

Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, Volume 8

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Introduction

2015 was the second year of the turbulent political and military crisis, affecting all religious groups in Ukraine. Domestic Islamic networks experienced a geographical reconfiguration. Most of the trends, related to Islam in Ukraine, need to be described within three separate geographic areas: the main part of the country, the Russia-controlled Crimean peninsula and, finally, the self-proclaimed “Donetsk” and “Luhansk People’s Republics” (constituting more than half of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions).

In Crimea, the Russian authorities (both federal and local) started to implement their traditional policy of supporting “official Islam,” with the ultimate beneficiary being the former *Духовне управління мусульман Криму* (Spiritual Administration of the Crimean Muslims). In 2014, it was re-named as the Centralised Religious Organisation of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea and Sevastopol City (CRO SAMCS). Since most of the “non-traditional” Islamic groups (as they are usually described in Russian official discourse) like Salafis and member of the Hizb al-Tahrir party already left Crimea for Ukraine, CRO SAMCS became the only important player in the area. In the rest of Ukraine, excluding the self-proclaimed republics in Donetsk and Luhansk, the influx of Crimean Muslims activated the development of old Islamic networks as well as the creation of the new ones. These developments affected the Western part of Ukraine, where the number of Muslims increased in a very short period (in the cities of Vinnytsia, Lviv etc. in particular).²

Despite the Government’s special attention towards regulating Muslim communities, many actions of the Government towards the issue of ethnic

1 Mykhaylo Yakubovych, PhD, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, The National University of Ostroh Academy, Ostroh, Ukraine, is the author of the first complete translation of the Qur’an into Ukrainian (2013). He held numerous academic fellowships in Poland (Warsaw University, Warsaw), Saudi Arabia (Academic Department, King Fahd Qur’an Printing Complex, Medina) and USA (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton). Currently, he works on the history of Islamic intellectual traditions in Eastern Europe. His recent publications include monographs on the history of the Islam in Ukraine and intellectual traditions of the Crimean Khanate.

2 In the Lviv region, more than 2,000 Crimean Tatars already settled (according to personal conversation with Alim Aliev, head of the “KrymSos” initiative).

minorities (first of all Crimean Tatars) were in focus in 2015. Recently, due to the high public tensions concerning the issue of migration and terrorism, the Security Service of Ukraine (*Служба безпеки України, СБУ*) reported the arrests of some Muslims, alleged to be connected to ISIS. Some changes, made in state laws on education and religious freedom, also had their effects on the development of Muslim communities.

The main Islamic organisations were active in 2015 not only in organising usual local events (such as the celebration of Islamic festivals), but also in participating in official state functions, interreligious conferences, and media programmes. The activities of the All-Ukrainian Council of the Churches and Religious Organisations (*Всеукраїнська рада Церков і релігійних організацій, АСЦРО*), one of the most important government-initiated platforms for interreligious dialogue, included also Muslim representation with Ahmad Tamim, the Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims being its member. The opening ceremony of new Islamic centres (such as the largest one in the city of Lviv in June 2015) attracted the attention of the local media. In general, issues related to Islam in Ukraine were portrayed in the Ukrainian media in a positive way. One of the reasons for that is public sympathy for the plight of Crimean Tatars who are perceived as a pro-Ukrainian group, which became the focus of Ukrainian public debates soon after Russian control over Crimea. In 2015, one of the government initiatives included the formation of the state-owned company “Crimean House” (located in Kiev), which, according to its statutes, will pay significant attention to preserving the religious and cultural heritage of Crimean Tatars. In their interviews in 2015, leaders of Ukrainian Muslims supported the trend of Muslims actively participating in the Maidan and Post-Maidan events of recent Ukrainian history, varying from the moderate³ up to very strong nationalistic attitudes.⁴ The recent increase in the production of Islamic literature in Ukrainian (despite the continued use of Russian in most mosques in sermons delivered by local imams) shows a kind of indigenisation of Islam in Ukraine. The phenomenon of Islamic chaplaincy (for the first time in the history of Ukrainian army) also appeared in 2015.

3 Муфтії ДУМУ Ахмед Тамім: Мені не треба доводити, що я—патріот (Mufti of SAUM Ahmed Tamim: I do not need to prove that I am a patriot), http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/interview/60716/, accessed 4 December 2015.

4 Мусульмани України: історія солідарності (Muslims of Ukraine: History of Solidarity), www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo/musulmany-ukrayiny-istoriya-solidarnosti, accessed 4 December 2015.

