his involvement in the Russian occupation of the Kherson region.¹²⁷

Vladimir Aleksandrovich Beshpalov, the "Deputy Head" of the Kherson occupying government, responsible for internal policy, also previously served in the government of the Kaliningrad region.

Mihail Leonidovich Rodikov is another Russian working at the occupying government as the "Minister of Education and Science". Before coming to Russian-occupied Kherson, Rodikov served in the Russian-occupying administration of Crimea where he was integrating the education system of occupied Sevastopol into Russia.¹²⁸

Rodikov stated that his Crimean experience is the "foundation" of what he does in the Kherson region and that his task is to create a Russian education system in place of a Ukrainian one.¹²⁹ When speaking about the problems and challenges he faces, Rodikov claims that the hardest task is to find people willing to collaborate with the Russian occupying regime and blames Ukraine for this problem:

"The difficulty is that Ukraine pays salaries to everyone on bank cards. Ukraine also says that it will return [to Russia-occupied territories], and that those who have agreed to cooperate with Russia will be punished... The most difficult thing is to find people who are ready to take responsibility...The main thing is people who will believe in Russia."¹³⁰

¹²⁵ The then newly appointed Chief Federal Inspector in the region.

¹²⁶ Калининград 24 (9 June 2017). Available at: <https://kaliningrad-city24.ru/news/politics/glavnym-federalnym-inspektorom-po-kaliningradskoj-oblasti-naznacheni-eks-sotrudnik-fsb/>

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of The Treasury (2 August 2022). Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20220802>

¹²⁸ Grinev (5 July 2022). Available at: <https://sevastopol.su/news/eks-nachalnik-sevastopolskogo-obrazovaniya-vozglavil-ministerstvo-v-hersonskoy-oblasti>

¹²⁹ Abramov (23 July 2022). Available at: <https://sevastopol.su/news/mihail-rodikov-opyt-sevastopolya-bescenen-dlya-hersona>

¹³⁰ Ibid.

The “problem” that local teachers and educators living under Russian occupation were getting paid by Ukraine on bank cards and, therefore, had means to survive without collaborating with Russian occupying authorities was “solved” by removing the terminals required for cashless payments with Ukrainian bank cards. This aspect of the Russian was covered in more detail in the previous report of the series.¹³¹

Evgeny Viktorovich Nemtinov, another official with experience from the Russia-occupied Crimea, joined the Kherson occupying government in August 2022 as the “Minister of Finance.”¹³² Born in the Dnipropetrovsk region (Ukraine) in 1977, he served in the “Ministry of Finance of Crimea” after Russia illegally occupied the Ukrainian peninsula in 2014.

Semyon Alekseevich Mashkautsan was appointed to the Kherson occupying government in August 2022 as the “Minister of Industry.” Before being sent to the Kherson region, Mashkautsan worked in Russian governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, and took part in the “Programme for the development of personnel management reserve.”¹³³ The programme was initiated by Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation at the time when Sergey Kiriienko was the Head of this Russian state enterprise.¹³⁴

Alexey Viktorovich Katerinichev was another Russian-appointed official who joined the Kherson-occupying government in August 2022. Katerinichev was appointed as Sergey Yelisseyev’s deputy with a focus on security-related matters.¹³⁵ Like his boss, Katerinichev also previously served in the Russian FSB. Right before coming to the Kherson region, Katerinichev served as the Deputy Head of the Federal Centre for Rescue Operations of High Risk in Russia.¹³⁶

Kherson’s online newspaper *MOST* reported that he was killed in Kherson on 29 September 2022 when the Ukrainian army reportedly hit a location where Russian forces were based.¹³⁷ On 30 September 2022, the Kherson occupying administration’s Telegram channel wrote that Katerinichev was killed due to a “terrorist attack by Ukrainian armed units”.¹³⁸

¹³¹ Thomas, Carrasco Rodriguez, and Shestopalova (23 September 2022). Available at:

<https://www.info-res.org/post/parallel-worlds-how-russia-is-imposing-a-new-reality-on-kherson>

¹³² “Администрация Херсонской области” (18 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2928

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Корпоративная академия Росатом. Available at: [Программы развития управленческого кадрового резерва - Росатом \(rosatom-academy.ru\)](https://rosatom-academy.ru)

¹³⁵ “Администрация Херсонской области” (18 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2928

¹³⁶ ФГКУ “Центр по проведению спасательных операций особого риска “Лидер.” Available at:

<https://csoor.organizations.mchs.gov.ru/o-centre/rukovodstvo/1010>

¹³⁷ MOST (30 September 2022). Available at: <https://most.ks.ua/news/url/pid-chas-udaru-zsu-likvidovano-zastupnika-golovi-okupatsijnoi-administratsiji-hersonschini/>

¹³⁸ “Администрация Херсонской области” (30 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3744

The channel also underlines that it is “thanks to Alexey [Katerinichev]” the sham referendum took place in the Kherson region under the “high level of security.”¹³⁹ Putin also acknowledged Katerinichev’s “bravery and heroism shown in the performance of duty” and posthumously awarded Katerinichev the title of “Hero of Russia”.¹⁴⁰



Figure 20: Alexey Katerinichev.



Figure 21: Order by Vladimir Putin awarding Katerinichev with the “Hero of Russia” title.¹⁴¹

Kherson occupying administration's Telegram channel informed that “governors” coming to the Kherson region in August 2022, including Katerinichev “were sent [to Kherson] by Russia.”¹⁴² The attention paid by Putin’s administration to the reportedly deceased Katerinichev provides additional insight into the level of centralisation and control that the Kremlin exercises on the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, including the occupying “governments” and “administrations” at various levels.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ ФГКУ “Центр по проведению спасательных операций особого риска “Лидер” (1 October 2022). Available at: <https://csoor.organizations.mchs.gov.ru/deyatelnost/press-centr/novosti/4237621>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² “Администрация Херсонской области” (18 August 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2928

Church collaborationism: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has broken ties with Russia, but not everywhere.

By Alex Sid



Figure 22: Joint public appearance of Archimandrite Alexy, Rector of the Holy Dormition Cathedral in Kherson, and Sergey Yeliseyev, acting head of the occupying administration of Kherson region.

War is often a flash point for religiosity. People seek protection and support in faith and pray for their families and friends. The question of faith becomes a question of trust. For the mostly Orthodox religious community in Ukraine, it is crucial to know if their Church leaders take a stand against the war – and if they can be trusted.

Due to the prominence of the Orthodox Church in the Kherson region this section explores some collaborationist figures within the Church and their links to the occupying administration.

According to research by the Razumkov Centre,¹⁴³ a Ukrainian think tank, during 2010-2020, the share of believers among adult Ukrainian citizens was high, averaging 70%. This makes the Church an influential authority in the formation of Ukrainian opinions. Similarly, a study

¹⁴³ Razumkov Centre. Last visited 10 October 2022. Available at: <https://razumkov.org.ua/en/>

recorded an increase from 67% before the war in Donbas¹⁴⁴ to 76% in 2014 – a trend which is typical for a society under stress.¹⁴⁵

During 2000-2018, the three largest Orthodox denominations legally and actually operated in Ukraine: The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church (UAOC), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP).¹⁴⁶

On 5 January 2019, Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, signed the tomos that officially recognised and established the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and granted it autocephaly (self-governorship).¹⁴⁷

This permission re-established the ancient direct connection between Kyivan Metropolitanate and Constantinople Patriarchate created in the X century, when the Kyivan Rus' was baptised and ended several-centuries-long subordinate religious ties between Kyiv and Moscow.¹⁴⁸ As a result of the permission, in 2019, the united autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was established.

