

NCSEJ Country Report

Ukraine



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Executive Summary

Ukraine underwent a relatively peaceful transition to independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Due to Ukraine's geopolitical location between the West and Russia, Ukraine's leaders have tried to keep a balanced approach to interacting with its neighbors. Since Ukraine's independence, however, corruption and crime have persisted. The presidencies of Leonid Kuchma (1994-2004) and Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) failed to notably improve the economy or put Ukraine on a fast track to European integration. During Viktor Yanukovich's presidency (2010-2014), the executive branch further consolidated power, corruption increased, and crackdowns on political opponents and independent media intensified.

Yanukovich's decision to suspend signing of an EU Association Agreement in November 2013 triggered mass protests and a relatively peaceful overthrowing of the government in February 2014. Parliament impeached Yanukovich, and Ukraine returned to the 2004 constitution's parliamentary-presidential model. Petro Poroshenko won Ukraine's next presidential elections. In April 2016, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk resigned, and a new government was appointed, led by parliament Speaker Volodymyr Groysman.

After the 2014 Maidan protests, Russia deployed troops in Crimea on the pretext of protecting Russian-speaking nationals. Since Spring 2014, armed conflict and intense fighting in Ukraine's east has been frequent, as pro-Russian separatists, with Russian support, battle Ukrainian military forces. In 2015, a ceasefire agreement was reached in Minsk, though fighting continued.

In Spring 2019, a famous comedian and actor, Volodymyr Zelensky, was elected the President. Although he was a political novice, Zelensky's anticorruption platform and significant online following won him widespread support. He won a landslide victory over incumbent President Petro Poroshenko in the second round of the 2019 presidential election.

Statistics:

Population: 43,846,000 (March 2019 est.)

5,800,000 refugees (May 9)

Size: 603,550 sq. km.

Capital: Kyiv (Kiev)

Major cities: Kyiv, Lviv (Lvov), Kharkiv (Kharkov), Odesa (Odessa), Dnipro (Dnipro-petrovsk, Dnepr)

Jewish population:

Approximately 300,000 Feb. 2022 number

Head of State: Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Head of Government: Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal

Foreign Minister: Dmytro Kuleba

Ambassador to United States: Oksana Markarova

U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine: Bridget Brink

Freedom House Rating:

Partly Free

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with false claims of a need to de-Nazify the region. In the nascent moments of the war, President Zelenskyy made the defining decision to stay in Ukraine to fight and resist the unprovoked attack. Initially, Russian forces attacked on three flanks, from the north, east, and south of Ukraine. Attempts to capture Kyiv and dismantle Ukraine’s government were unsuccessful. Ukraine’s resilience and military strength, with the help of aid from the United States and EU countries, caused Russian forces to retreat. Russia’s military has regrouped and as of May 23, are focusing their attack on the Donbas region.

Ukraine and much of the international community have condemned the actions of Russia in Ukraine based primarily on two premises: violating the sovereignty of nations to determine its borders and war crimes. Cities such as Mariupol and Bucha have suffered greatly from Russian war crimes. Russian soldiers have murdered unarmed civilians, often showing signs of being tortured.

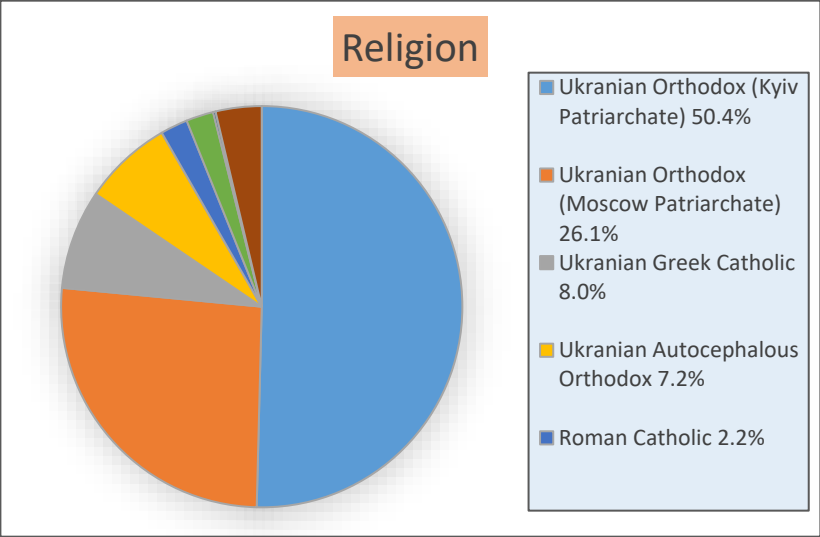
As a result of the war, around one fourth of Ukraine’s population has been displaced either externally or internally. Poland and other neighboring countries have risen to the challenge to receive Ukrainians fleeing the war.

As the atrocities of Russia’s war transpire, the composition of Ukraine’s economic situation, government structure, and Jewish community change by the minute. When and if the war ends and Russia’s crimes are fully documented, Ukraine’s status will become clearer.

