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## Sound the Alarm for Ukraine Coalition (1)



## Religious Leaders of Ukraine Deliver Appeal for Aid to President Obama



Washington, DC, November 9, 2015 - Representatives of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations met with Obama Administration officials today, delivering a letter to the President calling for the U.S. government to play a greater role in delivering aid to the millions in Ukraine in dire need of humanitarian assistance as the season's freezing temperatures set in. The All Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations members represent 85% of the citizens of Ukraine.

Representing the Council were Ukraine's Chief Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, Ukrainian Orthodox Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko) and Ukrainian Catholic Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk. They met with the following representatives of President Obama's Administration:

- Dr. Charles Kupchan (Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European
- . Melissa Rogers (Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships)
- Elizabeth Zentos (National Security Council Director for Eastern Europe),
- · Eric Ciaramella (NSC Director for Ukraine)
- · Christine Gottschalk (NSC Director for Humanitarian and Crisis Response)
- Laura Shultz (NSC Director for Global Engagement)
- . Jennifer Wistrand (Policy Advisor for Europe and Eurasia in the Secretary of States Office of Religion and Global Affairs)
- . M. Patrick Ellsworth (Senior Ukraine Policy Advisor, U.S. State Department)

They discussed the current humanitarian crisis and their appeal to President Obama to allow the National Guard Program and the Partnership for Peace program to airlift crucial humanitarian supplies to Ukraine for this winter season. Also, participating in the meeting at the White House were Ambassador of Ukraine Valeriy Chaly, Deputy Head of Presidential Administration Rostyslav Pavlenko and President of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Nadia K. McConnell.

The letter to President Obama states: "While we are grateful for the assistance provided by the United States government to date, we know that the need is so much greater. Thus, we appeal to you to increase assistance and to activate the full potential of the National Guard



State Partnership Program and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) as instruments for alleviating the humanitarian catastrophe..." particularly to "...deliver already available medical and humanitarian

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), time is running out for winterization: 5 million people are in need of assistance, which includes 1.7 million children; 1.5 million internally displaced; 1.1 million externally displaced; the families of the almost 8,000 killed and 17,600 wounded. Long queues of civilians waiting for up to 24 hours at a number of crossing points on the 'contact line' between government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas persist, says the OCHA.

Also in attendance were: Yaroslav Brisuik (Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister-Counselor, Embassy of Ukraine in U.S.), Archbishop Stephen Soroka (Ukrainian Catholic Church, Philadelphia), Archpriest Oleksandr Trofymlyuk (Rector of the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy), Ari Shapiro (Assistant to Rabbi Bleich), Jennifer Perrino (Legislative Director, Rep. Marcy Kaptur's Office),

Ali Chalupa, (National Democratic Ethnic Coordinating Committee), John Jaresko (Ukrainian Orthodox church activist from Chicago), Peter Voitsekhovsky (Research Director, U.S.-Ukraine Foundation). Shortly after their White House meeting, Patrirch Filaret, Patriarch Sviatoslav and Rabbi Bleich spoke at

a press conference at the National Press Club, where they stressed the need to address the



immediate humanitarian crisis due to winter.

Patriarch Sviatloslav Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church noted that "today, in Ukraine, we have more than 2 million refugees but inter-national societies can help only 400,000 refugees ... Ukrainians are helping Ukrainians, but our resources are short because of the economic crisis... We are here to be a voice of the millions who are suffering the biggest humanitarian crisis in Europe after the Second World War... Ukraine needs worldwide international support in order to solve this situation and we are here to

speak on behalf of those millions who will suffer terrible winter months."

Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate, reminded the audience that through its rejection of Russian authoritarianism and battle against Putin's aggression, "Ukraine is defending democracy and freedom" for all Western countries. He emphasizes, "The United States is the leaders of democracy and freedom in the world and Ukrainians are giving their lives for this democracy and freedom... We are giving away our lives, and you (the United States) please give us the resources including the humanitarian assistance. We ask you to please help us!"

Ukraine's Chief Rabbi Bleich said: "The message comes from a coalition which is called All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations which is a very unique organization anywhere in the world probably, where the heads of all the religious in the country come together and work for the benefit of all of the people living in the country." "The help that we may get in paying for transport of containers of humanitarian aid that was collected here to be sent over to Ukraine is very, very symbolic. Money is not the most important



thing." It will show the "importance that the United States government places on the humanitarian needs in Ukraine," and that "people in the U.S. care about what is happening in Ukraine" and about the "the fight of freedom over Putinism."

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, working with other Members of Congress has been actively encouraging the Obama Administration to increase assistance to Ukraine and to engage the National Guard State Partnership Program and the Partnership for Peace program in delivering aid to Ukraine.

The press conference at the National Press Club was sponsored by the Sound the Alarm for Ukraine Coalition, moderated by Ambassador John Herbst of the Atlantic Council and a member of the coalition. The newly formed coalition is bringing together former ambassadors, Ukraine experts, humanitarian organizations, diaspora groups, the interfaith community, corporate supporters, other organizations, and individuals around the shared mission of delivering humanitarian, reconstruction/redevelopment and peacekeeping assistance to millions of people in Ukraine, effectively and in a timely manner.

Nadia K. McConnell emphasizes that "the Coalition will sound the alarm for Ukraine here in the U.S., so that the people of Ukraine will know that they have not been forgotten and will receive the assistance they need and deserve. We cannot allow geopolitical issues to compromise our response to the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine. We must not repeat what happened during the Holodomor, the Holocaust and more recently Chernobyl."

After the press conference (see photo below), Archbishop Soroka, Patriarch Shevchuk, Patriarch Filaret, and Rabbi Bleich jointly visited the newly-dedicated Holodomor Memorial in Washington, DC. Other religious and secular leaders who attended this event (to the right of Rabbi Bleich) are Nicholas Kotcherha, President of the Ukrainian Genocide Commission, Archpriest Oleksandr Trofymlyuk, Rector of the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy, Rev. Roman Zahursky, Pastor of Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate in North Royalton, OH, Adrian Saluk of



Afterwards, there was a working visit with government, religious and community leaders at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation office. Of the latter, these individuals included Tamara Denysenko of Rochester, NY, Vera Eliashevsky of Chicago, IL, Marta Farion of Chicago, IL, Bohdan Kantor of Arlington, VA, Daniel & Daria King of Mount Airy, MD, Adrian Saluk of Phoeniz, AZ, and Marianna Zajac of New York City.



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