However, not all Ukrainian churches became a part of the OCU: some decided to keep their ties with Russia. On 27 May 2022, three months into the Russian full-scale war in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which had remained loyal to Moscow, also took the ultimate decision to break with the Russian Church. Since then, reports of hostilities and violent clashes between the followers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine have emerged.¹⁴⁹

This research has identified collaborationist activities¹⁵⁰ in at least three churches in the Russia-occupied parts of the Kherson region, including the organisation of political events. Collaborationist religious actors have also carried out activities in cooperation with the Russian occupying administration, including public appeals to support its decisions and actions.

This section of the report analyses Russian and Ukrainian language social media, with a focus on Telegram channels around Kherson, between 24 February and 30 September 2022.

¹⁴⁴ The war in Donbas was an armed conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine that began in April 2014 and preceded the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Razumkov Centre (25 November 2020). Available at: https://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2020_relgiya.pdf, p. 1

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.unian.info/politics/10399809-history-is-made-bartholomew-signs-tomos-of-autocephaly-for-orthodox-church-of-ukraine.html> (2022-10-12).

¹⁴⁸ <https://patriarchia.org.ua/istoriya/> (2022-10-12).

¹⁴⁹ Pullella (14 March 2022). Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-invasion-splits-orthodox-church-isolates-russian-patriarch-2022-03-14/>

¹⁵⁰ Definition "collaboration activity" (ukr.: "Колабораційна діяльність"): https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14?find=1&text=%D0%9A%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B0+%D0%B4%D1%96%D1%8F%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C#w1_1 (2022-09-19).

Several actors related to the Orthodox churches and their collaboration activities are presented in this analysis.

The Role Model: Patriarch Kirill and his Narrative

Vladimir Mikhailovich Gungyayev, or Patriarch Kirill, is the head of the Russian Orthodox Church and one of the primary religious supporters of Russia's war in Ukraine.¹⁵¹ One of the ideological foundations of Russia's war against Ukraine and its people is the doctrine of the "Russian World", a concept that asserts ethnic Russian dominance over "traditional" Russian territory and denies the existence of distinct Slavic nations and cultures, such as the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations.¹⁵²

The Russian regime actively formed this doctrine in the 1990s to preserve the influence of the Russian Federation on former Soviet Union territories. Patriarch Kirill has been personally promoting this doctrine for years, as the following public statements he has made demonstrate:

- 2009: "My words do not mean that the Russian Church is questioning the current state borders. Of course, one cannot help but admit that these borders, at least for today, given the current nature of all these border situations, create unnecessary obstacles between the peoples of the Russian World." – Patriarch Kirill at the opening of the III Assembly of the Russian World.
- 2014: "The Russian world is a special civilization, to which belong people who today call themselves by different names – Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians." – Patriarch Kirill on TV broadcast in the program "Shepherd's Word."¹⁵³
- 2021: "For me, as for the Patriarch of All Russia, there is no division into peoples and states, but there is a flock of the Russian Orthodox Church." – Patriarch Kirill in an interview on the air of the Russia 1 TV channel, on the occasion of his 75th birthday.¹⁵⁴
- 20 March 2022: "Someone must defend God's truth that we are really one people that came out of the Kyiv Baptismal font! I know how the opponents of these people will now shout there, in Ukraine: Again, the Patriarch says that we are one people. And the Patriarch cannot say otherwise, because this is historical and God's truth." – Patriarch

¹⁵¹ @patriarchkirill. Last accessed 10 October 2022. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/patriarchkirill/>

¹⁵² Euractiv (6 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/putin-approves-new-foreign-policy-doctrine-based-on-russian-world/>

¹⁵³ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3728242.html> (2022-09-14).

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5863267.html> (2022-09-14).

Kirill on the second Week of Great Lent, after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.¹⁵⁵

Patriarch Kirill's statements are consistent with Russian state propaganda, which rejects the existence of the Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian culture, and does not recognize Ukrainians' right to self-governance¹⁵⁶. The doctrine of the "Russian World" now contributes to the justification of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.

Mid-March 2022 can be considered the high point of Kirill's propaganda. During a liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on 13 March 2022, he presented the Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard of Russia, Viktor Zolotov, with the August Icon of the Mother of God¹⁵⁷ and gave his blessing to the Russian military.¹⁵⁸



Figure 23(above): Patriarch Kirill and Zolotov at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, with the August Icon of the Mother of God.¹⁵⁹ Photo: Press Office, the National Guard of Russia (Росгвардия).¹⁶⁰

During the ceremony, Patriarch Kirill and Zolotov exchanged the following words:

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5909901.html> (2022-09-14).

¹⁵⁶ The priests of UOC MP share this view. See the statement by Andriy Pinchuk, priest of the Dnipropetrovsk Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=5012948892114452&id=100001981718431 (2022-10-06).

¹⁵⁷ Russ.: Августовская икона Божией Матери.

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19KiQgetuy0> (2022-09-14).

¹⁵⁹ Ironically, Gundyayev presented an icon that did not bring the Russian army the hoped-for victory as early as 1915. For the history of the icon, also see the interview with Andrey Kurayev, deacon and professor of theology:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcZV--s78A8> (2022-09-14).

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5252452> (2022-09-20).

“Patriarch Kirill: This is the image I would like to convey for our military temple. Let him inspire young warriors who take the oath, who embark on the path of defending the Fatherland. I hand it over to you... to you.¹⁶¹ Well, since you are the head, Vadim Vasilyich, of the National Guard, I would like this image to be in the ranks of the National Guard of the Russian Federation.

Zolotov: Your Holiness, thank you for this gift. I want to wish you many years to the glory of your labours and I want to convey to you, and to all the parishioners present here, that the National Guard troops, together with the armed forces of the Russian Federation, are doing everything assigned tasks during this military counter-operation. And I want to say that yes, not everything is going as fast as we would like, but this is only because the Nazis are hiding behind the backs of civilians, behind the backs of the elderly, women, children. Arrange firing positions in kindergartens, schools, residential buildings. But we are moving towards our goal step by step. And so the victory will be ours. And this icon will protect the Russian army and accelerate our victory. Thank you again for this.”¹⁶²

Breaking with the Russian Orthodoxy

On 27 May 2022, the branch of Ukraine's Orthodox Church that remained a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, announced it would also break with Russia over the invasion of Ukraine.¹⁶³ In particular, it self-declared its “full independence and autonomy,” and distanced itself from Russian Orthodoxy:

¹⁶¹ In the part of the recording it can be seen that Kirill apparently forgot to mention the National Guard of Russia (russ: росгвардия). He is reminded of this by the approaching man and continues his speech: <https://www.m24.ru/videos/obshchestvo/13032022/440022> (2022-09-20).

¹⁶² Video transcript (russ.):
Патриарх Кирилл: Вот этот образ я бы хотел передать для нашего воинского храма. Пусть он вдохновляет молодых воинов, которые принимают присягу, которые вступают на путь защиты отечества. Вручаю Вам... Вам. Ну, и поскольку Вы возглавляет, Вадим Васильич [Gundyayev wrongly called Zolotov by the name Vadim; Zolotov's correct first name is Viktor], Росгвардия, то я хотел бы чтобы этот образ именно был в рядах Росгвардии Российской Федерации.
Золотов: Ваше святейшество, благодарю Вас за этот дар. Хочу пожелать Вам многие лета во славу трудов ваших и хочу довести до Вас, и до всех присутствующих здесь прихожан, о том, что войска национальной гвардии, совместно с вооружёнными силами Российской Федерации, выполняют все поставленные задачи в ходе этой военной контр-операции. И хочу сказать, что да, не всё идёт так быстро как хотелось бы, но это только лишь потому, что нацисты прячутся за спинами мирных граждан, за спинами стариков, женщин, детей. Устраивают огневые позиции в детских садах, в школах, в жилых домах. Но мы идём к намеченной цели шаг за шагом. И поэтому победа будет за нами. А эта икона будет защищать русское воинство и ускорять нашу победу. Ещё раз благодарю Вас за это.