History

Ukraine is Europe’s second largest nation and the second largest Soviet successor state in population and economy. Ukraine borders Russia, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and the Black Sea.

Kyivan Rus, a powerful state centered in Kyiv, was founded in the 9th century, and was destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th century. Later, Ukraine was partitioned by its stronger neighbors, Poland, Lithuania, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, with Russia eventually annexing most of the Ukrainian territories.



As a result of the Soviet-Polish War in 1921, Ukraine was divided between the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.

Under the Bolshevik regime, Ukrainian grain was repeatedly confiscated in the 1920s and 1930s, generating artificial famines that killed between 1.8 and 12 million Ukrainians, known as the Holodomor. Thousands of members of the Ukrainian elite were shot or deported to Siberia during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Through the lens of Russia's current invasion, 2022 grain production has suffered greatly. There has been an adverse impact on Ukraine's economy, which relies heavily on grain exports.

During World War II, Ukraine lost millions to combat, Nazi atrocities, and wartime deprivation. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed during the Holocaust in Ukraine. During Russia's indiscriminate attacks, shelling fell on the site of Babyn Yar. Additionally, there was damage to the memorial of Drobitsky Yar near the city of Kharkiv.

Repressions eased after Stalin's death in 1953, under Ukrainian-born Nikita Khrushchev. He transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 and supported a return to greater ethnic Ukrainian representation in the Ukrainian Communist Party.

90% of Ukrainian voters supported Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991. In December 1991, Ukrainian communist party leader Leonid Kravchuk became the first president of newly independent Ukraine.

Government

Ukraine is a semi-presidential republic with executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

The unicameral parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*, or Supreme Council) consists of 450 members elected to five-year terms. (Because of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the partial occupation of two eastern provinces, 27 of the 450 seats remain unfilled.) It has the power to initiate legislation, ratify international agreements, and approve the state budget.

The President is the chief of state, and the Prime Minister is head of government. The Prime Minister nominates a Cabinet of Ministers, to be approved by the Verkhovna Rada. The president directly is elected by absolute majority popular vote for at most two five-year terms. The prime minister, nominated by the president, is confirmed by the Rada.

Political Situation

Ukraine's transition to independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union was relatively peaceful. In 1991, an overwhelming majority of Ukrainian voters supported independence, electing Leonid Kravchuk as the first president. During his presidency, Ukraine's economy severely contracted, and hyperinflation followed.

Dissatisfied with economic conditions, widespread corruption, and crime, Ukrainians supported Kravchuk's opponent Leonid Kuchma in the 1996 presidential elections.

Viktor Yushchenko, a former chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine and a Prime Minister during the Kuchma administration, became the leader of the opposition. Yushchenko competed against Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich in the 2004 presidential elections. Yanukovich supported closer ties with Russia, and was openly backed by the Russian government, while Yushchenko promoted closer integration with Europe. Ukraine's Central Electoral Committee declared Yanukovich the winner, but the elections were widely criticized for severe violations, including voter intimidation, media manipulation, and a near-fatal poisoning of Yushchenko. The committee's decision sparked massive non-violent protests against Yanukovich, known as the Orange Revolution. A December 2004 runoff election on resulted in Yushchenko's election as President.

In 2013 and 2014, Ukrainians took to the streets in a dramatic series of protests, known as "The Revolution of Dignity," which led to President Yanukovich's ouster, and new presidential and parliamentary elections. Russia refused to formally recognize Ukraine's new post-Yanukovich government, and deployed troops in Crimea on the pretext of protecting Russian-speaking nationals in the peninsula. These actions were followed by a local referendum on accession to Russia, Crimea's *de facto* annexation, and further escalation of tensions between Russia and the West.

In September 2014, an initial ceasefire was signed, though fighting in the Donbas continued. In February 2015, Ukraine's government and pro-Russian separatists signed a second ceasefire in Minsk.

In Crimea, Russian authorities have persecuted pro-Ukraine activists and the Crimean Tatar community for their peaceful opposition to Russia's occupation of the peninsula.

In November 2018, tension between Ukraine and Russia once again increased after the Russian military seized three Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait, which divides the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov.

On 11 July 2019, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin following the former's appeals to the Russian leader to take part in talks with Ukraine, the United States, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom in Minsk. The leaders also discussed the exchange of prisoners held by both sides. On 7 September, Ukraine and Russia exchanged prisoners.

Economic Situation

Russia's occupation of Crimea in March 2014 and ongoing aggression in eastern Ukraine have hurt economic growth. With the loss of a major portion of Ukraine's heavy industry in Donbas and ongoing violence, Ukraine's economy contracted by 6.6% in 2014 and by 9.8% in 2015. The Ukrainian economy returned to low growth in 2016 and 2017, reaching 2.3% and 2.0%, respectively, as key reforms took hold. It also redirected trade activity towards the EU following the implementation of a bilateral Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement in January 2016, displacing Russia as Ukraine's largest trading partner. A prohibition on commercial trade with separatist-controlled territories in early 2017 has not impacted Ukraine's key industrial sectors as much as expected, largely because of favorable

external conditions. Amid positive economic developments, Ukraine returned to international debt markets in September 2017, issuing a \$3 billion sovereign bond.

