

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002545/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Diana Iovanovici Șoșoacă (NI)
(25 June 2025)

Subject: Situation in Cernăuți (Chernivtsi), Ukraine

On Tuesday 17 June 2025, 20 young Ukrainians, some with their faces covered, physically assaulted several Romanian priests in Cernăuți Cathedral. One of the attackers had originally entered the church in a wheelchair, only to participate in the violent attack subsequently. According to reports, Father Pavel Pavlenko, one of the priests, who has eight children, was taken to A&E, while others also suffered serious injuries such as broken ribs, head wounds and kidney damage. The attackers then barricaded themselves in the cathedral and occasioned major damage. After the incident, members of the Romanian community — including priests — gathered peacefully to protest, but they were brutally dispersed, physically assaulted and exposed to tear gas.

The Priests were assaulted, but Romanians have been discriminated against for years. They are not allowed to speak Romanian or to worship freely, and Romanian Orthodox churches have been shut down.

Thus far, no official statement has been issued in response to what happened in Cernăuți.

1. What is the Commission's official stance on this incident?
2. Can events such as this lead to Ukraine's accession to the EU being put on hold until crimes against minorities, and in particular the Romanian minority, cease and respect for human rights in Ukraine is restored?

Submitted: 25.6.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 August 2025)

The European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission are aware of the reports on the violent events in Chernivtsi (Ukraine), related to the change of affiliation of one of the parishes, including the faithful belonging to the Romanian national minority. According to publicly available information, criminal investigations related to violent acts perpetrated on this occasion have been launched.

The Constitution of Ukraine, as well as related legislation, provides for the right to freedom of religion and belief, as stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights ⁽¹⁾, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ⁽²⁾ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ⁽³⁾.

In the context of assessing the implementation of Ukraine's law 'On the protection of the constitutional order in the field of activities of religious organisations' ⁽⁴⁾, the EEAS and Commission pay close attention to the Guidelines for Review of Legislation pertaining to Religion or Belief ⁽⁵⁾, the Guidelines on the legal personality of Religious or Belief Communities ⁽⁶⁾, prepared jointly by the Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), and the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief ⁽⁷⁾.

In accordance with its foundational treaties, the EU promotes human rights within and beyond its borders. The Treaty on European Union ⁽⁸⁾ particularly highlights the importance of the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Human rights, including minority rights, are included in the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the EU and part of the regular dialogue between the EU and Ukraine in the context of Ukraine's for accession to the EU.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/convention_eng.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ccpr.pdf>.

⁽⁴⁾ Law No 3894-IX of 20 August 2024.

⁽⁵⁾ [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL\(2004\)061-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL(2004)061-e).

⁽⁶⁾ [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2014\)023-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2014)023-e).

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/137585.pdf>.

⁽⁸⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.