

GUAM AND ITS MEMBER STATES' TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF ETHNOCONFESSIONAL REALITY IN THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA

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Implementation of the GUAM transnational energy transportation and communication project calls for a discussion of a vast range of issues related not merely to the political-legal, economic, and engineering spheres, which are indispensable for the project's adequate functioning, but also to other problems found far beyond the project's confines. I have in mind political stability, civil peace, and interfaith relations.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is a strategically important part of the GUAM corridor, which makes civil peace and stable interfaith relations a linchpin for the successful realization of GUAM's political and economic tasks.

Ukraine's independence created a qualitatively new social context in which millions of people acquired new ideas about the world, moral and ethical values, spirituality, and religion.

At all times religion has played an important role in people's lives; at all times the church has been seen as a force conducive to society's moral revival.

The Ukrainian Constitution and the country's legal system proclaim the principle of equal rights and opportunities and are designed to prevent all encroachments on the "right to freedom of personal philosophy and religion," the latter constituting the ideological, moral and ethical, and social basis of a civil society. "This right includes the freedom to profess or not to profess any religion" (Art 35).

Under Ukrainian legislation, “the violation of citizen equality regardless of religious convictions” (Art 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine) and “illegal prevention of performing religious rituals” (Art 180) are punishable by law.

Even though the processes going on in the religious sphere remain complicated and highly ambiguous, Ukrainian society has realized that there is no alternative to the commonly accepted norms of freedom of conscience. This is confirmed by the fact that Ukraine has accepted the main principles of human rights, ratified the corresponding international documents, and brought domestic legislation into harmony with them.

Today, it can be said that each believer, religious community, and Ukrainian society are sitting a freedom test. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is no exception in this respect.

The Crimea, together with the rest of the country, is living through a religious revival that sometimes breaks out in storms. All the ethnic groups on the peninsula are reviving their spirituality and their religious and national self-awareness. The number of religious educational establishments is growing together with the number of religious communities; the clergy is developing into a social group; religious centers are busy establishing contacts with co-religionists abroad. Bit by bit religion is gaining a broader foothold in social life (the family, relations between the sexes, social relations, national holidays, etc.). It has become part of the individual’s spiritual freedom and is contributing to the development of civil society.

According to the 2001 population census, there are over 120 ethnic groups living on the peninsula. According to the republican committee for religious affairs, by 1 January, 2008, there were 1,339 religious organizations in the Crimea, 48 confessions, trends and persuasions; 1,306 registered religious communities, 2 religious centers, 6 religious administrations, 6 monasteries and missions; 4 religious fraternities, and 9 spiritual educational establishments. According to the same source, there are 674 unregistered religious communities, most of them (612) Muslim.

There are 46 religious communities based on ethnic affiliation: besides 386 Muslim communities, there are 46 communities that belong to other confessions: 9 German Evangelical Lutheran Church communities; 13 Jewish, 7 Armenian Apostolic Church communities; 9 Karaim; 1 Krymchak; 5 Orthodox Greek, and 2 Korean Baptist Church communities.

Table 1

**Ethnoconfessional Communities of
the Crimea**

| | Registered | Unregistered | Total |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Muslim | 386 | 612 | 998 |
| Other ethnoconfessional communities: Armenian Apostolic Church, German Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jewish, Karaim, Krymchak, Orthodox Greek | 46 | | 46 |
| Total | 432 | 612 | 1,044 |

This means that there are 1,044 religious communities based on ethnic affiliation, or 50 percent of all the religious communities on the peninsula. This can be described as the Crimea’s specific feature.

Islam as an ethnic confession has the largest number of followers: 998 communities account for over 14 percent of the Crimea’s total population.

Today, the general ethnoconfessional climate on the peninsula is determined by the relations between Orthodoxy (497 communities) and Islam.

Politicians, academics, journalists, and the ordinary people agree that the relations between them are fairly strained.

The Crimean Tartars, all of them Muslims, returned to their historical homeland, which previously (before the 1990s) had been the home of the predominantly Slavic population. This created a new religious landscape with the Tartars rapidly turning Islam into an influential force.