The international community has taken efforts to stabilize the Ukrainian economy, including a March 2014 IMF assistance package of \$17.5 billion, of which Ukraine has received four disbursements, most recently in April 2017, bringing the total disbursed to approximately \$8.4 billion. Ukraine has made significant progress on reforms designed to make the country prosperous, democratic, and transparent. But more improvements are needed, including fighting corruption, developing capital markets, and improving the business environment to attract foreign investment, and privatizing state-owned enterprises.

Foreign Policy

The strategic goals of Ukraine's foreign policy include European and Euro–Atlantic integration, forming a relationship of strategic partnership with the United States of America and European Union, cooperation with member countries of the CIS and GUAM, active engagement with the UN and other international organizations, effective participation in the global economy with the maximum protection of national interests, and the transformation of Ukraine into a regional power.

On 1 January 2016, Ukraine joined the DCFTA with the EU. Ukrainian citizens were granted visa-free travel to the Schengen Area for up to 90 days during any 180-day period on 11 June 2017 and the Association Agreement formally came into effect on 1 September 2017. On February 21, 2019, the Constitution of Ukraine was amended, the norms on the strategic course of Ukraine for membership in the European Union and NATO are enshrined in the preamble of the Basic Law, three articles and transitional provisions.

As of January 2021, Ukraine was preparing to formally apply for EU membership in 2024, in order to join the European Union in the 2030s.

European Union:

In May 2017, the European Union approved visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens. Under the regulation, Ukrainian citizens holding a biometric passport can travel to an EU country for up to 90 days out of any 180-day period for business, tourism, or family purposes.

According to a June 2018 poll by the non-governmental research group “RATING,” 51% of Ukraine’s citizens supported their country’s integration into the EU.

In February 2019, President Poroshenko signed a new constitutional amendment that committed the country to becoming a member of NATO and the European Union. The legislation requires Ukraine to submit a request for EU membership and receive a NATO membership action plan no later than 2023. European Council President Donald Tusk attended the signing ceremony at the Rada.

The United States:

On December 25, 1991, the United States officially recognized Ukraine's independence. As a result of negotiations with the U.S., Russia, and the UK in 1994, Ukraine agreed to renounce its nuclear weapons, which constituted the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, in return for aid and an agreement protecting its sovereignty.

The U.S. supported the results of the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. President Yushchenko's visit to the U.S. in April 2005 signaled a major breakthrough in bilateral relations. President Yushchenko declared Ukraine's graduation from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment a top priority.

In March 2016, President Petro Poroshenko visited Washington for a nuclear summit and met with President Barack Obama and other U.S. leaders. In June 2016, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden announced a commitment of \$220 million in new assistance to support economic, political, and energy reforms.

On January 16, 2017, in one of his last official acts, Vice President Joe Biden met Ukraine's president and called on the Trump administration to retain Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia.

In May 2017 Vice President Mike Pence met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin in Washington. Pence issued a statement that stressed U.S. support for Ukraine's "territorial integrity" while urging Kyiv to "peacefully resolve the conflict" with Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

In June 2017, President Donald Trump met with President Poroshenko amid intensifying questions over whether his administration would step in to protect partners in the face of Russian aggression. The White House meeting began shortly after the Trump administration sanctioned two Russian officials and three dozen other individuals and companies over Russian activities in Ukraine. In January 2018, the United States imposed new economic sanctions on a further 21 people and nine companies.

In July 2018, the U.S. State Department released the *Crimea Declaration*, which reaffirmed the United States' refusal to recognize Russia's annexation of the peninsula.

In March 2019, the United States, EU, and Canada took coordinated action to impose sanctions on individuals who orchestrated the November 2018 attack on Ukrainian naval vessels near the Kerch Strait.

Before the U.S.-hosted NATO summit in Washington in April 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on NATO member states to support Ukraine. In March 26 testimony to the House Foreign Relations Committee, Pompeo also outlined his hope for additional measures against Russia.

On September 24, 2019, the United States House of Representatives initiated an impeachment inquiry against incumbent U.S. president Donald Trump in the wake of scandal surrounding a phone conversation that Trump had with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on July 25. On August 12, 2019, an anonymous whistleblower submitted a complaint to U.S. Inspector General Michael Atkinson

that stated that Trump had allegedly attempted to pressure Zelensky into launching an investigation on former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, during the phone call.

Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States has stayed committed to the defense of Ukrainian sovereignty as a free and democratic state. In December 2022, President Zelenskyy visited President Biden and spoke at a joint session of Congress. In February 2023, President Biden made an unannounced visit to Kyiv to meet with President Zelensky and demonstrate the United States’ unwavering commitment to Ukraine. The United States has given over 76.8 billion dollars in aid as of February 24, 2023.

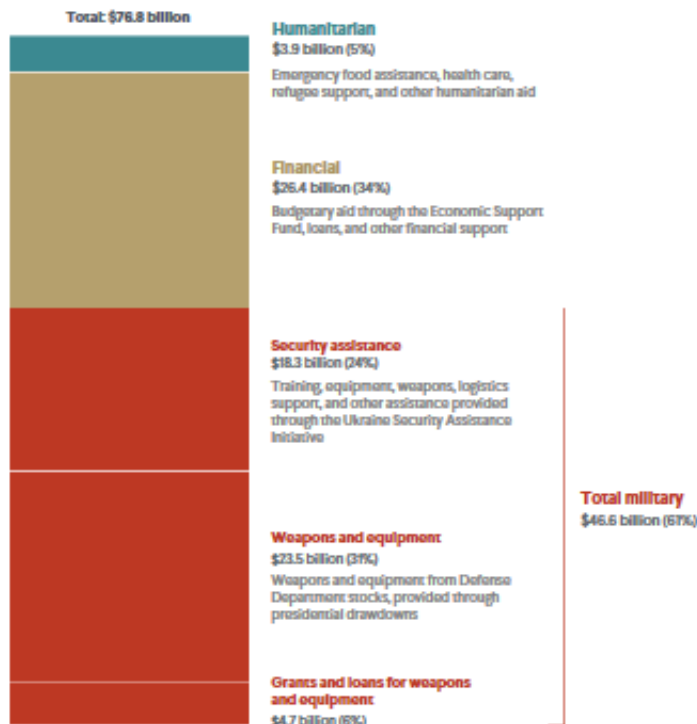
Relations with Israel

Ukraine and Israel established bilateral relations in 1992. Israel opened an embassy in Kyiv in 1993; Ukraine opened its Tel Aviv embassy in 1992. Israeli cultural centers are active in Kyiv and several other Ukrainian cities.

In 2005, Ukraine and Israel signed an economic agreement promoting trade cooperation. Ukraine sided with Israel during a UN Human Rights Council vote to condemn “Israeli human rights violations in Lebanon” in August 2006, and to investigate Israel’s conduct during the war. Ukraine supported Israel on the issue of the 2009 UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (the “Goldstone Report”), voting against the report.

Just How Much Aid Has the U.S. Sent to Ukraine?

Bilateral aid to Ukraine between January 24, 2022, and February 24, 2023



A breakdown of the aid given to Ukraine by the United States.

In 2010, President Yanukovich and President Shimon Peres signed a bilateral free trade agreement. In February 2011, Ukraine and Israel canceled visa requirements for citizens traveling to each country. In June 2011, Israel and Ukraine signed a bilateral agreement establishing an Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. Israel’s and Ukraine’s foreign ministers have made frequent bilateral visits.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko paid a state visit to Israel in December 2015, where he met with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and addressed the Knesset.

In December 2016, Ukraine voted for a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlements.

Shortly after that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu cancelled the planned visit of Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman to Israel due to Ukraine's vote. In a statement defending the vote, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry described the resolution as "balanced," and said its "yes" vote should not affect ties.

In May 2017 Prime Minister Netanyahu met with Prime Minister Groysman in Jerusalem. Netanyahu described the premier's visit and the mending of ties between Jerusalem and Kyiv as a "moment of courageous friendship."

In January 2019, Israel and Ukraine signed a free trade agreement after more than fifteen years of negotiation. With this agreement, trade between the two countries is expected to increase to over \$1 billion in the next five years.

On March 20, 2022, President Zelenskyy addressed the Knesset urging greater support from the State of Israel in defending Ukraine from Russia's invasion.

In February 2023, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen met with President Zelensky to demonstrate Israel's support of Ukraine and discuss their mutual enemy of Iran. Cohen also offered a \$200 million loan guarantee to build civilian infrastructure, support healthcare needs, and create an airstrike warning system for Ukraine. In the same month, Israel signed the UN resolution to demand that Russia stops their invasion of Ukraine. The resolution passed 141-7.

In March 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu led a meeting with his Minister of Defense, Foreign Minister, National Security Adviser, Mossad chief, IDF Chief of Staff, Foreign Ministry Director-General, and military secretary to review Israel's policy on Ukraine. The leaders debated providing military aid to Ukraine and potential use of Israeli air defense systems.

In April 2023, Israel announced that they will begin their pilot program for the early warning system in Kyiv in May 2023.