Public Debates

The main topic of public discussions on Islam in Ukraine was the role Muslims have played in contemporary history. First of all, this is about their attitude to the Maidan and Post-Maidan events (*Антитерористична операція*, Counterterrorist Operation, *СТО*, as the military conflict in the Eastern Ukraine is officially defined by Ukrainian authorities) and their position regarding the territorial integrity of Ukraine; some media outlets also disseminated the opinions of Ukrainian Muslim leaders on the terrorist attacks in France as well as the actions of ISIS.

As a long-standing tradition in Ukraine, Muslim communities received greetings from the highest authorities during the main Islamic festivals. On the occasion of 'Id al-Adha, the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko officially highlighted the struggles of Muslims in combating foreign aggression—a reference to the Russian takeover of the Crimean peninsula.⁵ In May 2015, the Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims (*Духовне управління мусульман України*, SAUM) Ahmad Tamim presented his report “Social Activity as the Manifestation of Patriotic Feelings” at the conference “Patriotism in the Context of the Contemporary System of Social Values.” His presentation was dedicated to the role of patriotic Muslims in modern Ukraine.⁶ The same topics were recently highlighted in an interview with another Islamic leader, the Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims “Ummah” (*Духовне управління мусульман України «Умма»*, SAUM “Ummah”) Said Ismagilov.⁷ The Mufti explicitly sanctioned the Muslim participation in the military conflict for the Ukrainian side, stating that “all

5 Порошенко привітав мусульман України зі святом Курбан-Байрам (Poroshenko congratulated Muslims of Ukraine on the Festival of Qurban-Bayram), www.unian.ua/politics/132788-poroshenko-privitav-musulman-ukrajini-zi-svyatom-kurban-bayram.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

6 Православні, католики, мусульмани взяли участь у конференції “Патріотизм у системі сучасних суспільних цінностей” (Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims participated in the Conference “Patriotism in the Context of the Contemporary System of Social Values”), www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/29204-pravoslavni-katoliki-musulmani-vzyali-uchast-u-konferenciyi-patriotizm-u-sistemi-suchasnix-suspilnix-cinnostej.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

7 Шейх Саїд Ісмагілов: “Захист Батьківщини—єдиний спосіб вберегти власну гідність” (Sheikh Said Ismagilov: “Defence of the Homeland: The Only Way to Preserve Own Values”), www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo/musulmany-ukrayiny-istoriya-solidarnosti, accessed 4 December 2015.

Ukrainians and, especially, Muslims, are obliged to defend themselves.”⁸ Such rhetoric is usually welcomed in the Ukrainian public discourse and to a large extent determined by the recent conflict with Russia. In August 2015, the former leader of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatars (*Меджлис кримськотатарського народу, Mejlis*) and Ukrainian MP Mustafa Dzemilev asserted the necessity to establish special Muslim combat units in the armed forces of Ukraine to protect the border with Crimea.⁹ This statement received quite a lot of attention.¹⁰ However, up to now no further steps were undertaken to realise this idea.

As mentioned above, the only platform for dialogue between the Ukrainian government and Muslim organisations is the All-Ukrainian Council of the Churches and Religious Organisations (*Всеукраїнська рада Церков і релігійних організацій, ACCRO*), where the only Muslim member currently is Ahmad Tamim, the Mufti of SAUM.¹¹ Formally ACCRO, the highest semi-official institution for interreligious cooperation, also includes the Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims (SACM) Emirali Ablaev. However, in 2015 he informed the head of ACCRO that he could not participate in further activities and suggested the Mufti of SAUM “Ummah” Said Ismagilov to represent his position. Nevertheless, some members of ACCRO refused to accept the new delegate, referring to the fact that Ablaev’s letter was written on paper letter headed with the new Russian legal address of SACM, “Republic of Crimea” (instead of “Autonomous Republic of Crimea,” the only official form, used and accepted in Ukraine). Since the rules of the ACCRO require unanimous decisions for accepting new members, the request of Mufti Emirali Ablaev was not approved. This issue raised some level of discussion among experts without

8 Шейх Саїд Ісмагілов: “Захист Батьківщини—єдиний спосіб вберегти власну гідність” (Sheikh Said Ismagilov: “Defence of the Homeland: The Only Way to Preserve Own Values”), www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo/musulmany-ukrayiny-istoriya-solidarnosti, accessed 4 December 2015.

9 На Херсонщині створять мусульманський батальйон—Джемілев (Muslim battalion will be created in Kherson region—Dzemilev), <http://ru.tsn.ua/politika/na-hersonschine-sozdatut-musulmanskiy-batalon-dzhemilev-461610.html>, accessed 4 December 2015.