¹⁶³ Only the delegation of the Simferopol and Crimean diocese unanimously voted against the adoption of the decision of the Council and the proposed amendments. The Diocese remains under the omophorion of Patriarch Kirill. Press release: <https://crimea-eparhia.ru/59-events/23179-8965094657687890>.

“1. The Council condemns war as a violation of God’s commandment “Thou shalt not kill!” (Exodus 20:13) and expresses heartfelt condolences to all those who have suffered in the conflict.

2. The Council appeals to the authorities of Ukraine and the authorities of the Russian Federation to continue the negotiation process and to search for a strong and sensible dialogue that could stop the bloodshed.¹⁶⁴

3. We disagree with the position of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’ on the war in Ukraine.

4. The Council adopted appropriate amendments to the Statute with regards to the Administration of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), all of which testify to the full independence and autonomy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. [...]”¹⁶⁵



Figure 24: On 27 May 2022, the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was held in the Saint Panteleimon Monastery. The decision to convene the Council was made by the Bishops’ Council of the UOC, which took place after an extraordinary meeting of the Holy Synod of the UOC.¹⁶⁶ Video screenshot.

The decision to break ties with the Russian Church came amid the third month of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is being prominently supported by Patriarch Kirill. However, CIR’s research shows that in the currently occupied regions, pro-Kremlin priests are still active and not breaking with Russia.

Christian Symbols for the War against Ukraine

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, point 2 iterates the Kremlin’s narrative of the need for Russian-Ukrainian negotiations. However, the Ukrainian position is clear: the basis for any negotiations between Ukraine and Russia is solely the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

¹⁶⁵ <https://news.church.ua/2022/05/28/resolutions-council-ukrainian-orthodox-church-may-27-2022/?lang=en> (2022-09-15).

¹⁶⁶ Video: <https://youtu.be/2vRdN0KXSh4> (2022-09-15).

In his propaganda activities, Patriarch Kirill is supported by the numerous bishops and priests, and also by “smaller” actors, including Andrey Afanasyev,¹⁶⁷ a propagandist on the Orthodox TV channel “Spas” (Russian: Спас¹⁶⁸), and “Radio Rossii” (Russian: Радио России¹⁶⁹), who uses Christian symbols to provide an air of sanctity and righteousness to the war.

For example, the Orthodox heraldic flag, the so-called “Khorugv” (Russian: хоругвь) used during military (combat) operations, with the image of the Jesus Christ, is available in online shops¹⁷⁰ for just under 500 RUB (approximately 8 GBP). Afanasyev’s Telegram channel is full of images of these flags in a military context.



Figure 25: Images of Christian symbols, accompanied by emotionally charged text¹⁷¹
Video screenshots.

These Christian symbols are seen in images and videos with Russian military personnel, reinforcing the link between the church and the war. They are often accompanied by emotionally charged text, for example: “The face of the Savior over the Peski. Our dear reservist brothers hoisted the oldest battle banner – the Russian Banner over the liberated city. Listen to these guys, look into their so young and so grown-up eyes. And pray for them.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Андрей Афанасьев (18 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/Andrafanaslive>.

¹⁶⁸ Federal channel in Russia, owned by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹⁶⁹ One of the biggest radio stations in Russia and part of the state-owned unitary enterprise „The Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Company.”

¹⁷⁰ Aliexpress (7 October 2022). Available at: <https://aliexpress.ru/popular/gonfalon.html>

¹⁷¹ @Andrafanaslive (19 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/Andrafanaslive/6698>; Original (Russian): “Лик Спасителя над Песками. Наши дорогие братья-резервисты водрузили древнейшее боевое знамя – Русскую Хоругвь над освобожденным городом. Послушайте этих ребят, посмотрите в их такие молодые и такие взрослые глаза. И помолитесь за них.”

¹⁷² Ibid.



Figure 26: “The sniper platoon of the 1919 Alexander Nevsky Battalion was transferred from Vladislav Evgenievich and Evgeny Vladislavovich Lobaev, the leaders of the Lobaev Arms [...] company, an optical sight, to facilitate and increase the distance of the sniper group. [...]”¹⁷³ Video screenshots.

Since 16 June 2022 Patriarch Kirill has been on the UK’s sanctions list for his support and endorsement of Putin’s war:

“[...] Patriarch Kirill has made multiple public statements in support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He therefore engages in, provides support for, or promotes any policy or action which destabilises Ukraine or undermines or threatens the territorial integrity, sovereignty or independence of Ukraine.”¹⁷⁴

In contrast to Patriarch Kirill, other individuals in a religious context, who have promoted the same rhetoric publicly, including Afanasyev, have not been sanctioned by the UK, EU, or US to date.

Collaboration in Kherson – Three Churches in the Spotlight

There are 45 churches in the Kherson diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (most recent figure is from 2014) which serve an estimated population of 331,500 people.¹⁷⁵ Of these churches, 17 are located at hospitals, educational institutions, and prisons. There are also two monasteries near Kherson: the Intercession Monastery in the village Muzykovka and the Annunciation Convent in the village Priozernoie.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ @Andrafnaslive (18 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/Andrafnaslive/6879>; Original (Russian): “Передали во взвод снайперов батальона 1919 имени Александра Невского от Владислав Евгеньевича и Евгения Владиславовича Лобаевых, руководителей фирмы Lobaev Arms [...], оптический прицел, для облегчения и увеличения дистанции работы снайперской группы. [...]”

¹⁷⁴ See the UK sanctions list here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list>. However, from the EU sanctions list, on which Gungyayev originally had been listed, he was removed in early June 2022, thanks to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is perceived as Moscow’s closest ally within the EU. Source: <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-patriarch-kirill-european-union-hungary-cea330ee156bfcd724383359459504f3> (2022-09-15).

¹⁷⁵ Figure as of 1 January 2017: <https://miskrada.kherson.ua/pro-kherson/> (2022-09-16).

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.pravoslavie.ks.ua/rubric/prihody-eparhii/article/hramy-hersona> (2022-09-16).

In at least three of these churches, CIR has identified collaboration activities,¹⁷⁷ including the organisation and holding of political events, activities in cooperation with the occupation administration and public appeals to support its decisions and actions. Reportedly, all three churches belong to the Kherson and Taurida diocese, UOC-MP (Russian: Херсонская и Таврическая епархия, УПЦ МП):

- The Holy Spirit Cathedral (Russian: Свято-Духовский кафедральный собор),¹⁷⁸ the main Orthodox church of the Kherson and Taurida diocese, UOC-MP¹⁷⁹
- The Catherine's Cathedral (Russian: Екатерининский собор)¹⁸⁰
- The Holy Dormition Cathedral (Russian: Свято-Успенский собор).¹⁸¹

During a congratulatory speech on 28 August at the Holy Dormition Cathedral, there was a joint public appearance of the acting head of the Kherson regional occupying administration Sergey Yelisseyev and Archimandrite Alexy (Fedorov¹⁸²). Yelisseyev explained that the work to return the cathedral building to the community began at the request of the Archimandrite Alexy, with the assistance of the head of the Military-Civilian Administration, Volodymyr Saldo. The public event was recorded and published on multiple Telegram channels, including that of the military-civilian administration¹⁸³ and Saldo.¹⁸⁴ Several pro-Russian Kherson channels also picked up the news.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ Definition "collaboration activity" (ukr.: "Колабораційна діяльність"): https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14?find=1&text=%D0%9A%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B0+%D0%B4%D1%96%D1%8F%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C#w1_1 (2022-09-19).