Jewish Communal Life

The first Jewish communities on the territory of modern Ukraine emerged in Greek and Roman-ruled city-states along the Black Sea coast and in Crimea. During the early Middle Ages, the Khazars (Turkic nomads from Central Asia) conquered and dominated much of modern Ukraine and southern Russia. Many converted to Judaism in the 8th century to better resist neighboring Christian and Muslim threats; their conversion accelerated Jewish settlement in the region, including in Kyiv. These early Jewish communities were destroyed during the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

In subsequent centuries, Jews returned to Ukraine from Western and Central Europe, especially from Germany and Poland. Jews became successful traders as well as adjuncts to the Polish landowning aristocracy. However, this alliance generated strong hostility from the Ukrainian peasantry. Approximately

100,000 Jews were massacred during a 1648-49 popular revolt, led by Cossack Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who is still regarded today as a Ukrainian national hero, against the Polish aristocracy. Smaller-scale anti-Jewish and anti-Polish riots and massacres were orchestrated in the 18th century by the Haidamaks (bands of peasant serfs and Cossacks).

Despite periodic anti-Jewish pogroms, Ukraine's Jewish population grew to over two million by 1899. As a result of the tsarist policy of limiting Jewish residence to the Pale of Settlement, most Jews lived in western Ukraine. Continued anti-Jewish violence and tsarist "Russification" programs led hundreds of thousands of Jews to emigrate from Ukraine between 1880 and 1913, mostly to the United States. During Russia's 1918-21 Civil War, tens of thousands of Jews were killed by various armies, militias, and insurgents. Ukrainian nationalist forces during this period have been accused of responsibility for the most devastating pogroms, and their activities led many Jews to join the Red Army and the Communist Party, which officially opposed anti-Semitism.

Ukrainian Jewish life experienced a remarkable revival during the late 1980s and after independence in 1991. The Jewish community is represented by several umbrella organizations based in Kyiv. The Association of Jewish Communities and Organizations of Ukraine (VAAD), founded in 1991, unites more than 260 Jewish organizations that address communal, charitable, educational, cultural, and political issues and provide emigration assistance. The Jewish Council of Ukraine promotes Yiddish culture and Holocaust memorial activities. The Jewish Foundation for Ukraine was created in 1997 to fund communal and educational projects. The Union of Jewish Religious Communities of Ukraine unites more than 70 Jewish organizations, and the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress encompasses 120 organizations.

In 1998, the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine (JCU) umbrella organization was founded, uniting the VAAD, the Jewish Council of Ukraine, the Union of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine and the Kyiv Municipal Jewish Community.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC/"Joint") funds welfare, cultural, and educational projects across Ukraine. To address the needs of elderly Jews, who comprise approximately 50% of the Jewish population in Ukraine, JDC and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany have built up a network of "Hesed" centers, which supply daily hot meals, medical assistance, and other social services.

An array of religious groups have emerged under the sponsorship of international religious organizations. In addition to the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations under Chabad-Lubavitch has built an extensive programmatic network. Chabad has a rich history in Ukraine and has been active in coordinating Jewish community efforts with the national and local governments.

U.S.-born Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich (a member of the Karlin-Stoliner movement) has served as Chief Rabbi of Ukraine and Kyiv since 1992 and is a widely recognized leader of Ukraine's post-Soviet Jewish renaissance. Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny has served as Chief Progressive Rabbi of Kyiv and of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Ukraine since 1999. The World Union operates congregations in over 20 cities of Ukraine and runs leadership seminars and holiday and summer programs.

The Masorti (Conservative) movement runs a Sunday school and a youth group in Kyiv; it operates a day school in Chernovtsy and sponsors Sunday schools, youth activities, and summer camps in several other cities, predominantly in western and southwestern Ukraine.

In September 2005, Rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman was elected one of the Chief Rabbis of Ukraine by the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress and the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, the two secular Jewish organizations backed and headed by Ukrainian-Jewish media magnate Vadim Rabinovich. In 2008, billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky replaced Rabinovich as the president of the United Jewish Communities of Ukraine.

The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI/ "Sochnut") sponsors a wide range of programs connected to Israel, aliyah, and Jewish life. JAFI funds summer camps and trips to Israel. The Orthodox Union has built a Torah community-learning center in Kharkiv.

Israeli and American organizations (including Hillel, Beitar, Kidma and Aish HaTorah) have initiated numerous student and youth programs. Local Jewish groups have established facilities in Dnipro, Odesa, Zhytomyr, and Korosten for homeless Jewish children, with support from World Jewish Relief and JDC. An orphanage is maintained under the auspices of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities of Karlin-Stolin. Project Keshet runs women's leadership training programs throughout Ukraine, which build multi-ethnic coalitions to address domestic violence, trafficking, and women's health concerns.

For several years, NCSEJ has helped in pairing Ukrainian Jewish communities with American Jewish communities through its Kehilla Projects and Operation Lifeline, which assist in providing educational, medical, and other social service programs. Models of these Kehilla partnerships include Baltimore-Odesa, Chicago-Kyiv, MetroWest (NJ)-Cherkasy, and Boston-Dnipro; similar projects were successful in other Ukrainian cities.