10 See, for example, expert commentaries: Решит ли мусульманский батальйон Джемилева вопрос Крыма? (Can the Muslim battalion of Dzemilev solve the issue of Crimea?), www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-lastnews/1871723-reshit_li_musulmanskiy_batalon_dgemileva_vopros_krima_1772370.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

11 Президент обговорив актуальні питання з членами Всеукраїнської Ради Церков (The President discussed critical issues with the members of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches), www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhlivo/28340-prezident-obgovoriv-aktualni-pitannya-z-chlenami-vseukrayinskoyi-radi-cerkov.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

any definite results.¹² For this reason, at the official level (like the meetings with the President and foreign delegations) the only Muslim member is the Mufti of SAUM Ahmad Tamim without any official representation of Crimean Muslims.

One of the topics of public discussions was the living conditions of Muslims among the internally displaced persons (from Crimea and Donbass). Some public initiatives, like KrymSoS (in cooperation with the UNHCR), were active in dealing with Muslims from Crimea in particular who had to leave the peninsula. The Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, one of the most advanced institutions of learning in the Western part of Ukraine, organised a special round table about the local dimensions of the relations between Muslims and Christians, inviting both Muslim scholars and public intellectuals.¹³ Special reports of the most important media outlets outlined the life of the Muslims in their new homes in Western Ukraine, emphasising that most of these refugees are practising Muslims.¹⁴ One survey dealt with public attitudes towards internally displaced persons from Crimea. It was conducted in January–March 2015 in the main cities of Ukraine (Kiev, Kherson, Kharkiv, Lviv and Vinnytsia). More than half of Ukrainians surveyed welcomed the presence of Crimean Muslims in their cities, the building of new mosques, and other activities.¹⁵

Another trend, which dominated public debates in the last few months of 2015, was the problem of ISIS. In November, some media outlets distributed the video produced by ISIS, in which the Ukraine is mentioned as one of the enemies of ISIS (by being a member of the global anti-ISIS coalition).¹⁶

12 See Хамза Караманоглу. Мусульман Криму виштовхують з материка? (Hamza Karamanoglu. Are the Crimean Muslims expelled from the continent?), <http://ua.krymr.mobi/a/27150554.html>, accessed 4 December 2015; Tetyana Kalynychenko, “Ukraine Islamic vector: Ukrainian Ummah’s reason for being”, http://risu.org.ua/en/index/expert_thought/open_theme/60555, accessed 4 December 2015.

13 В УКУ відбудеться круглий стіл «Актуальні питання християнсько-мусульманського діалогу в Україні: львівський аспект» (In UCU the round table “Problems of the Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Ukraine: the Lviv Dimension” is going to be held), <http://ucu.edu.ua/news/23514/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

14 Карп’як, Олег. Шаріат у Карпатах: кримські татари в бойківському селі (Shariat in Carpathians: Crimean Tatars in Boiki Village), www.bbc.com/ukrainian/society/2015/05/150508_tatars_borynia_ko, accessed 4 December 2015.

15 Дослідження: в містах України толерантно ставляться до кримських татар-переселенців (Survey: in the Ukrainian cities people are tolerant to the displaced Crimean Tatars), <http://ua.krymr.com/content/news/27054913.html>, accessed 4 December 2015.

16 ИГ объявило Украину своим врагом (IS declared Ukraine as its enemy), www.dsnews.ua/world/igil-obyavila-ukrainu-svoim-vragom-smi-25112015181800, accessed 4 December 2015.

In addition, the Security Service of Ukraine reported that, in 2015, 59 persons were denied entry to Ukraine because of their participation in the military conflict in Syria.¹⁷ In November, one suspected ISIS combatant was arrested in Vinnytsia.¹⁸ After the 13 November terrorist attack in Paris, Muslim leaders made public statements to explicitly condemn any kind of extremism, attributed to Islam—a position that was also noted by many media outlets.¹⁹ Finally, on 3 December 2015, the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue “Libertas” and SAUM “Ummah” organised a conference on Muslim-Christian cooperation, dedicating part of the discussion to the problem of radicalism. Members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate), and Catholic and Protestant communities were present to approve a final resolution condemning any forms of religious violence.²⁰

In Crimea, public debates about Muslims followed patterns of current Russian policies. Broadly speaking, the media mostly covered Islam in relation to Crimean Tatars, supported the local organisations (like CRO SACMS) and warned against the activities of Pro-Ukrainian Tatars (*Mejlis*). In November 2015, when Crimea experienced a blackout, resulting from damage made to power lines leading to Crimea, Mufti Emirali Ablaev criticised this action. He used religious references in his condemnation, comparing the “blockade of Crimea” to the actions of Meccan polytheists against the Prophet Muhammad and his followers in the earliest history of Islam.²¹ Statements such as these show that the CRO SACMS, the leading Islamic institution of Crimea, follows