The Crimean Tartars, who formed the Muslim minority, were not seeking political or cultural clashes with the Orthodox Christian majority. Yuri Babanov has the following to say on this score: "The Crimean Muslims are prone to religious tolerance and are demonstrating their intention to live in peace with all neighbors."¹

At first, the Muslim and Orthodox confessions displayed mutual tolerance. Mufti of the Crimean Muslims Seitjelil Ibragimov and Archbishop Lazar of Simferopol and the Crimea co-chaired the Interfaith Council "Peace the Gift of Gods" set up in November 1992 for the purpose of "*coordinating an interfaith dialog in the Crimea.*"

Over time, the religious issue acquired political hues. Late in 2000, the Simferopol and Crimean dioceses raised road crosses at the entrances to settlements and on prominent high places and adorned the main highroads with huge posters "The Crimea is the Cradle of Christian Orthodoxy" to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ. The Muslims predictably took the zeal for a sign that the Orthodox Church was asserting its domination in the republic.

Done without consultations and outside the dialog between confessions, this stirred up trouble on the peninsula.

V. Grigoriants, a prominent local academic, has pointed out: "This was followed by what in the Crimea was called 'bringing down the crosses' and worsened relations between the Slavic Orthodox and Crimean Tartar-Muslim communities... In an effort to settle the confessional conflict by legal means, the government of the Crimea took an important step: it passed a special decision that changed the standards regarding construction or placing buildings and other structures in the Crimea. From that time on, cultic objects could only be placed outside cultic buildings, veneration sites, the grounds of religious organizations, cemeteries, burial places, crematoriums, and private houses on a decision by district administrations and executive committees of the city councils after consultations with the Interfaith Council of the Crimea."² The author refers to Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea No. 33 of 13 February, 2001, On Certain Measures for Stabilizing Interfaith Relations in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

The Interfaith Council "Peace the Gift of God" was expected to promote a dialog between the Muslims and the Orthodox believers. Time showed, however, that those who raised the crosses did nothing to follow the provision "coordinating the interfaith dialog in the Crimea" registered in the Council's Charter. Instead, they fanned new conflicts between the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians.

Svetlana Chervonnaia has written on that score: "To register his protest, Mufti of the Crimea Aji Emir-Ali Ablaev suspended the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Crimea's membership in the Interfaith Council 'Peace the Gift of God' headed by Archbishop Lazar of Simferopol and the Crimea who ignored the interests of the Muslim citizens."³

¹ S. Chervonnaia, "Islam and Christianity in the Crimea: a Dialogue or 'Clash of Civilizations'," *Avdet*, No. 5, 4 February, 2008.

² V.E. Grigoriants, "K voprosu o gosudarstvenno-konfessional'nykh otnosheniakh v Ukraine i ARK," Supplement to the *Krymskiy arkhiv* journal, Simferopol, 2004.

³ S. Chervonnaia, *op. cit.*

Today, however, it has become clear that this was not a suspension. The Spiritual Administration has been absent from the Council for over seven years, which means that the relations between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims are in crisis. Table 2 shows the dynamics of the largest conflicts between the confessions.

Table 2

Largest Ethnoconfessional Conflicts in the Crimea since 2000

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|---------------|--|---|
| 1. | October 2000 | Road cross raised on Mount Kamatra in the village of Morskoe (city of Sudak) is removed by Muslims | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 2. | October 2000 | Road cross raised at Inkerman (in Sevastopol) is removed by Muslims | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 3. | November 2000 | Road cross raised in the Kirovskoe settlement is removed by Muslims | Incident developed into a latent conflict |
| 4. | November 2000 | Road cross raised in the village of Mazanka (Simferopol District) is removed by Muslims | Incident developed into a latent conflict |
| 5. | April 2001 | The Muslim community of the town of Saki demands that no road crosses be raised at the entrance to the town | Conflict settled |
| 6. | July 2001 | Clashes between the local Muslims and law enforcement bodies at the Monastery of the Holy Dormition and the Zynjyrly madrasah: the Muslims wanted to cross the monastery's territory (earlier 47 hectares of land were transferred to the monastery under an official act) to reach the Gazy Mansur Muslim burial place. | Incident developed into a latent conflict |
| 7. | June 2005 | Numerous complaints by Muslims of the town of Armiansk about the road cross raised at the entrance to the town | Conflict unsettled |
| 8. | August 2005 | Numerous complaints by the dwellers (all of them Muslims) of a high-rise on Marshal Zhukov St. about the building of an Orthodox Church in the courtyard of their apartment block | Conflict settled |

Table 2 (continued)