¹⁷⁸ Also known as Свято-Духов кафедральный собор, Привозная церковь, Купеческая церковь. Official website: <https://kherson-sob.church.ua/o-sajte/> (2022-09-16).

¹⁷⁹ [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B2%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%94%D1%83%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80_\(%D0%A5%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BD\)](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%B2%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%94%D1%83%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80_(%D0%A5%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BD)) (2022-09-16).

¹⁸⁰ Also known as Собор Екатерины, Свято-Екатерининский собор, церковь Великомученицы Екатерины, Спасский собор. Listed on the official website of the Херсонская и Таврическая епархия: <http://pravoslavie.ks.ua/rubric/prihody-eparhii/article/hramy-hersona> (2022-09-16).

¹⁸¹ Official website: <https://dormition.church.ua/> (2022-09-16).

¹⁸² Ukr.: Архимандрит Алексій (Федоров).

¹⁸³ @VGA_Kherson (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/3047.

¹⁸⁴ @SALDO_VGA (20 September 2022). Available at: https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/121.

¹⁸⁵ E.g. https://t.me/tavriya_kherson/1012; https://t.me/Novorossia_Region/10892 (2022-09-20).



Figure 27: Archimandrite Alexy presents Yeliseyev with the holy jar, with the image of the Icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God – similar to how Patriarch Kirill presented Zolotov with the August Icon of the Mother of God.
Video screenshot.

The following transcript is an excerpt from the video recording:

“Yeliseyev: I really want, firstly, to congratulate you on the celebration once again, Your High Reverence, on behalf of myself and the entire government. [...] I want to wish that from now on the interaction between the state and the church will only intensify, strengthen in the name of Orthodoxy in all regions of the Russian land. [...].

Archimandrite Alexy: I am very glad that you begin your work with the awareness that no good deed is possible without the spiritual support of our people. Because we now have to choose, either we will go the Western way, where the sanctity of marriage is violated, the sanctity of the family, where sin is already proclaimed almost some kind of accomplishment, or we will continue our path in line with the Orthodox Russia, in which we were brought up, for the sake of which, in fact, such majestic temples were built, so that the name of God would never again be ridiculed and not be desecrated. Because when you see that in Europe sinners walk under police protection, and a man with a Bible is taken away as if he had violated the order, then you understand that only, perhaps, we, those lands that were consecrated by Grand Duke Vladimir [...], on us lies that great feat, to keep the faith. Please accept this holy jar, which depicts the

icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God. [...] and we ask you to convey our best wishes to Vladimir Vladimirovich Saldo [...].”¹⁸⁶

The Kremlin has rewarded Archimandrite’s dedicated work and collaboration: Alexy attended Putin’s annexation speech on 30 September 2022 in person and sat not far away from Ramzan Kadyrov (head of the Chechen Republic) and Rawil Gaynetdin (Chairman of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation and member of the Supreme Council of the World Islamic League, etc.), surrounded by top Russian politicians.



Figure 28: Archimandrite Alexy is obviously in a good mood. He was invited to attend Putin’s speech on the annexation of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Video screenshots¹⁸⁷.

Further analysis of Russian and Ukrainian language social media channels, with a focus on Telegram posts talking about Kherson region between 24 February and 30 September 2022 reveals more actors and their collaborationist activities.

The following table provides a selection of prominent posts which exemplify this connection between the churches and the occupation administration or Russian military personnel, in chronological order:

¹⁸⁶ Video transcript (Russian):

Елисеев: Мне очень хочется, во-первых, поздравить Вас с праздником ещё раз Ваше высокое преподобие от себя лично и от всего правительства. [...] Хочу пожелать, чтобы отныне взаимодействие государства и церкви только усиливалось, укреплялось во имя укрепления православия во всех регионах земли русской. [...]

Архимандрит Алексий: Я очень рад что начинаете Вы свой труд со сознания того, что без духовной поддержки наших людей невозможно никакое доброе дело. Потому что нам сейчас надо выбирать, либо мы пойдем западным путем, где нарушена святость брака, святость семьи, где грех провозглашён уже чуть ли не каким-то достоянием или мы продолжим свой путь в том ключе православной Руси, в котором мы были воспитаны, ради чего, собственно говоря, и строились такие величественные храмы, для того чтобы имя божье никогда больше не было осмеяно и не было поругано. Потому что когда ты видишь, что в Европе греховодники ходят под охраной полиции, а человек с библией, забирают его как за нарушение порядка, то ты понимаешь, что только, пожалуй, мы, те земли, которые были посвящены великим князем Владимиром [...], на нас лежит тот вот великий подвиг, сохранить веру. Примите пожалуйста эту святую фосфору, которая с изображением иконыuspения божьей матери. [...] и просим передать Владимиру Владимировичу Сальдо наши благопожелания [...].

¹⁸⁷ Video screenshot and detail, 7:15: <https://youtu.be/q0AUcnqnLW0> (2022-10-06).

23 April

"The Easter service is held in the Kherson Holy Spirit Cathedral. Security measures have been strengthened here, but at the same time, for the sake of the holiday, the curfew was lifted" – *Izvestia* correspondent Ivan Litomin reported.



24 April

Procession in the Kherson Holy Spirit Cathedral. Footage of the traditional Easter procession was shown by the *Izvestia* film crew.

"Until recently, it was not known whether the holiday would take place, but now the bells are ringing. Easter has come" – correspondent Ivan Litomin reports.

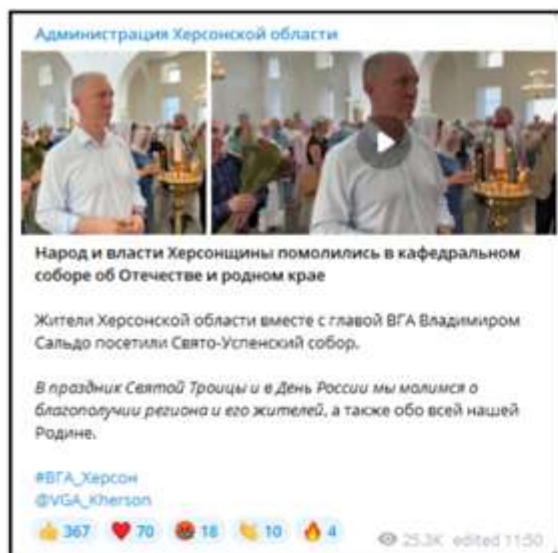


9 May

Sons of Gennady Shkil, the [...] pro-Russian rector of the UOC-MP church in Holi Prystan.

Right - Nazar Shkil, subdeacon
Centre - Anton Shkil, subdeacon
Left - Andriy Shkil, deacon

They've joined the "Victory Day" celebration, gladly waving with rags on sticks.



12 June

The people and authorities of the Kherson region prayed in the Cathedral for the fatherland and their homeland. Residents of the Kherson region, together with Vladimir Saldo, visited the Holy Dormition Cathedral.

"On the feast of the Holy Trinity and the Day of Russia, we pray for the well-being of the region and its inhabitants, as well as for our entire motherland" – VGA Kherson.