17 В СБУ розповіли, скільки бойовиків ІДІЛ намагалися проникнути до України (SBU reported how many militants of ISIS tried to enter Ukraine), www.unian.ua/society/1172887-v-sbu-rozpovili-skilki-boyovikiv-idil-namagalisy-prorvatisya-doukrajini.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

18 У Вінниці СБУ знайшла бойовика ІДІЛ (SBU found ISIS militant in Vinnytsia), www.unian.ua/politics/1192515-u-vinnitsi-sbu-znayshla-boyovika-idil.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

19 See, for example, recent report by “Zik” TV channel: Іслам і Україна (Islam and Ukraine), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbaYLaoz7vc>, accessed 4 December 2015.

20 Мусульмани мають бути присутніми в Європі не лише фізично, але й у інтелектуальному просторі (Muslims must be represented in Europe not only physically, but in the intellectual space), <http://umma.in.ua/?p=3102>, accessed 4 December 2015.

21 Муфтий Крима прокоментировав обесточивание полуострова (Mufti of Crimea commented on blackout of the peninsula), <http://15minut.org/article/muftij-kryma-prokomentiroval-obestochivanie-poluostrova-2015-11-25-12-55-31>, accessed 4 December 2015.

the views of local and federal Russian authorities. On 31 December 2015, CRO SACMS published a statement attacking “all those forces which are trying to prevent Crimean Tatars from the integration into Russian society,” in particular, SAUM, “Alraid” and some unnamed “Wahhabis.” The authors of the statement argued for their dissociation from Ukrainian Muslim communities, identifying themselves with Russia.²² Similarly, in the Eastern part of Ukraine, some Muslim activists from Donetsk already established close links with the self-proclaimed authorities of the Donetsk People’s Republic, visiting their “official” events and supporting their “political course.”²³

Transnational Links

The most active Islamic organisations with a broad spectrum of international relations were centralised religious communities, SAUM and SAUM “Ummah” in particular. Mufti Ahmad Tamim made a few visits abroad, meeting with the President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and the highest religious authorities of Al-Azhar in March 2015.²⁴ He was also a speaker at the international conference “Religion and Violence” in Macedonia (26–28 October 2015)²⁵ and a special event “Ukraine in Washington,” organised by the US-Ukraine Foundation in September.²⁶ In Kiev, SAUM organised many events to promote its international relations; for example, *iftars* for the ambassadors coming from Muslim majority countries and special meetings with local ethnic diasporic communities of a Muslim background. In most cases, SAUM continued to work with previously established ties.

The same could be said about SAUM “Ummah.” This organisation (having very close links with “Alraid”) welcomed some foreign guests and made

22 Мы все ответственны за сохранение мира в Крыму (All of us are responsible for the preservation of peace in Crimea), <http://qmdi.org/index.php/ru/glavnye-novosti/2144-my-vse-otvetstvenny-za-sokhranenie-mira-v-krymu>, accessed 4 December 2015.

23 First Republic Forum on issues of ethno-cultural policy and religion in the DPR, 10 July 2015, <http://mid-dnr.ru/en/gallery/10072015-pervyj-respublikanskij-forum-v-dnr/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

24 Ислам против экстремизма! (Islam is against extremism!), <http://islam.ua/novosti/islam-protiv-ekstremizma/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

25 Международная конференция в Македонии (International Conference in Macedonia), <http://islam.ua/novosti/mezhdunarodnaya-konferentsiya-v-makedonii/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

26 Україна в Вашингтоні (Ukraine in Washington), <http://islam.ua/novosti/ukraina-v-washingtone/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

some visits abroad. For example, the imam from Lviv Murat Sulaymanov represented Ukrainian Muslims in the Competition of Reciters of the Qur'an in Saudi Arabia.²⁷ In December 2015, SAUM "Ummah" was visited by Ahmad von Denffer, a well-known German Islamic writer and translator.²⁸ The Mufti of SAUM "Ummah" Said Ismagilov visited two conferences abroad, one in Georgia at the invitation of the Georgian Muslim Union and the second one to chair a panel at the XXI International Association for the History of Religions Congress in Erfurt, Germany in July and August 2015.²⁹ Since in recent years Ukrainian Muslims have run their organisations based on their own financial resources (mostly donations from the members of their communities), international cooperation with numerous foundations from abroad has become less important. The Directorate of the Association "Alraid" made few visits to international conferences abroad, for example, a quite significant Islamic forum against terrorism in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in November 2015.³⁰