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|---------------|---|--------------------|
| 9. | November 2005 | Conflict in the village of Golubinka (Bakhchisarai District) stirred up by the intention of the local Orthodox community to build a church on Kilse-Bair Hill where a church destroyed in the 18th century once stood | Conflict settled |
| 10. | November 2005 | City authorities of Feodosia pass a decision to raise a 8-meter high cross dedicated to St. Andrew the First Called on one of the streets under an agreement of the Interfaith Council "Peace the Gift of God" | Conflict settled |
| 11. | Since 2006 | Conflict in Bakhchisarai caused by the intention of the heads of the Monastery of the Holy Dormition to erect Holy Gates on the lower site in front of the entrance to grounds where Muslim and Karaim shrines are also found | Conflict unsettled |

The table clearly demonstrates that on no occasion did Muslims initiate the conflicts.

An analysis of the copycat acts suggests that the conflicts were planned and deliberately fanned. The trouble appeared out of nothing and followed a recurring chain of events: a religious incident is brought to boiling point, which attracts fairly politicized groups (members of regional Mejlises, Cosacks, politicians, journalists, and others); and the conflict is settled after prolonged negotiations by leaders of the autonomous republic and heads of the power-related structures.

A more detailed analysis of the tabulated conflicts reveals that all of them were planned well in advance.

1. One of the Christian Orthodox communities of the Simferopol and Crimean diocese selected a land plot for its church in the direct proximity of a high-rise on Marshal Zhukov Street built for deported Crimean Tartars even though there was enough vacant land in a residential area in the Simferopol outskirts. Republican officials, well aware of the issue's conflict potential, not merely allowed the Orthodox community to use the land, but actively insisted on their decision despite the Muslims' vehement protests. Contrary to above-mentioned Decision No. 33 of 13 February 2001, the project was not brought to the Interfaith Council. The conflict was stemmed after numerous protests addressed to the administration and the media.
2. In March 2001, a conflict over the local Orthodox community's intention to build a church on Kilse-Bair Hill (the site of a medieval Christian church that disappeared in the 18th century) was stirred up in the village of Golubinka (former Foti-Sala, the Bakhchisarai District).

Azizler, an organization of the Crimean Tartars earlier headed by a now deceased veteran of the movement of Crimean Tartars, Idris Asanin, informed the administration of the

town of Bakhchisarai that the “medieval church which stood on that site belonged to the Constantinople Patriarchate and had nothing to do with the Moscow Patriarchate.” Tension gradually rose, until it reached its climax in the summer of 2006; the confrontation between the local Crimean Tartars and Slavs became even more obvious, while the local Cossacks also moved in. The conflict was settled by the personal efforts of Speaker of the Supreme Rada of the Crimean Autonomy A. Gritsenko and Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tartars M. Jemilev.

3. Another conflict in Bakhchisarai was caused by the intention of the Abbot of the Monastery of the Holy Dormition to fence off the territory the monastery believed to be its property and build Holy Gates on it. The monastery received rights on the lower site with a parking lot and souvenir stalls under an official act of 2001. The site is the starting place for those heading for the Zynjirly madrasah, a shrine of the Crimean Tartars, or for another Muslim shrine, the Aziz Gazy Mansur cemetery, and leading to the Chufut-Kale cave town and the sacred Karaim Balta Tiymez cemetery. The Muslims object to the Holy Gates because those wishing to visit the Muslim shrines will have to go under a Christian symbol. The conflict is still going on: the Muslims are determined to bury the project, while construction materials are being delivered to the future construction site.
4. An attempt of the administration of the city of Feodosia to erect a monument to St. Andrew the First Called on one of the streets. Strange as it may seem, the initiative belonged to the Feodosiagorstroy communal service. Indeed, why should a communal (that is, secular) organization lobby a religious Christian monument at the entrance to a city inhabited by people of varied confessions? This situation obviously called for interference by the Interfaith Council “Peace the Gift of God.” It met to approve the initiative and stipulated that the monument should be erected after 20 May (probably to remove this action as far as possible from 18 May, the date of deportation of the Crimean Tartars in 1944).

Meanwhile Crimean Tartars started picketing the site and demanded that the oak cross and pedestal be removed. The city fathers, who at first were belligerent enough, acted under the slogan “power should not betray weaknesses.” As time went on, the conflict gathered momentum: Slavic and Cossack units joined in. At the height of the confrontation, when the picketers began demolition of the cross and pedestal, Cossacks from the Russian Federation arrived. The local conflict could develop into an international issue.