Figure 24: Volodymyr Saldo and Kateryna Hubareva, the deputy head of the Kherson Military-Civilian Administration, in the Holy Dormition Cathedral in Kherson. Propaganda footage has been produced and distributed in a performative attempt to link faith with the occupation. At 0:27, "His Holiness Patriarch Kirill" is being praised during the ceremony (audio). Video screenshots from the post above.¹⁹⁴

28 June

On Tuesday, June 28, the funeral of Dmitry Savluchenko took place in the Holy Spirit Cathedral of Kherson.

"A wonderful young Russian from Kherson worked with youth, organised sports events, competitions, and holidays. He was part of our large team and was engaged in establishing a peaceful life. [...] The tears of the mother of Dima Savluchenko will burn the hearts of these murderers and criminals, they will be punished", said Volodymyr Saldo.





28 July

On July 28, Orthodox Christians celebrate the Day of the Baptism of Russia. Festive services are held in Russian churches. The Kherson region did not stay away from the celebration. In churches and cathedrals of the city and the region, liturgies are served.

"Today the Russian Orthodox Church honours the memory of the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Duke Vladimir"—says the priest of the Holy Spirit Cathedral of Kherson, Father Maxim —"We remember the most important event that the Lord created with his hands – this is the baptism of the state that he ruled, that is, the baptism of our Holy Kievan Rus'."

30 July

Priests at the Forum *We are together with Russia*: "Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are the common heirs of Kyiv Rus". All this time, with multiple arsenals of the devil, adherents of the State Department have tried and are trying to destroy the unity of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples. For 30 years, their purposeful actions have turned a prosperous Ukraine into a failed project. Kherson was the first to escape from the tenacious hands of the collective West. But the city that is divided will be defeated. We need to unite because unity is our strength. We are the sole and legitimate heirs of the Baptism of Kyiv Rus'- Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. God is with us! Russia is with us!"—said Archpriest Gennady Shkil, a participant in the 'We are with Russia' forum, and rector of the Holy Seraphim Church in the city of Hola Pristan.





1 August

The organisation 'Combat Brotherhood' in the Kherson region invites residents of the city to take part in the celebrations on the occasion of the Day of the Airborne Troops.

On the program on August 2:

10.00 – Prayer service in Catherine's Cathedral.

11.30 – Motor run from the Walk of Fame through the streets of Kherson.

12.00 – Laying flowers at the monument to Vasily Margelov, a festive concert at the Palace of Culture of Tekstilshchikov (Perekopskaya st. 158).

2 August

Day of the Airborne Troops celebrated in Kherson. In the morning, a prayer service was held at St. Catherine's Cathedral. At the end of the prayer service, the participants of the celebration laid flowers at the monument to the soldiers-internationalists. Then the participants of the celebration moved in a motorcade through the city to the house of culture of Tekstilshchikov (VKT).

Father Gennady Shkil, rector of the Church of St. Seraphim of Sarov in Hola Pristan, commented on his participation in the forum 'We are together with Russia':

"I believe that the time of princely strife has passed, when we divided territorially, politically, and most importantly - spiritually, and I took part in this forum so that we put an end to this strife and become a single Holy Russia."

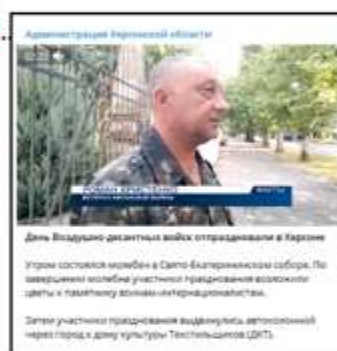


Figure 25: Archpriest Gennady Shkil in an interview with the journalist Alena Berezovskaya, in the city of Kherson. Video screenshots.²⁰⁴

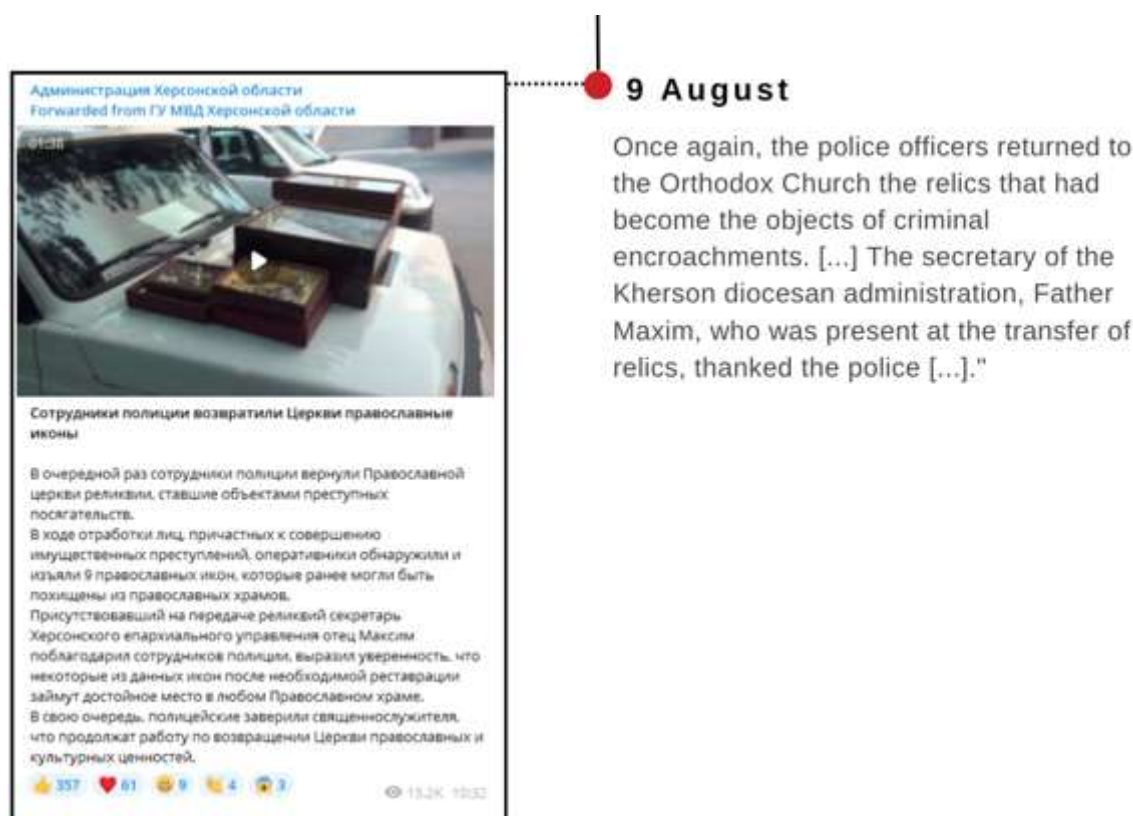


Figure 29: Timeline of posts showing the connection between Kherson's churches and the occupying administration.¹⁸⁸

Gennady Shkil runs a number of social media channels: Telegram¹⁸⁹ (1,179 subscribers), YouTube¹⁹⁰ (14,300 subscribers), VK¹⁹¹ (856 subscribers), OK¹⁹² (349 participants), Facebook¹⁹³ (687 subscribers), and even Tiktok¹⁹⁴, where he has more than 321,000 followers and 3,7 million likes. "Education" and "awaken the Russian spirit": In the latest interview Shkil has published on his YouTube channel, he sums up the purpose of his collaboration efforts very well:

“Alena Berezovskaya: I would like to ask, so maybe Kherson is a Russian city?