In Crimea, the leading Muslim institutions (CRO SACMS and *Таврический муфтият*, "The Tavrian Muftiate") primarily cooperated with the Islamic institutions of Russia. The only exception is the visit of the Mufti Emirali Ablaev to Turkey, where he met the President of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Dîyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) Mehmet Görmez in August 2015.³¹ In his office in Symferopol, Mufti Emirali Ablaev hosted many Muslim delegations from various parts of the Russian Federation. Crimean Muslims visited some Islamic events in Russia, like courses of advanced studies for imams, sponsored by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation

27 Імам львівського ІКЦ представляє мусульман України на престижному конкурсі читців Корану в КСА (Imam of the Lviv ICC represents Ukraine in the prestigious competition for Readers of the Qur'an in Saudi Arabia), <http://umma.in.ua/?p=2796>, accessed 4 December 2015.

28 Главное для родителей—самим знать ответ на вопрос "Каким я хочу видеть своего ребенка в будущем?"—Ахмад фон Денффер (The main thing for the parents—"how they would like to see their child in future"—Ahmad von Denffer), www.araidd.org/ru/node/4852, accessed 4 December 2015.

29 The Response of Ukrainian Muslims to the Challenges of the Crisis Year 2014, www.iahr2015.org/iahr/2798.html, accessed 4 December 2015.

30 "Альрайд" на Международной исламской конференции "Ислам и борьба с терроризмом" ("Alraid" Association at the international Islamic conference "Islam and Confrontation with Terrorism"), www.araidd.org/ru/node/4351, accessed 4 December 2015.

31 Муфтий: встречу с министром по делам религии Турции пыгались сорвать (Mufti: Meeting with the Minister of Religious Affairs of Turkey was interrupted), <http://ria.ru/incidents/20150826/1209232522.html>, accessed 4 December 2015.

in Moscow (29 October–6 November 2015).³² Mufti Emirali Ablaev was also invited to the opening ceremony of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque. Other Islamic organisations of Crimea (for example, various Salafi groups) were not active internationally, due to the many restrictions imposed after Crimea came under Russian control.

Law and Domestic Politics

Being a state without an official religion, Ukraine has no experience in dealing with some legal issues and practices, directly affecting Islam. However, recent changes of the laws on the freedom of religious beliefs may have some consequences for Muslims communities as well. Primarily, this is related to the long-awaited regulation of Religious Education. On 2 June 2015, the Parliament of Ukraine approved a special law “On the Changes in Some Ukrainian Laws about the Foundation of the Educational Institutions by Religious Organisations” (*No. 1447*). Article 11 of this Law clearly states that “religious organisations, which have their statutes . . . officially registered, could be the founders (owners) of general education schools.”³³ According to this Law, religious communities (including Muslim) could operate their own religious learning institutions and provide state-recognised diplomas for the graduates. In the past (and this practice continued in 2015) some Muslim organisations cooperated with public schools, providing Islamic religious education during out of class hours.

Another legal initiative dealt with the exemption from paying property taxes, if the property belongs to an officially registered religious organisation and is not used for economic activities (*No. 2226*).³⁴ This may apply, for

32 По итогам курсов повышения квалификации крымские имамы получили сертификаты гособразца (After the courses of advance learning the Crimean imams received official certificates), <http://qmdi.org/index.php/ru/glavnye-novosti/2002-po-itogam-kursov-povysheniya-kvalifikatsiya-krymskie-imamy-poluchili-sertifikaty-gosobraztsa>, accessed 4 December 2015.

33 Проект Закону про внесення змін до деяких законів України (щодо заснування релігійними організаціями навчальних закладів) (Law project on the changes in some Ukrainian laws on the foundation of educational institutions by religious organisations), http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=52915, accessed 4 December 2015.

34 Закон України про внесення зміни до статті 266 Податкового кодексу України щодо звільнення від оподаткування нерухомості релігійних організацій (Law of Ukraine on the changes of article 266 of the Tax Codex of Ukraine on tax exemptions for property of religious organisations), <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/420-19>, accessed 4 December 2015.

example, to Muslim cultural and religious centres, religious schools, and other buildings owned by Muslim and other religious organisations.

Some Muslim activists initiated a discussion about the use of photographs for official documents (first of all, personal ID cards) in which the person is wearing a head scarf, launching a special petition on the government website.³⁵ For the six weeks, it received just 572 votes (out of the necessary 25,000, which would require the President of Ukraine to consider it). In general, it seems that this initiative received little attention from Muslims.