After a while, reason prevailed: the monument would be erected on the territory of one of the Orthodox churches.

This, however, is not the end of the story: conflicts of this kind might repeat themselves because on 16 May, 2006 the Feodosia City Council lodged an administrative complaint with the Economic Court of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea against Point 3 of Government Decision No. 33 and won the case.

This means that interfaith relations on the peninsula will be prone to destabilization.

It was not the officials of the Feodosia City Council who initiated the monument or lodged the complaint: they merely acted on the instructions of Church hierarchs.

The above initiatives built up a vast potential of religious confrontation in the Crimea along Orthodoxy-Islam lines, which leads to ethnic confrontation between the Slavic and Crimean-Tartar population.

The religious incidents contributed to xenophobia and anti-Islamic feelings heated by the media brimming with distorted ideas about Islam that present it as a radical and aggressive religion. Anti-Tartar and anti-Slavic slogans are very popular with the republican media; this results in insulting graffiti and acts of vandalism in Muslim cemeteries. Intended to wound the most sensitive of human feelings, acts of vandalism are multiplying and threaten to upset the situation on the peninsula.

Table 3

Dynamics of Ethnic Incidents and Acts of Vandalism in the Crimea

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. | August 2001 | Protests of the Muslim community of Evpatoria against selling the territory of the old Muslim cemetery for a construction project | Conflict settled |
| 2. | August 2001 | Protests of the Muslim community of Gaspra against the project for laying a road across an old Muslim cemetery | Conflict settled |
| 3. | August 2001 | Act of vandalism in relation to the memorial plaque in honor of twice Hero of the Soviet Union Ametkhan Sultan in Simferopol | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 4. | August 2001 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to Crimean-Tartar poet and writer Bekir Choban Zade | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 5. | Since October 2001 | Numerous addresses of Muslim communities and the SAMC to the authorities of the Crimea and Ukraine with a request to return the cultic object Aziz Salgir Baba in Simferopol | Conflict unsettled |
| 6. | Since August 2002 | Rallies and pickets of the Muslims of Alushta caused by the city council rejecting a request to give land to a new mosque at the Storm cinema | Conflict settled |
| 7. | December 2002 | Muslim community seizes a club (former mosque) in the village of Dachnoe (in Sudak) because it took too long to transfer it to the Muslim community | Conflict settled |
| 8. | February 2003 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to the victims of deportation in Evpatoria | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 9. | Since September 2003 | Numerous complaints by the SAMC to the authorities of Simferopol, Crimea, and Ukraine with a request to allocate a landed plot in Simferopol for the main mosque in Salgirka Park | Conflict unsettled |
| 10. | September 2003 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to the victims of deportation in Simferopol | Incident caused copycat acts |

Table 3 (continued)

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|---------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 11. | September 2003 | Numerous addresses to the authorities of Ukraine, Crimea, and Simferopol caused by rejection of the request to allocate land for a mosque in the village of Beloglinka (Simferopol District) | Conflict settled |
| 12. | Since October 2003 | Numerous addresses to the authorities of Ukraine and Crimea by the villagers of the former village of Cherkez-Kermen (Bakhchisarai District) in connection with the transfer of 7.2 hectares of land to a private person (part of the transferred land belonged to a protected zone where the monuments of Eski-Kermen and Kyz-Kule are located) | Conflict unsettled |
| 13. | November 2003 | Conflict of the Muslim community of Feodosia with the local authorities caused by the sale of a former mosque to a community of Seventh-day Adventists | Conflict unsettled |
| 14. | Since December 2003 | Members of the Ana Yurt Muslim community of the Nikita settlement (Yalta) seize the building of the former madrasah-mosque. Later the building was auctioned by its owner Yuzhekogeotsentr | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 15. | January 2004 | Conflict between the Muslim and Orthodox communities of Jankoy over the road cross raised at the entrance to Novostepnoe village (Jankoy District) | Conflict settled |
| 16. | March 2004 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to Crimean-Tartar poet and writer Bekir Choban Zade | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 17. | March 2004 | Protests of the Muslim community of Saki against the decision of the Saki city council to allocate a plot of land occupied in the past by azizes to a fill-up station | Conflict settled |
| 18. | Since April 2004 | Protests of the Muslim community of Evpatoria (addresses, pickets, and | Conflict unsettled |

Table 3 (continued)

