

**Jewish Life in FSU: an Overview**

*monthly report*

*October 2019*

*After the busy summer months and September, October turned out to be relatively calm and not rich in events in Jewish life.*

**Relations with Israel**

● Russia continued to intensify criticism of Israel’s actions against terrorist infrastructure in Syria.

On **October 3**, the Russian state news agency issued a statement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. He claims that Israeli attacks on Syria destabilize the situation. “With regard to Israel’s arbitrary air strikes on Syrian territory, we have never concealed a negative attitude towards such actions, which further destabilize the situation, which can lead to escalation. A situation could getting out of control,” the Russian Foreign Minister said.

(https://ria.ru/20191003/1559395970.html)

In turn, Russia's position is being discussed with concern in Israel. We are talking not only about the diplomatic aspect of relations, but also about the military-technological issues. At the end of October, it became known that the Syrian army handed over to Russia a missile of the latest Israeli air defense system “David's Sling”, which has felled on Syrian territory without exploding. According to unofficial data, the State of Israel and the United States have asked Russian Federation to return the rocket to Israel, but the Kremlin refused.

(https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/248393/)

Vladimir Putin has refused to Benjamin Netanyahu in another issue discussed during a telephone conversation on **October 21** also. Israeli Prime Minister asked to consider the possibility of mecry, commutation of punishment, or at least improve the conditions of Israeli Israeli Naama Issahar. She flew from India in transit through Moscow, and was detained at the airport and sentenced to 7.5 years in prison, allegedly for drug smuggling.

(https://ria.ru/20191021/1560034488.html)

**Community life**

● On **October 8**, the annual awarding of the “Arevim” badge of honor for achievements in Jewish community life was held in St. Petersburg. This year, the Man of the Year award for the Jewish community of St. Petersburg was received by Talya Tolochinskaya, the head of the Jewish boarding school for girls, and Isaac Kushnir, collector, creator of the exhibition of heritage of a painter Anatoly Kaplan in the Synagogue.

(https://news.jeps.ru/novosti/czeremoniya-arevim-i-otkryitie-memorialnoj-doski-v-i-kogana-2019.html)

**Restitution**

● On **October 22**, the property committee of the Kyiv City Council considered the issue of the return of the former synagogue in Kyiv’s Goloseevsky District to the Jewish Religious Community “Chabad Lubavich” to Goloseevsky Prospekt, No. 22 / 1A. The commission decided to recommend the City Council to transfer the building to the community for free rental for a period of 49 years. It is planned that deputies of the City Council will vote for this decision at the next plenary session in early 2020.

(http://Kyivvlast.com.ua/project/resources/attachments/0Tk2DPBy.pdf)

The synagogue was opened in 1878 thanks to the contribution of the merchant Itsko-Yankel Barshipolsky. In 1925, the synagogue was closed, the Stalin (Demievsky) district club opened in the building, then the Frunze Transport Club operated in it.

(https://kmr.gov.ua/sites/default/files/4298\_05-dodatok-1.pdf)

In the 1990s, the question was raised about transferring the building to the Jewish Council of Ukraine, however, the organization was not able to maintain the building, and it was returned to state ownership. Since 2003, the Children's Art Center of the Goloseevsky District operates in the building.

**●** During October, an understanding of a possible way out from the difficult conflict situation that arose in the Bila Tserkva (Kyiv region) around the building of the Great Choral Synagogue, which now houses the Technological and Economic College of the Belotserkov National Agrarian University (BNAU), was reached. The city authorities and the rector’s administration of the BNAU reached an understanding about the possibility of moving the college to another building and about the transfer of the former synagogue building to the local Jewish community.

(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2698666736851253&set=a.769152246469388)

In recent months, the issue has been quite acute in connection with the needs for reconstruction of the building, which is in disrepair. The administration of the BNAU began repair work that changes the historical appearance of the building. Meanwhile, the building has the status of a monument of architecture. Repair work was previously suspended by decision of the city authorities.

(https://hmarochos.Kyiv.ua/2019/07/26/u-bilij-tserkvi-pid-chas-remontu-zbyly-ozdoblennya-fasadu-synagogy-hih-stolittya-foto/)

**Manifestations of Antisemitism**

● On **October 4**, it became known about the arrest in Kyiv of a suspect in the commission of three acts of anti-Semitic vandalism committed earlier against the memorials to the victims of the Holocaust in the Kherson and Kirovograd regions.

The official report says that he turned out to be “one of the representatives of the artistic circles of Kyiv [sic] who is a fanatical supporter of swastikas and runes that were used by the Nazis.”