¹⁸⁸ https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1215 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1214 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2333 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2412 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2653 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2690 (2022-10-06); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2709 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2739 (2022-09-22); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2742 (2022-10-07); <https://youtu.be/6Rs52mO44s8> (2022-10-07); https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2837 (2022-09-22).

¹⁸⁹ <https://t.me/gennadyshkil> (2022-10-08).

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/user/Akaphist> (2022-10-08).

¹⁹¹ <https://vk.com/gennadyshkil> (2022-10-08).

¹⁹² <https://ok.ru/group/52316843802753> (2022-10-08).

¹⁹³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/seraphim.holapristan> (2022-10-08).

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.tiktok.com/@akaphist> (2022-10-08).

Gennady Shkil: Most likely, most likely. But you see, here we still need to try very, very much in this regard.

Alena Berezovskaya: What exactly?

Gennady Shkil: [...] Educating people, recreating, and transmitting to these people real history, and not what was previously taught. Awaken in them that Russian spirit – not Ukrainian [...], but the Russian spirit. The spirit that we all have, and which is transmitted to us from Prince Vladimir.”¹⁹⁵

An Institution to be Watched Closely

Reports of hostilities and violent clashes among the followers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) have also emerged, though most of the events found through open source investigation are the accounts of individuals.

For example, according to Alexander Chorney, who describes himself as a “priest of the UOC – missionary, mediator, facilitator, crisis consultant.”¹⁹⁶, a Moscow-loyal church was vandalised. His video shows damage to the building and he claims that:

"Someone, tonight [...] at about 4 am, threw something, fuel, and people spent the night in our church. [...] You understand that this is the temple of God, right? And you want to burn it? [...] Stop hooliganism, otherwise the Lord will kick your ass hard.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Video transcript (Russian):

Алёна Березовская: Хочется спросить, а может быть Херсон русский город?

Геннадий Шкиль: Скорей всего, скорей всего. Но понимаете, здесь ещё нам в этом плане нужно ещё очень и очень много постараться.

Березовская: Что именно?

Шкиль: [...] Воспитание людей, воссоздание и передача этим людям настоящей истории, а не того, что до этого преподавалось. Разбудить в них тот русский дух – не украинский, не российский, а русский дух. Тот дух, который в нас всех есть и который нам передаётся ещё от князя Владимира.” <https://youtu.be/6Rs52mO44s8> (2022-10-07).

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwSaCHrYA4-jxo44bpP1HKg> (2022-09-22).

¹⁹⁷ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038 (2022-09-22). Original (Russian): “Кто-то сегодня ночью [...] около 4 утра, бросил что-то горячее, а у нас в храме люди ночевали. [...] Вы же понимаете, что это храм божий? И вы хотите палить его? [...] прекращайте хулиганство, а то господь вам поджопник такой даст, что мало не покажется.”



Figure 30: Alexander Chorney¹⁹⁸ reports on the church vandalism and shows the damage. Video screenshots.

Chorney's video was shared by "War Without Fakes" [Russian: "Война Без Фейков"] on 9 May 2022. Annex III provides a selection of comments that received the most reactions to Chorney's video.

This section of the report has highlighted the religious tensions which have built up since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While the Constitution of Ukraine is secular in nature, meaning that the church and other religious organisations in Ukraine are separated from the state and no religion is mandatory,¹⁹⁹ the influence of religion and religious actors in the region is undeniable.

Researchers must continue to carefully monitor whether the events reflect the religious hostility already brewing in the Ukrainian population, or whether an anti-Ukrainian narrative is in the making to divide the Ukrainian people. Linking the invasion of Ukraine with religious aims, such as the unification of territories under Russian Orthodoxy, raises the stakes of the invasion beyond territorial or ethnic reunification, into the spiritual realm. If signs of violent confrontations can be independently confirmed, religious collaborationism and its proponents will appear in a new and even more dangerous light.

¹⁹⁸ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038 (2022-09-22).

¹⁹⁹ Стаття 35. „[...] Церква і релігійні організації в Україні відокремлені від держави, а школа - від церкви. Жодна релігія не може бути визнана державою як обов'язкова. [...]“ [https://www.president.gov.ua/ua/documents/constitution/konstituciya-ukrayini-rozdil-ii#:~:text=%D0%A1%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%82%D1%8F%2035.,%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%20%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%8F%D0%B4%D0%B8%2C%20%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%20%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%96%D0%B3%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D1%83%20%D0%B4%D1%96%D1%8F%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C.\(2022-09-23\).](https://www.president.gov.ua/ua/documents/constitution/konstituciya-ukrayini-rozdil-ii#:~:text=%D0%A1%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%82%D1%8F%2035.,%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%20%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%8F%D0%B4%D0%B8%2C%20%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%20%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%96%D0%B3%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D1%83%20%D0%B4%D1%96%D1%8F%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C.(2022-09-23).)

Conclusion

The Russian occupation of the Kherson region became possible only after the Russian army had captured most of the region using military means. Even so, both the order for the full-scale attack on Ukraine and for the establishment of Russia-controlled occupying authorities on captured territories do not seem to come from military commanders but from high-ranking Moscow officials. This research has shown that top-level Russian officials like Sergey Kiriyyenko, the First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia, are involved in the construction of the occupation power structure in the Kherson region.

The core, publicly known occupying institution, the regional “Military-Civilian Administration”, is reportedly under the control of Kremlin officials. That control is exercised through choosing who gets positions in the occupying institutions, what the responsibilities of appointees should be, which Russian elites are allowed to visit occupied territories in the Kherson region, and who should implement the sham referendum.

Russia established military control over most of the Kherson region in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion. Russia now seeks to identify local collaborators and use them in attempts to camouflage and legitimise the occupation. Thus, in the very first weeks of occupation, the first collaborators began to emerge. The two most known and discussed collaborators are Kyrylo Stremousov and Volodymyr Saldo. Both of them took part in the 2020 Kherson mayoral elections and both lost to Ihor Kolykhaiev, the legitimate mayor of Kherson who did not collaborate with Russian occupying forces, and was kidnapped by them in June 2022.

As no elected or legally appointed institutions in the Kherson region collaborated with Russia, occupation forces captured buildings of those institutions and chose new “heads” for the leading positions. These new “heads” are put in charge of a variety of institutions and services, ranging from education and healthcare to numerous municipal positions.

In the absence of legitimate institutions eligible to appoint those “heads,” Viktor Bedrik, the military commandant of the region and colonel of Russian military forces, formally made the first assignments. Furthermore, the occupiers simply ignored the existence of legitimate Ukrainian institutions, many of which evacuated to Ukraine-controlled territory and continued their work there.

Later, Russia-appointed Volodymyr Saldo, the “Head” of the regional occupation administration, signed documents appointing some lower-level officials. However, due to tight Russian control over the region, it is rather unlikely that Saldo has real agency in the occupation power structure.

Russia's control over the region is also exemplified by the creation of the “occupying government” of the Kherson region in July that happened when Sergey Kiriienko visited Kherson. The fact that most of the “governors” were Russian citizens that had previously served in administrations in Russia or in Russia-occupied Crimea suggests either a lack of local collaborators or Russia’s desire to have “their” people in charge on the ground.

One potential reason for a lack of willing Ukrainian collaborators is the highly visible partisan activity taking place in the Kherson region, which will be widely covered in the next report of the series. A large number of Ukrainian collaborators and defectors have been killed and injured as a result of their alignment with the occupying administration. This activity may be deterring Ukrainians from participating in the occupying administration or otherwise helping it. Regardless of why it is happening, it is notable that all new positions within the occupying government that were created in August were given to Russians, not Ukrainians. This coincided with the Russian official, Yeliseyev, having temporary control of the regional occupying administration during Saldo’s absence.