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and other senior government and community leaders place candles at the Babyn Yar Memorial on September 29, 2016. (Shahar Azran)

In September 2016, the Ukrainian government marked the 75th anniversary of the Holocaust-era massacres at the Babyn Yar ravine with a three-day series of commemorative events in Kyiv. Event participants included President Poroshenko, Prime Minister Groysman, Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko, and Jewish organization representatives from across the globe, including a delegation of over 20 NCSEJ leaders.

During the 75th commemorative event, the government announced plans to build a museum and research center at Babyn Yar. In August 2017, The Culture Ministry of Ukraine, the National Historical Memorial Reserve,

and the International Memorial Foundation “Babyn Yar” signed a memorandum on the joint establishment of the Babyn Yar State Museum. The state allocated funds for restoring a building for the future museum.

During the 80th anniversary commemorating the Babyn Yar Massacre, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Israeli President Isaac Herzog, and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered remarks at the official ceremony. The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, together with the government of Ukraine, launched a large-scale project to educate and commemorate the Holocaust and the massacre at the Babyn Yar site.

Other educational programs and scholarly institutes have expanded significantly in the past decade. Ukrainian Jewish community organizations run 15-day schools and 11 kindergartens, 80 Sunday schools, eight yeshivas and an estimated 70 Hebrew *ulpanim*. The International Solomon University, with branches in Kyiv and Kharkiv, offers a program in Judaic studies.

Secular Jewish day schools operate in several Ukrainian cities under the supervision of World ORT, including the Technology Lyceum in Kyiv, the ORT Technology Centres in Odessa and in Dnipro, and the ICT Studio in Kharkiv, in cooperation with JDC. ORT has also contributed computer equipment and curricula to several other schools and community centers.

The Center for Jewish Education in Ukraine (CJEU), under the sponsorship of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, trains Jewish teachers for day schools, conducts teacher-training workshops on the Holocaust, and organizes Sunday schools. The Beit Chana Jewish Women’s Pedagogical Institute in Dnipro, established by the Boston Jewish community, trains teachers for work in Jewish schools and operates a special-needs center for children.

Several Jewish-related research centers operate in Ukraine. JDC supports the Tkuma Scientific-Educational Center, an institution for Holocaust studies. The Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies, affiliated with the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, operates in Kyiv. The Academy of Sciences maintains an archive of Jewish manuscripts and books in its Vernadsky Library. The Institute for Jewish Studies, a research institute in Kyiv, receives support from several local and international Jewish organizations for its projects, publications, and annual conferences. It also prepares a regular analysis of anti-Semitic trends.

In addition to scholarly Jewish publications, ten Jewish newspapers are published in Kyiv, four of which have national circulations of 10-15,000. Nearly twenty smaller Jewish newspapers are published in other Ukrainian cities. Several professional Jewish theaters operate in Kyiv.

The Ukrainian city of Uman annually hosts tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims from around the world for celebration of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Before February 24, 2022, Ukraine’s Jewish community comprised of approximately 300,000 people and more than 290 organizations in 100 towns and cities. Kyiv’s Jewish community, estimated at 100,000, was the largest, followed closely by Odesa (60,000-70,000), Dnipro (60,000), Kharkiv (50,000), and Donetsk (18,000). However, the war-time exodus of Ukrainian Jews has reduced the overall Jewish population. The

number of Jews in Ukraine is currently unclear and is volatile due to the massive humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's invasion.

Community Concerns and Anti-Semitism

Restitution:

Restitution of Jewish communal property confiscated during the Holocaust and the Soviet era is an issue of concern for the Ukrainian Jewish community. Although a small number of synagogues have been returned to the Ukrainian Jewish community, the pace has been slow; hundreds of synagogues and community buildings in Ukraine could potentially be restituted. Many isolated and poor communities seek to recover their buildings, which could once again house synagogues, schools, and community centers.

According to the Ukrainian Jewish community, approximately 40 synagogue buildings have been returned out of the nearly 2,000 surviving communal properties confiscated during the 20th century. Some communities have been able to regain property through Ukraine's court system. In a few cases, newer buildings have been provided to religious communities, in place of the original synagogues to which they lay claim.

Instances of restitution include the rededication of a monument in Crimea in 1999 to the 500 Jewish soldiers who died during the Crimean War; return of the Central (Brodsky) Synagogue in Kyiv to the local Jewish community in 1997, and its restoration; designation of the Babi Yar Holocaust site as a state-protected historical site in 2007; and transfer of Torah scrolls and holy texts from government archives to Jewish communities in 2009.

However, many restitution claims remain outstanding. According to a 1992 decree, only registered religious organizations are entitled to seek restitution of property confiscated by the Soviet regime, and only for those buildings and objects considered necessary for religious worship. The law requiring local authorities to return property to religious communities before 1998, however, was never fully implemented. Only 10% of Jewish properties have been returned to their original owners. Proposed amendments to the current law would expand the properties eligible for restitution to include religious schools and administrative buildings.