During a search in his private house in Kyiv, home-made Nazi and neopagan symbols were found with which he decorated the premises, the facade of the building, a fence and even children's toys. In particular, he made dozens of metal swastikas by his own hands in his workshop. In addition, maps of the Kirovograd and Nikolaev regions, notes with marks of objects for committing acts of vandalism, spray paints of gray and black colors that completely coincide with those that defiled the memorial in Golovanevsk of the Kirovograd region were found. An electric saw was also seized. Using it, according to investigators, the attacker cut out swastikas on the monuments.

The detainee was informed of the suspicion of committing crimes under Part 1 of Art. 161 (deliberate actions aimed at inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred and hatred, to humiliate national honor and dignity) and part 3 of article 297 (abuse of the grave, or another burial place) of the Criminal Code.

(https://ssu.gov.ua/ua/news/1/category/2/view/6572#.3vMLdmXc.dpbs)

**●** On **October 5**, it became known that vandals desecrated a recently erected monument to Khaim Frenkel, a Jewish entrepreneur and philanthropist of the early 20th century, in the city of Šiauliai (Lithuania).

(http://jewseurasia.org/page6/news65023.html)

**●** On **October 11**, in Uman (Cherkasy region, Ukraine), in the area where the ​​Hasidic pilgrims who come from all over the world to celebrate Rosh Hashanah (the new year according to the Jewish religious calendar) stay, graffiti appeared, which was perceived by the public as neo-Nazi. It depicted a man with guessing portrait features of Adolf Hitler, with a blood stained mouth. The painted man's mouth was stained with red paint, obviously symbolizing blood. He held a brush in his hand with traces of red paint. “Ruf leichtt verlieren, schwer zu verdienen...” (“Reputation is easy to lose, hard to earn” in German) was written next to the image in red letters.

Graffiti attracted the attention of the Ambassador of the State of Israel to Ukraine Joel Lyon. On his Twitter account, he called for the conviction of those responsible and their prosecution.

(https://twitter.com/ambassadorlion/status/1182635838682947585)

On the same day, the National Police of the Cherkasy region detained the alleged author of graffiti. He is charged with making and distributing Nazi symbols and propaganda of totalitarian regimes.

Utility workers painted graffiti on the inscription, the face of Adolf Hitler and Nazi symbols.

(http://dom.co.il/news/view/10419)

**●** On the afternoon of **October 14**, something like an anti-Semitic performance happened at the entrance to the Brodsky synagogue in Kyiv.

About ten people stood at the entrance to the synagogue, showing posters and a doll whose “face” was a leaflet on which was printed a photograph of businessman Igor Kolomoisky, president of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine. One of the posters read “SOS! He is back". Some of the demonstrators made a gesture, raising their right hand in a Nazi salute. The doll was doused with red paint and left on the steps at the entrance to the synagogue, after which they quickly disappeared.

The performance lasted no more than two minutes. Police arrived 10 minutes after the incident. There were no detainees.

The incident attracted the attention of the Israeli embassy in Ukraine.

(https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/political/619377.html)

October 14 is an official Defender of the Fatherland Day in Ukraine. On this day in Kyiv the March against Surrender took place – a large opposition rally dedicated to the protest against the intention of the country's leadership to withdraw the armed forces from the settlements of several aries along the contact line in the Donbass region. In addition, the same day is considered the day of the creation of the Ukrainian rebel army which is traditionally celebrated by nationalists. However, it is difficult to say whether there was any connection between the performance near the synagogue and the March. The inscription on the poster was in Russian, which is hardly typical of Ukrainian radical nationalist activists.

**Preservation of historical heritage**

**●** On **October 24**, in the Bila Tserkva, the construction of a hostel for military personnel was suspended, which had begun earlier by order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine at the territory of the old Jewish cemetery. The cemetery was destroyed totally during the Soviet period. During the work, human remains were discovered. A meeting of the working group was held in the Belotserkovsky City Council to work out a solution to the issue.

(https://www.poglyad.tv/u-bilij-tserkvi-planuyut-perepohovaty-znajdeni-ostanky-z-yevrejskyh-pohovan/)

It was decided to suspend construction for the time necessary to detect and rebury the human remains. However, while the suspension of work occurred on the basis of an oral order. The Vaad of Ukraine is working to obtain a written order from the Minister of Defense on the cessation of all types of work at the facility.

(https://www.facebook.com/jewishnewsua/posts/2575922325786864?\_\_tn\_\_=-R)

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