The occupying administration is both disorganised and impromptu in nature. Because of a lack of Ukrainian collaborators, persistent anti-Russia partisan activity, the encroaching Ukrainian counteroffensive, and the top-down nature of the power structure within the Russian government, the entire occupying administration is plagued by an inability to take quick, decisive action.

Further, many decisions that would be better left to those ostensibly in charge in the Kherson region actually come from the Kremlin. This means that the occupying administration is at the whim of the Kremlin and must change course frequently and suddenly whenever guidance from Moscow changes. This disorganisation potentially undermines the legitimacy and power of the occupying administration.

Even so, the local façade of the occupation is strengthened not just by locals serving in Russian occupying administrations but also by some collaborators from local religious

institutions. That is a crucial issue due to the relatively high religious sentiment throughout Ukraine and, thus, the influence of religious institutions on public opinion.

On 27 May 2022, the branch of Ukraine's Orthodox Church that remained loyal to Moscow announced it would break with the Russian church over the invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared its “full independence and autonomy,” distancing itself from Russian Orthodoxy. At the same time, CIR’s research clearly shows this it is not the case in the Russia-occupied part of the Kherson region, where some pro-Kremlin priests keep close ties with the Russian Orthodox Church, bless the occupying authorities, and welcome them in Kherson’s Moscow-loyal churches. Archimandrite Alexy, one of the religious figures loyal to Moscow, even travelled to the Kremlin for the celebration of Russia’s illegal annexation of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk.

Despite the faces of the Russian occupation of the Kherson region being quite diverse, the actions of all the enablers and reinforcers of the occupation tend to lay in line with the general frame of the increasingly tight Russian control over the occupied region.

Annex I

Methodology

- **Objective.** This investigation is an effort by CIR to document, describe and understand the life of Ukrainian citizens in territories occupied by Russian military forces.
- **Approach.** We use a case study approach, taking Kherson region as the selected territory to zoom into the means used by Russia to expand and consolidate control of institutions, resources and people. For this purpose, CIR analysts explore Russia's activities across three different areas, which are reflected in three separate reports:
 - (1) mechanisms utilised to assert power in the area and compel Kherson locals to cooperate;
 - (2) actors actively involved in enabling the occupation;
 - (3) impact of these activities in people and land.
- **Data collection.** In each report of the series, the data is collected using media analysis and open-source intelligence techniques. This includes keywords-based manual search on search engines, media and social media monitoring, and open-source data gathering.
- **Documentation of evidence.** The evidence collected is stored and classified in an internal database.
- **Analysis.** In the analysis, CIR team uses local knowledge to contextualise the data, Russian and Ukrainian native speakers for translation and interpretation, and relevant research from other CIR investigations within the wider Eyes on Russia project.
- **Limitations.** The main limitation is the scarcity of reliable sources in the region caused by:
 - (1) the departure of independent media, intimidation of the local population from posting information, and restrictions on their access to social media;
 - (2) an increase in Russian disinformation and influence operations trying to shape perceptions of local and international audiences.

- To overcome this limitation and ensure the quality, integrity, and authenticity of the information, this study proposes a source reliability index. The index (below) is an adaptation of the NATO System,²⁰⁰ a model used by NATO allies to evaluate the reliability of a source and assess the level of confidence in the information. According to this model, the reliability is linked to the level of confidence in a given source, based on past performance.
- **Other.** A VPN has been used to mask the analysts' IP addresses, protect the integrity of this investigation, and access domains restricted to certain geographical areas.

Table 1. Index of reliability of the source

Code	Reliability	Description	Verification	Source examples
A	Completely reliable	A tried and trusted source which can be depended upon with confidence. History of complete reliability.	Source can be used in the report as a completely reliable source. The analyst will not need to use any further sources to confirm/verify the information.	OSINT data (satellite imagery, verified online footage, etc).
B	Fairly reliable	Source has been successful in the past but there is still some element of doubt and needs further scrutiny.	To be included in the report as "authentic" or "confirmed" information the analyst will have to find another source or piece of evidence that validates the information. Otherwise, it will be included as a "claim" .	NGOs, Ukrainian authorities in occupied areas, Ukrainian national agencies, Western governments, international media, Russian authorities/outlets in occupied areas, Russian government policy documents.

²⁰⁰ https://cradpdf.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc351/p812555_A1b.pdf

C	Not usually reliable	Source which has been used in the past but has proved to be sometimes unreliable or unworthy of confidence.	Information needs to be verified with open-source data if included in the report. If it cannot be verified with open-source data, then it will be labelled as "unverified claim" or "false claim" in the report.	Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media, Kremlin proxies (incl. outsiders and Western proxies), certain claims on social media by citizens in occupied areas.
D	Proven to be misleading	Source which in the past has proved to spread misleading information.		Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media, Kremlin proxies (incl. outsiders and Western proxies).
E	Reliability unknown	Unknown source. It has not been used in the past.		

Table 2. Relationship between reliability of the source and credibility of the information.

Reliability	Verification	+/-	Credibility
A – Completely reliable	Not needed		Credible information
B – Fairly reliable	Requires additional source (code A or B) to confirm the information; or OSINT verification	+	Credible information
		-	Claim
C – Not usually reliable	Requires OSINT verification	+	Credible information

D – Proven to be misleading		-	Unverified claim
E – Reliability unknown		X	False claim

Annex II

Table 3. Map explaining the duality between Ukraine-controlled and Russia-controlled entities.

Entity	Ukraine-controlled	Russia-controlled
Military-Civil Administration of the Kherson region	<p>Kherson Regional State Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official website: Херсонська обласна державна адміністрація (khoda.gov.ua); Telegram account. 	<p>Administration of Kherson Oblast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official website: Администрация Херсонской области (khogov.ru); Telegram account; YouTube account: (2) Военно-гражданская администрация Херсонской области - YouTube
Personal telegram channels of self-proclaimed acting head/deputy heads of the Kherson region		<p>Kateryna Gubareva (Катерина Губарева); Kyrylo Stremousov (Кирило Стремоусов); Volodymyr Saldo (Володимир Сальдо)</p>
Police of the Kherson region	<p>Police of the Kherson Oblast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official website; Facebook page: Поліція Херсонської області Facebook 	Press contact of the Police of Kherson Oblast.
Kherson city authorities/ city council	Kherson City Council, official website: Херсонська міська рада (miskrada.kherson.ua)	Kherson City Council Administration: telegram account .

Skadovsk Administration	Facebook page: Скадовська громада Facebook	Telegram account.
Skadovsk City Council	Facebook page: Скадовська міська рада Facebook	Telegram account.
Beryslav Administration	Facebook page: Новини Бериславська міська рада Офіційний сайт (berislav-mr.gov.ua)	Telegram account.
Henichesk Administration	Facebook page: Офіційний сайт Генічеської міської ради (genich-rada.gov.ua) ²⁰¹	Telegram account.
Nova Kahovka Administration	Official website: Нова Каховка (novakahovka.com.ua) Facebook page: Новокаховська міська територіальна громада Facebook	Telegram account.
Kahovka administration	Official website: Новини — kakhovka (kakhovka-rada.gov.ua) ²⁰² Facebook page: Каховська міська територіальна громада Facebook	Telegram account.
Hola Prystan administration		Telegram account.
Bilozerka administration		Telegram account.