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|-------------------|--|---|
| | | rallies) caused by the delay in transferring the courtyard of the Khan Jami mosque to the community | |
| 19. | May 2004 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to the victims of deportation in the village of Zua (Belogorsk District) | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 20. | Since August 2004 | Protests of the Muslims of Bakhchisarai caused by delayed removal of the market from the site of the old Eski-lurt settlement with 4 durbe mausoleums of the 15th-17th cc. | Conflict settled |
| 21. | August 2004 | Mosque in the Lugovoe district of Simferopol is defiled by insulting grafitti | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 22. | August 2004 | Vandals destroy 2 tombstones in the Muslim cemetery of Belogorsk | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 23. | August 2004 | Act of vandalism in relation to the monument to the victims of Stalinism and Nazism in the village of Zaprudnoe at Alushta | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 24. | July 2005 | Repeated act of vandalism in relation to the monument to the victims of Stalinism and Nazism in the village of Zaprudnoe at Alushta | |
| 25. | September 2005 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim cemetery in the village of Chernomorskoe—7 tombstones ruined | Incident developed into a latent conflict |
| 26. | December 2005 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim cemetery of the village of Yarkoe Pole, Saki District—4 tombstones ruined | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 27. | April 2007 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim cemetery—over 30 tombstones ruined—in the village of Sofievka, Simferopol District | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 28. | June 2007 | One more act of vandalism in relation to the monument to Crimean-Tartar poet and writer Bekir Choban Zade in Belogorsk | Incident caused copycat acts |

Table 3 (continued)

| No. | Date | Description | Settlement |
|-----|-----------------|---|---|
| 29. | August 2007 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim cemetery of the village of Krym-Roza, Belogorsk District—4 tombstones ruined | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 30. | August 2007 | Act of vandalism at the ancient Muslim cemetery of the village of Pionerskoe, Simferopol District | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 31. | 20 January 2008 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim and Orthodox cemeteries of the village of Marfovka, Lenin District—10 tombstones defiled | Criminals apprehended, incident caused copycat acts |
| 32. | 23 January 2008 | Picketing at 22, Yaltinskaia St. in Simferopol by members of the Muslim communities of the Crimea because of the Simferopol city council's refusal to allocate this plot of land to the main mosque | Incident caused copycat acts |
| 33. | 9 February 2008 | Act of vandalism at the Muslim cemetery of the village of Uvarovka, Nizhegorsk District—270 tombstones ruined | Incident caused copycat acts |

Lenur Unusov, journalist of *Ekonomicheskie izvestia* newspaper, reported on the act of vandalism at the cemetery of the village of Uvarovka: in small hours of 10 February unknown criminals performed an unprecedented act of vandalism, ruining nearly all the tombstones in the Muslim cemetery. They defiled over 270 gravesites with insulting graffiti, and 220 tombstones were ruined. The vandals ruined part of the fence and killed the watchdog (the district budget had no money to pay for guards). Task force officials who arrived at the cemetery established that the vandals “used a heavy object well suited to destroy monuments such as a sledge hammer.”

The Crimean Muslims of the Nizhegorsk District are convinced that the action was planned in advance, since a crime of this dimension could not be perpetrated by a couple of people. Chairman of the Nizhegorsk Mejlis of the Crimean Tartars Mustafa Salmanov said: “Such things are not done in everyday life. This was a planned action.” Lenur Memedliaev, head of the department of inter-ethnic relations of the Nizhegorsk District Administration, was convinced that this act was intended to fan religious strife in the district, one of the calmest in the region. He said to the journalist of *Ekonomicheskie izvestia*: “Look for yourself—here is the ruined Muslim cemetery and there is an untouched Christian one. It seems that those who ‘ordered’ the crime expected the Crimean Tartars to rush to the Christian cemetery, thus igniting a conflict. I’ve just come from there. The scene is heartbreaking: people are weeping and crying. This is a tragedy.”

Tables 2 and 3 show that the number of unpleasant incidents in the religious sphere is gradually growing together with instances of xenophobia and Islamophobia. Contrary to the laws and legislation acts that regulate the confessional relations in the state, as well as the Presidential Decree on the Urgent Measures for the Final Liquidation of the Negative Repercussions of Totalitarian Policies of the Former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics in Relation to Religion and Restoration of the

Violated Rights of the Churches and Religious Organizations of 21 March, 2002, the Crimean Peninsula became an arena of confrontation along “state officials-Muslim communities” lines. Strange as it may seem, it is officialdom that is guilty of erecting artificial barriers against the Muslim communities that ask for land to build mosques and for return of the cultic buildings and other religious property that belonged to them in the past. This is especially true of Simferopol, the Crimean capital, and the littoral cities. Here are some examples.

