



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Religious Freedom

Panel



Dmytro Vovk is a visiting associate professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. He also runs the Center for the Rule of Law and Religion Studies at Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in Ukraine and teaches law at Ukrainian Catholic University. Vovk has been a religious freedom expert for several international and European institutions, as well as for the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian State Agency for Ethnic Policies and Freedom of Conscience. Since 2019, Vovk has been a member of the OSCE/ODIHR Expert Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief. He co-edited with Elizabeth A. Clark the volume *Religion During the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict* (Routledge 2019). Vovk also edits the ICLRS blog *Talk About: Law and Religion*.



Rachel Denber is the Deputy Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division, specializing in countries of the former Soviet Union. Previously, Denber directed Human Rights Watch's Moscow office and did field research and advocacy in Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Estonia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. She has authored reports on a wide range of human rights issues throughout the region. Denber earned a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in international relations and a master's degree in political science from Columbia University, where she studied at the Harriman Institute. She speaks Russian and French.



Dennis Christensen is a former religious prisoner of conscience and the first Jehovah's Witness to be convicted and imprisoned in Russia after its Supreme Court in 2017 labeled Jehovah's Witnesses "extremist" and banned their activities. Christensen was arrested in May 2017 during a worship service and sentenced to six years in prison for "organizing the activities of an extremist organization." On May 24, 2022, Christensen was released after serving his sentence and subsequently deported to his homeland, Denmark.



Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt is the Chief Rabbi and President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) and exiled Chief Rabbi of Moscow. CER unites over seven hundred communal rabbis from Dublin to Khabarovsk. He heads the Moscow Rabbinical Court of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which he founded in 1989. Goldschmidt also represents the Russian Jewish community politically and has published op-eds in the international press, such as *Foreign Policy* and *The New York Times*. He has also addressed the US Senate, the EU Parliament, The Council of Europe, and The Israeli Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's "Neeman Commission," Oxford University, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Berlin Conference on anti-Semitism, and Harvard University, discussing the state of the Jewish Community in Russia and the threats of antisemitism.