²⁰¹ Inactive since March 2022.

²⁰² Not active since March 2022.

Taxation	Official website: Територіальні органи ДПС у Херсонській області, Автономній Республіці Крим та м.Севастополі (tax.gov.ua)	Telegram account .
Health authorities	Facebook page: Департамент здоров'я Херсонської обласної державної адміністрації Facebook	VK account: Министерство здравоохранения Херсонской области VK https://t.me/minzdrav_Kherson
Departments for different policy areas (education, culture, digitalisation and mass communication, agriculture, family and sport, work and social policies, etc.)	Official website: ОДА інформує (khoda.gov.ua)	“Ministry of Culture of Kherson region” ; “Ministry of Digital Development and Mass Communications of Kherson Region” ; “Ministry of Education and Science of the Kherson region” ; “Ministry of Labour and Social Policy” ; “Department of Youth Policy, Family and Sports” ; Employment service ; Agricultural Inspector .
Khersonoblenergo	Official website: АТ "Херсонобленерго" (ksoe.com.ua)	Website ; Telegram account .
Kherson regional energy supply company	Official website: Херсонська обласна енергопостачальна компанія (khoe.kh.ua)	
Khersongas	Official website: АТ Херсонгаз – Підприємство з розподілу природного газу (gaz.kherson.ua)	

Khersonwater		<p>Official website: Херсонський водоканал – МКП Херсонський водоканал (water.kherson.ua)²⁰³</p> <p>Facebook page: Херсонський Водоканал Facebook²⁰⁴</p> <p>Telegram account.</p>
Kherson National Technical University	Official website: Головна - Херсонський національний технічний університет (kntu.net.ua)	
Kherson Agrarian University	Official website: http://ksau.kherson.ua/	Telegram account.
Kherson State University	Official website: Херсонський державний університет (kspu.edu)	Telegram account.

²⁰³ It looks like the old Ukrainian website is currently used by Russians. E.g., current prices are written in rubles, and payments should be made to the Russian state-owned Promsvyazbank (https://water.kherson.ua/hersonskyj-vodokanal-ynformyruet/?cat_slug=payment).

²⁰⁴ The situation with the previously Ukraine-controlled Facebook page of Kherson water is similar to the situation with the website of Kherson water.

Annex III

Table 4. Comments with the most reactions to Alexander Chorney's video.

<p>User: AJ, 9 May 2022 23:56</p> <p>"Since the church of the Moscow Patriarch, then it means that it is no longer a church? Or is there another god? Well, let's fucking call us blasphemers, what is there. We eat children, we "sieg-heil" [sic: do morning exercises with our hands] on a portrait of Hitler and Bandera, we listen to German marches on the radio, and we burn churches on holidays [...]."²⁰⁵</p>	<p>AJ Reply</p> <p>Раз церковь московского патриарха то значит это уже не церковь? Или там бог другой? Ну давайте блять чтобы нас ещё и богохульниками называли, чё уж там. Детей едим, на портрет гитлера и бандеры утреннюю зарядку рукой делаем, немецкие марши по радио слушаем ещё и церкви по праздникам жжём... Хули с нас взять? 🙄👊</p> <p>👍 25</p> <p>23:56</p>
<p>User: Андрей 260978, 9 May 2022 23:59</p> <p>"And what difference does it make what kind of church, if not for the Moscow Patriarchate, then what turns out badly, in Ukraine there are many confessions of faith, so what of this?"²⁰⁶</p>	<p>Андрей 260978</p> <p>А какая разница какая церковь если бы не московского патриархата то что получается плохо ,в Украине много вера исповеданий так что из этого?</p> <p>👍 10</p> <p>23:59</p>
<p>User: Хук, 10 May 2022 04:19</p> <p>"What difference does it make to you that this is the church of those who kill thousands of the civilian population of Ukraine, what difference does it make to you that this is the church of those who rape, torture, shoot elderly people, women and children. What difference does it make to you that this is the church of those who staged genocide in Irpin and Bucha, those who are now bombing Odesa and</p>	<p>Хук</p> <p>Андрей 260978</p> <p>А какая разница какая церковь если бы не московского патр...</p> <p>Яка тобі різниця, що це церква тих хто вбиває тисячами мирне населення України, яка тобі різниця, що це церква тих, хто гвалтує, катує, розстрілює людей похилого віку, жінок і дітей. Яка тобі різниця, що це церква тих хто влаштував геноцид в Ірпіні та Бучі, тих хто зараз бомбардує Одесу та Миколаїв. Яка тобі різниця, що це церква тих, хто зрівняв із землею Маріуполь разом із мирним населенням. Немає різниці лише для тварин – російських окупантів та їх помічників.</p> <p>👍 19 🐼 3</p> <p>04:19</p>

²⁰⁵ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38539 (2022-09-22).

²⁰⁶ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38541 (2022-09-22).

<p>Mykolaiv. What difference does it make to you that this is the church of those who razed Mariupol to the ground along with the civilian population. There is no difference only for beasts - the Russian occupiers and their helpers.”²⁰⁷</p>	
<p>User: vadim vadim, 10 May 2022 04:23</p> <p>“The churches of the Russian Federation hid the killer soldiers and weapons with ammunition and served as bases for the Russian army. The Church of the Russian Federation should not exist at all after the war.”²⁰⁸</p>	<p>vadim vadim</p> <p>Андрей 260978</p> <p>А какая разница какая церковь если бы не московского патр...</p> <p>Церкви РФ прятали солдат убийц и оружие с боекомплектom и служили базами для армии РФ. Церкви РФ не должно быть вообще после войны</p> <p>👍 15 🗳️ 2</p> <p>04:23</p>
<p>User: Хук, 10 May 2022 04:26</p> <p>“After what the Moscow occupiers have done and are doing on Ukrainian land, the Moscow priest says that they are servants of God and they have a temple of God. Only their God is a Kremlin one, not heavenly. And Gundyayev of Moscow blessed the orcs to kill Ukrainians! But this priest talks about the temple of God.”²⁰⁹</p>	<p>Хук</p> <p>Після того, як зробили та роблять на українській землі московські окупанти, московський піп розповідає, що вони служителі бога й у них храм Бога. Тільки ось Бог у них кремлівський, а не небесний. І Гундяєв московський благословив орків на вбивство українців! Але цей піп розповідь про храм божий.</p> <p>👍 11 🗳️ 2</p> <p>edited 04:26</p>
<p>User: Vik, 10 May 2022 08:14</p> <p>“You've mixed flies with meatballs. I personally know Father Alexander. I've personally organised events for children and adults with him. The most decent person, like his whole family. Their roots are from western Ukraine. And he never called for ‘the Russian world and the</p>	<p>Vik</p> <p>Смешали мух с котлетами. Я лично знаю Отца Александра. Сама лично организовывала с ним мероприятия для детей и взрослых. Порядочнейший человек, как и вся его семья. Их корни с западной Украины. И он никогда не звал “русский мир и освободителей”. И кроме того, в храме не поминается имя патриарха. Если Вы бываете не службе, то должны были это слышать. А церковь была и есть Украинская Православная.</p> <p>👍 7</p> <p>08:14</p>

²⁰⁷ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38638 (2022-09-22).

²⁰⁸ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38641 (2022-09-22).

²⁰⁹ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38642 (2022-09-22).

liberators.’ And besides, the name of the patriarch is not mentioned in the church. If you were there, you would have heard it. And the church was and is Ukrainian Orthodox.”²¹⁰

²¹⁰ https://t.me/kherson_non_fake/1038?comment=38750 (2022-09-22).