Ukraine has no official law for the restitution of confiscated communal or private property. Authorities have made efforts, however, to work with the Jewish community and State Committee on Archives to register and return all Torahs in the country to former owners or synagogues.

Cemetery Preservation:

Like restitution, preservation of Jewish cemeteries is another issue of concern. While cemeteries should fall within the parameters of the government decree on restitution of religious property, they have frequently been distributed to private owners, resulting in the desecration and destruction of burial sites and memorials. Even in those cases where conflicts over ownership of burial sites do not arise, Jewish communities frequently do not have the resources to restore old cemeteries.

An issue that remains to be addressed is inadequate security of Ukraine's Jewish sites. Anti-Semitic vandalism has prompted the need for the government to address insufficient protection by increasing security and vigorously prosecuting hate crimes.

Instances of disregard for Jewish sites have created tensions between the Jewish community and the government. For example, construction of a market in the 1990s on the site of an old Jewish cemetery in Lviv angered Jews in Ukraine and abroad. Following protests in the U.S. and Ukraine, President Kuchma imposed a moratorium on the privatization of burial sites. This halted further construction on the marketplace but did not mandate its dismantling. On September 4, 2016, the first phase of the Space of Synagogues project in the western city of Lviv was opened to the public. It includes conservation of the remains of the Golden Rose synagogue, marking the foundations of the Jewish House of Learning (Beth Hamidrash) and the Perpetuation memorial installation.

Crosses erected at several Jewish cemeteries and World War II killing sites have stirred interethnic and religious quarrels. Disputes continue over the presence of a cross in the old Jewish cemetery near Babi Yar, and over the erection of crosses in the restored Jewish cemetery (reopened as a memorial park) in the Lviv oblast town of Stryi Sambir. In March 2017, NCSEJ raised concerns over the placement of a cross in a historic Jewish cemetery in Kolomyia by the members of the Right Sector, Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists.

The U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad has been active in addressing issues of restoration and preservation. The Commission and Ukrainian government signed an agreement in 1994 to establish frameworks for the protection and preservation of cultural sites.

In 2018 and 2019, however, local Jewish communities have reported numerous cemetery desecrations throughout the country. These include anti-Semitic graffiti and physical damage to memorials.

In 2018, there were also cases of grave diggers vandalizing Jewish cemeteries in the hope of finding valuables. In March 2019, grave robbers desecrated a mass grave of Holocaust victims in Rafliivka.

Donbas Conflict:

The humanitarian crisis in eastern and southern Ukraine beginning in 2014 has taken a heavy toll on Jewish communities. Included in the thousands that have left and continue to leave the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are many Jews. They urgently require assistance with relocation, housing, food, and meeting other basic needs.

Some, including many elderly Jews, have stayed behind and urgently need assistance. An estimated 3,000 Jews remain in the city of Donetsk itself, while around 12,000 have immigrated since the start of the conflict. These Jewish communities rely almost fully on support from international and local charity organizations. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Jewish Agency for Israel, and other organizations have significantly increased their assistance to Ukraine's Jews.

Jewish communities outside of the war-torn regions continue their regular programs and activities and are stepping up efforts to support Jewish refugees from the conflict areas. However, funding for programming has been reduced. Lack of jobs and the economic crisis have also negatively affected Jewish communities throughout Ukraine.

Aliyah from Ukraine has grown. Since the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, approximately 8,000 Ukrainian Jews have immigrated to Israel, many with the help of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. With the stabilization of the armed conflict, the rate of Jewish emigration in 2016 reached approximately 5,700. In 2017 and 2018, 4,300 and 4,000 Ukrainian Jews made aliyah, respectively.

As of May 25, 2022, there have been 10,019 immigrants to Israel from Ukraine since the start of Russia's invasion.

Anti-Semitism:

Anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in the history of Ukraine. The massacres of 1648-49 resulted in deaths of 100,000 Jews. During the pogroms of 1881-82, thousands of Jews throughout Ukraine were massacred. The pogroms of 1919-1920 resulted in the deaths of more than 100,000 Jews, and during World War II, the Nazis and their Ukrainian collaborators exterminated hundreds of thousands of Jews.

Government-sponsored anti-Semitism prevailed in the post-war years and continued to thrive throughout the Soviet era, but in the years following independence, Ukraine's government ceased its anti-Jewish rhetoric and reached out to Jewish communities. Today, there is no official state-sponsored anti-Semitism.

Despite government efforts to fight anti-Semitism in the post-independence years, anti-Semitic activity has reappeared in Ukrainian society. Throughout the 1990s, anti-Semitic incidents in Ukraine included verbal and physical harassment of Jewish students, dissemination of anti-Semitic literature, vandalism, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and arson attacks on synagogues. Anti-Semitism was often prevalent during election campaigns, particularly anti-Semitic graffiti and rhetoric fostered by ultra-nationalist extremists.