On 8–9 December 2015, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) organised a national meeting of religious or belief communities in Ukraine, gathering both experts and religious leaders, including two representatives of Muslim organisation (Rustam Gafuri from SAUM and Said Ismagilov from SAUM “Ummah”). The vast majority of the speakers concluded that despite the military conflict and terrorist threat level, the level of religious freedom in Ukraine continues to be among the highest in the post-Soviet region.

Activities and Initiatives of Main Muslim Organisations

Most of the Islamic activities in Ukraine were concerned with the public representation of Islam. SAUM was as usual active in the media, first of all, in the First National Channel, where its leader Ahmad Tamim frequently gives talks for the programme *Вічне* (“The Eternal”). Members of SAUM also participated in some book fairs in Ukraine and abroad and organised special educational workshops for non-Muslims. For example, on 2–3 December 2015, more than 100 guests visited the Al-Rahma mosque in Kiev and attended a lecture on Islamic beliefs by Ahmad Tamim.³⁶ The main message of all these events is to “confront misinterpretations of Islam,” since a significant amount of the SAUM publishing activities is dedicated to the critique of Wahhabism and various contemporary political movements of Islam. This year SAUM was also active in charitable projects, like visiting military hospitals.

35 Прошу разрешить мусульманкам Украины фото для внутреннего паспорта в хиджабе (I petition to allow photographs of Ukrainian Muslim with hijab to be used in personal ID cards), <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/11882>, accessed 4 December 2015.

36 Спроси об Исламе (Ask about Islam), <http://islam.ua/novosti/sprosi-ob-islame/>, accessed 4 December 2015.

SAUM “Umma” and the Association “Alraid,” working very closely on many projects, continued their charitable activities and support of some public events. Mufti Said Ismagilov attended many conferences in Ukraine and abroad, speaking mostly about the role of Muslims in contemporary Ukraine. First of all, SAUM “Ummah” propagated the idea of religious tolerance, organising meetings with members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Jewish communities and other religious organisations. SAUM “Ummah” also made statements on various events in Ukraine and the wider Muslim world, including controversial issues such as the terror attacks of 2015 in Europe. Many charitable projects (blood donation, food provision etc.) were also the focus of SAUM “Ummah” and the Association “Alraid”’s activities in 2015. Apart from Kiev, SAUM “Ummah” was active in various regions of Ukraine, such as Kharkiv, Zaporizhya, Lviv and Dnipropetrovsk. In addition, organisations of SAUM “Umma” in the territories, controlled by the “Donetsk” and “Luhansk People’s Republics” continued their usual religious activities.

Salafi communities, partially organised (since 2014) in the Association of the Muslims of Ukraine (*Асоціація мусульман України, АМУ*), were active in missionary activities. In the summer of 2015, they distributed Islamic literature in the Ukrainian language on the streets of Kiev, including a translation of the Qur’an into Ukrainian and Russian.

In Crimea, CRO SACMS (in cooperation with the local authorities) organised a conference on Islamic education (11–13 October 2015), inviting guests from Russia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.³⁷ The two central Islamic religious authorities of Russia, Ravil Gaynutdin and Talgat Tadzhuiddin, attended the conference. Other activities were mostly of such an official nature showing a close level of cooperation between CRO SACMS and representatives of the Russian state in Crimea. The director of the other Crimean Islamic institution, the “Tavrian Muftiate” (headed by Mufti Ruslan Saitvaliev) participated in a few seminars, dedicated to issues related to the Crimean integration into Russia.

It may be concluded that the main priority of the Islamic organisations in Ukraine was organising activities geared towards the public; institutions with their headquarters in Kiev dedicated their efforts to creating an image of Muslims as patriotic members of Ukraine. In Crimea, however, centralised

37 Зынджырлы медресе исполнилось 515 лет (Zincirli medrese celebrated 515th Anniversary), www.newstatar.ru/archives/13088, accessed 4 December 2015.

Muslim organisations became even more closely affiliated with Russian authorities and the wider Russian environment of religious institutions.

Muslim Population: History and Demographics

First contacts of Ukraine with Muslims could be traced back to the 10th and 11th centuries (merchants from Arab countries, Iran, and Volga Bulgaria). A well-known Crimean legend states that first Muslims on the Crimean peninsula were the followers of the Prophet Muhammad's companions Malik Ashtar and Ghazi Mansur. Since the 14th century, Crimea and Southern Ukraine became generally Islamised, being ruled by the Golden Horde. A few centuries later, the Crimean Khanate (15th–18th centuries) and the Ottoman cities (Caffa—now Feodosia, Akkerman—now Belgorod) represented one of the most prosperous Muslim areas in this part of Eurasia. In Western Ukraine, the first Muslim settlements appeared in the 16th century, being connected to so-called Lipka Tatars (living mostly in the land of present-day Belarus, Lithuania, and Poland). These communities were living in the various regions of Volyn until the middle of the 20th century; a small Muslim population of Tatarian origin also existed in Galicia (Lviv).