1. Since 2004 the Sabur Muslim community has been campaigning for a landed plot needed for a mosque in the Petrovskaia Balka District (Simferopol) with a Muslim population of over 3 thousand.
2. For eight years, deputies of the Alushta city council refused to allocate land for restoration of the historic Asha-Jami mosque. The deputies retreated after a series of mass rallies and the threat of a hunger strike in a tent camp.
3. For a long time now the Muslim Khan Jami community of Evpatoria has been campaigning for the territory of the former courtyard at the magnificent Khan Jami mosque that marked its 450th anniversary in 2002; currently the land that belongs to the city is occupied by a private car-repair shop. The Muslims have already tried all forms of protest (picketing of the city council included) with no tangible results.
4. In 2000, in Feodosia, the local Muslim Kefe community applied for the transfer of the former mosque used as a shop to the Muslim community. Its request was ignored: the building (city property) was sold through the Fund of Communal Property to a structure called Globus, which in turn sold it to a community of Seventh-day Adventists. This suggested religious confrontation. The Muslim community went to a court; so far there has been no court ruling.
5. In the 1990s, the Crimean muftiat first raised the question of building a main mosque in Simferopol and asked the city authorities to allocate land for this purpose. In 2004, after many different scenarios and deliberations, the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Crimea finally acquired 2.7 hectares of land at 22, Yaltinskaia St. The decision took many years of document drafting (a far from cheap process), however, guided by political considerations, the deputies of the Simferopol City Council rejected the earlier decision of the city executive structures. Since 23 January, 2008, the Crimean Muslims have been protesting against the Council’s decisions. All the Crimean TV channels allowed the picketers to express their indignation over the deputies’ cynicism; people of all ages pointed out that Orthodox churches were “mushrooming;” in the past few years the Orthodox Church has received at least 10 landed plots in the best places. The decision of the city deputies, which was interpreted as discrimination of the Muslims, started a perpetual protest action on the initially allocated site and caused a negative response from the Slavic population: after several days of picketing, the site was showered with anti-Tartar and anti-Muslim leaflets.

There is the opinion that the Crimean authorities should interfere to quench the passions and work toward a consensus among the religious, national, and political elites. So far this prospect looks dim. In the absence of preventive measures in the ethnic and religious spheres, no stable peace among the confessions is possible: the current practice of ad hoc response to the crises is hardly acceptable. If this trend continues, if the number of religious conflicts and acts of vandalism in relation to Muslim and Tartar objects grows, and if the officialdom-Muslim communities confrontation continues, the situation will surely become aggravated. So far, the state authorities have shown no interest in conducting objective and systemic studies of the processes underway in the ethnoconfessional sphere; they have refused to study the nature of the conflicts initiated by religious organizations and have done nothing to set up effective preventive measures. S. Kunitsyn, Chairman of the Sevastopol City

Administration, who for over six years headed the government of the Crimea, has pointed out: “The central authorities in Kiev should realize that there is no clear-cut conception of ethnic policy in the Crimea, even though the situation there is very complicated.”⁴ The state alone can help all the ethnoses and religions to live peacefully side by side on the peninsula: it should coordinate the efforts of all interested state, public, and religious institutions.

The unique ethnoconfessional situation in the Crimea and the far from simple processes unfolding in this sphere mean that the peninsula needs a state monitoring center staffed with locally respected academics specializing in religious studies, history, culturology, politics, law, and education.

The Center should supply the authorities with systemic analyses of the main trends and specific developments observed in the local religions and draw practical recommendations designed to prevent conflicts and lower the level of confessional and ethnic tension.

The government of the Crimea should set up a consultative structure in the form of an efficient interfaith body with full representation of all confessions. It should pool forces with the state to achieve a consistent dialog among the religions for the sake of religious tolerance, mutual understanding, and interfaith harmony.

The state and the interfaith body should address the key tasks, such as development and preservation of high moral qualities, moral education of the younger generation, and religious tolerance on the peninsula.

⁴ “Shtormovoe preduprezhdenie,” *Krymskiy obozrevatel*, No. 48, 27 November, 2007.