Several relatively small but active nationalist parties and movements have emerged, particularly the Ukrainian National Assembly, Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Ukrainian Social National Party, Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, and others, which support the idea of "Ukraine for Ukrainians" and are hostile to foreigners. Some are openly anti-Semitic.

Throughout the 2000s, acts of anti-Semitic vandalism and violence occurred across Ukraine. Manifestations of anti-Semitism included an assault on a group of Orthodox Jewish adults and youths in Simferopol in 2005, attacks on synagogues in Ivano-Frankovsk, Kyiv, and Zaporozhye in 2006 and 2007, several attacks on yeshiva students, desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in Berdychiv and Odessa in 2006 and 2007, and an attack on a Jewish orphanage in Zhytomyr in 2006. Holocaust memorials were vandalized in Berdychiv, Aleksandria,

Kalush and Lutsk. In 2008, Rabbi Dov-Ber Baitman, a teacher at the Jewish educational center Shiurey Torah in Dnipropetrovsk, was assaulted and severely beaten.

There have been numerous accounts of anti-Semitic statements and remarks made publically by pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Pro-Russian separatist leaders Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky, in anti-Semitic statements in February 2015, branded the Ukrainian government as 'pathetic Jews'. In June 2015, Plotnitsky said that Jews were responsible for the Maidan revolution.

Jewish community leaders have expressed concerns over the honoring of figures such as Olena Teliha, a Ukrainian nationalist writer and one of the leaders of OUN. In July 2016, Moscow Avenue in Kyiv was renamed after Stepan Bandera, the leader of the militant nationalist movement in the 1930-1940s, who were widely believed to be responsible for lethal violence against Jews and Poles. In May 2017, the Kyiv city council passed legislation to rename one of the city's main streets after Roman Shukhevych, a Ukrainian nationalist and Nazi officer who commanded a radical militia also complicit in the murder of Jews during World War II.

In a widely publicized post on his official Facebook page and on Twitter in May 2018, President Poroshenko wrote: "I strongly condemn any manifestations of intolerance and anti-Semitism. I consider as unacceptable any attempts to bring these shameful things in Ukraine, as it happened recently during the actions in Lviv and Odesa. Ukrainian authorities will resolutely respond to any attempts to sow hostility in our society. The reaction of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies to such unlawful actions will be immediate. Ukraine is not a place for discrimination and intolerance on any ground, since respect for life and dignity of every person is the highest value for the Ukrainian state," Poroshenko stated.

During President Zelensky's September 2021 visit to Washington, D.C., he delivered a speech at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Holocaust remembrance and education and condemned any manifestation of antisemitism, xenophobia, and intolerance in Ukraine.

In 2021 and 2022, the Rada (parliament) passed legislation outlining the criminal charges that could result from acts of antisemitism. The legislation defined antisemitism based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism.

Selected Anti-Semitic Incidents in 2021:

- In Late April, Hundreds of Ukrainians attended marches celebrating Nazi SS soldiers, including the first such event in Kyiv. The so-called Embroidery March took place in the capital on April 28, the 78th anniversary of the establishment of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, also known as the 1st Galician. It was a force set up under German occupation auspices comprised of ethnic Ukrainian and German volunteers and conscripts. The marchers held banners displaying the unit's symbol. The Kyiv march by about 300 people was an import from the western city of Lviv, which for several years has hosted such events. A day earlier, hundreds attended a larger Embroidery March there.
- On June 1, two separate anti-Semitic incidents occurred in Ukraine. Bullet holes were found in a synagogue and grave robbers allegedly raided a Holocaust-era mass grave, exposing and scattering human remains. The aftermath of a shooting at the synagogue of Kremenchuk, a city located 130 miles

southeast of Kyiv, was discovered in May 2021 but reported by the local Jewish community on early June. The delay was planned “in order to prevent panic in the Jewish community of the city,” the news site Jewish.ru reported, quoting a spokesperson for the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, a communal interest group. No one was hurt in the incident. The grave desecration happened in the village of Pikov, located 110 miles southwest of Kyiv, according to Eduard Dolinsky, the director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, another communal interest group.

- On August 11, the grave of a daughter of the Bratslav movement’s founder, Rabbi Nachman, was razed and desecrated with pig heads. The desecration of Sarah’s grave in Kremenchuk, Ukraine is the fifth such act since 2013 and the most serious, the Jewish.ru website reported. In 2015, the grave from 1831 in the central Ukraine city was set ablaze and defaced with swastikas.

In May 2023, the Anti-Defamation League released their updated antisemitism index called the “Global 100.” The document showed that antisemitism dropped from 46% in 2019 to 29% in 2023. The ADL proposed that this dramatic change was caused by the wide-spread popularity of Jewish President Zelensky. Ukraine’s antisemitism numbers are still 3% higher than Russia, but the decline can spell new hope for Ukrainian Jews.