After 1944, when the majority of the Crimean Tatars were deported from Crimea, Muslim communities ceased to exist (some of them already stopped their activities by the end of the 1920s); it was only after 1989, when thousands of the Crimean Tatars returned to their homeland, that Islam experienced a period of revival. By 2013, just a year before the Crimean and Donbass crisis, the number of Muslims in Ukraine reached 600,000; more than half of them were living in Crimea and Donbass. In the years 2014 and 2015, the majority of Ukrainian Muslims lived in the Russian-controlled Crimea and the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic.” Emigration from these parts of the Ukraine resulted in a rise of the Muslim population in the central and Western parts of Ukraine (more than 20,000 Crimean Tatars). Other Muslims represent Arab, Azerbaijani, Volga Tatar, Uzbek, Chechen, Turkish, and other ethnic groups, including a few thousand converts of Ukrainian and Russian origins.

The only official source to determine the exact number of Muslims (on the basis of ethnicity) is the All-Ukrainian National Census of 2001; however, all the figures provided must be updated. Another resource is the data provided by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine every year. It provides a statistical report with the exact number of registered religious communities (excluding

Crimea). Some estimates can also be received from Islamic organisation; however, their figures usually overestimate the actual number of Muslims. Taking this into consideration, the numbers given in table below are based on my own research and personal conversations with the representatives of the main Islamic organisations in the country.

Muslim Population	600,000 (1.4% out of total population) (2015).
Ethnic/National Backgrounds	More than half of Muslims are citizens of Ukraine. The largest ethnic groups are Crimean Tatars (around 300,000), Volga Tatars (70,000), Azerbaijanis (50,000), Chechens, Daghestanis, Turks, Iranians, Arabs, Uzbeks as well as Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian converts (approx. 10,000).
Inner-Islamic Groups	Sunnis (mostly Hanafi), including Neo-Sufis and Salafis, constitute the absolute majority. Twelver Shi'is are relatively small in number, not exceeding 20,000.
Geographical Spread	Around 50% of Ukrainian Muslims live in Crimea; more than 30% live in Kiev and Eastern Ukraine (Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk), around 20% in other regions.
Number of Mosques	More than 400 (including more than 300 on Crimea).
Muslim Burial Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Muslim cemetery on Lukyanivska str., Kiev – Abdal Muslim cemetery, Symferopol, Crimea – Ghazi-Mansur cemetery, Bakhcisaray, Crimea
“Chaplaincy” in State Institutions	SAUM “Ummah” provides chaplaincy services in prisons and military units, having up to ten persons involved. Similar services are provided by SAUM and CRO SACMS. Due to the military conflict, special attention has been paid to Muslims in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (provision of copies of the Qur’an, distribution of halal food etc.).

Halal Products

The main Muslim organisations like SAUM and SAUM “Ummah” certify halal products of Ukrainian origin; some products like halal chicken meat are available in all Ukrainian markets and stores, while special halal shops can be found mostly in larger cities (excluding Crimea, where halal meat is produced and sold in small villages with Crimean Tatar communities as well). There are no legal restrictions on halal slaughter.

Places of Islamic Learning and Education

- Al-Irshad Islamic School and University (Lukyanivska str, 46, Kiev, 04071, tel.: ++380 444651877/78, fax: ++380 444651876).
- Al-Nur Islamic School (Dehtiarivska Str., 25-a, Kiev, 04119, tel.: ++380 444909900, fax: ++380 444909922).
- Azov Medrese of Islamic Sciences (Majskoje, Dzankoj region, Crimea, Gasprinskogo str., 1, tel.: ++380 656450691, fax: ++380 656454535).

Muslim Media and Publications

- *Minaret*, Islamic magazine (in Russian, published monthly by SAUM), www.islamyat.org/gazeta-minaret.
- *Alraid*, Islamic magazine (in Russian, published monthly by the Association “Alraid”), www.araaid.org/ru/taxonomy/term/103.
- *Ummah*, Islamic magazine (in Ukrainian, published monthly by SAUM “Ummah”), <http://umma.in.ua/?cat=54>.
- *Istochnik Mudrosti* (“Source of Wisdom”, in Russian and Crimean Tatar, published monthly by SACM).
- *Ukraina i Islamskij mir* (“Ukraine and the Islamic World”, in Russian, published irregularly by the Muftiate of Kiev).

Main Muslim Organisations

- Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims (*Духовне управління мусульман України*, Lukyanivska str, 46, Kiev, 04071, tel.: ++380 444651877/78,

- fax: ++380 444651876, www.islam.ua, info@islam.ua). This organisation is among the oldest (founded in 1992) and headed by Sheikh Ahmad Tamim. With its headquarters in Kiev, it covers more than 100 communities in most of the regions of Ukraine. From a theological viewpoint, it follows Sunni Sufi Islam, primarily the order of 'Abd Allah al-Harrari (1910–2008) from Lebanon.
- Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims “Ummah” (*Духовне управління мусульман України «Умма»*, Dehtyarivska str., 25, Kiev, 04119, tel.: ++380 444909900, fax: ++380 444909922. <http://umma.in.ua>, dumu.umma@gmail.com). Founded in 2008, the Spiritual Administration represents more than 25 communities from all around Ukraine. Its leader, Sheikh Said Ismagilov, often appears in Ukrainian media. SAUM “Ummah” follows a mainstream Sunni creed with a strong admiration of the concept of “moderation” (*wasatiya*) in Islam. It has very close relations with the association “Alraid” (their headquarters are located in the same building).
 - All-Ukrainian Association of the Public Organisations “Alraid” (*Всеукраїнська асоціація громадських організацій «Альраїд»*, main office, Dehtyarivska Str., 25-a, Kiev, 04119, tel.: ++380 444909900, fax: ++380 444909922, www.arraid.org, office@arraid.org). This organisation, founded in 1997 by the Arab diaspora in Ukraine, is officially registered as an NGO. It has around 15 divisions in the regions of Ukraine, including Crimea. “Alraid” is very active in publishing and media, propagating cultural encounters between Ukraine and Middle Eastern states.
 - Muftiate of Kiev (*Київський муфтіят*, Nevska str., 10-A, Kiev, 03062, tel.: ++380 444496546, tugantel@gmail.com). This Muftiate (founded in 2007) represents Volga Tatar communities of Ukraine and propagates their cultural heritage. It has established good relations with Muslims of Tatarstan and is mostly concerned with the preservation of their cultural heritage in Ukraine.
 - Central Religious Organisation “Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea and City of Sevastopol” (*Централизованный религиозная организация «Духовное управление мусульман Крыма и города Севастополя»*, Kurchatova str., 4, Symferopil, 95000, tel.: ++380 652274353. www.qmdi.org, muftiyat@qirimmuftiyat.org.ua). SACM, with its leader Mufti Emirali Ablaev, is the largest Islamic organisation in Ukraine. It unifies most of the Crimean communities and a few in the Kherson region. It was founded in 1992 to preserve the religious identity of Crimean Tatars (representing the Hanafi-Maturidi school of law and theology). The SACM continues to operate in Russian-controlled Crimea.
 - Central Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims—“Tavrian Muftiyate,” (*Центральное духовное управление мусульман—Таврический Муфтият*, www.cdumk.ru/, info@cdumk.ru). Established in 2014 with the help of the

- Central Spiritual Administration of Russian Muslims, this organisation just started its activities. It seems to support a Sufi notion of Sunni Islam.
- Spiritual Centre of Ukrainian Muslims (*Духовний центр мусульман України*, Donetsk, Marshal Zhukov str., 1, 83071). This centre was established in 1995 to unify the Muslim communities of Donbass. By the end of the 1990s, it included more than 20 of local communities in the Donetsk and Luhansk areas. It has reduced its activities, mostly because of the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine.
 - Association of Ukrainian Muslims (*Асоціація мусульман України*, АУМ, Kiev, Borschahivska str., 128, <http://lifeislam.org>, lifeislam.org@gmail.com). Established in 2012, АУМ represents Salafi Muslims, increased after the influx of the internally displaced persons from Crimea. Recently, АУМ started to operate in some regions of Ukraine (Lviv, Vinnytsia), registering new communities.
 - Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Donbass (*Духовное управление мусульман Донбасса*, САМД, Donetsk, Artema str., 125, <http://islam-donbass.ru/>, donbass-Islam@mail.ru, tel. ++380 639664288; ++380 502604824). Established in 2014, САМД uses the same place where the local community of SAUM previously operated; it appears that they follow the same ideological trend of Neo-Sufism (Al-Ahbash group) as SAUM. САМД also publishes materials against “sects in Islam” (namely Hizb al-Tahrir, Salafi communities etc.).