

# SPIRITUAL COUNSELLING AND CARE IN HEALTH AND PRISON SERVICES:

Diverse Experiences & Practices

Editors:  
Nuri Tınaz- Ali Ayten  
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AND CARE IN HEALTH  
AND PRISON SERVICES:  
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**Değerler Eğitimi Merkezi Yayınları**  
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## **Preface**

Spiritual Counselling and Care, is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that emerged from bringing together multiple fields in social sciences like; theology, sociology, psychology and others. So as a field of research, Spiritual Counseling and Care is relatively new in Turkey, though in essence is not a novel concept. As in our tradition, it is part of one's moral commitment and responsibility to express condolences and prayer to a grieving person or family. Also, it is an obligation to visit and console patients, in the frame of family and community culture, so extending help for the ones in need of care and assistance manifest the internal codes of spiritual counselling that rooted in our culture. Today's changing social conditions and societal needs do in fact necessitate the institutionalization of the services in the field of Spiritual Counseling and Care both theoretically and practically. Therefore, as a Center for Values Education we aim to establish theoretical basis for the field of Spiritual Counseling and Care by developing a body of literature around it, since this field is of relevance to the areas of our inquiry. For about 6 years, we have organized research projects, workshops, seminars and two international conferences in this field. Indeed, during this period, the interest on the subject in the Turkish academic circles has increased, thanks to the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet)'s contributions to the studies on the subject and to the other academic endeavors that significant progress has been made in the development and institutionalization of this field, especially in its recognition as a field of profession. Thus, all the efforts put by

the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs regarding the field of Spiritual Counseling and Care, from inter-institutional cooperation to its recognition as a profession, deserve all kinds of appreciation. In this regard, as a Center for Values Education, our goal behind organizing the International Spiritual Counseling and Care Conference in 2016, was to promote the transfer of local and international academic knowledge and to encourage academic circles to produce more knowledge in this field. Given the results presented in our conference, we observed the need of our society and institutions for all kinds of knowledge and information regarding the Spiritual Counseling and Care. Therefore, in 2018 we held the Spiritual Counseling and Care Conference II with special focus on “Prison Health Care Services.” The papers presented in this conference underwent a second peer review and editing process. As a result of this process, selected papers classified into thematic sections and thus this book came into being. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to this endeavor; the authors, the referees, the editorial board, and our staff who made the layout, design, correction and proofreading. We also hope that this work will contribute to the growing literature in the field of Spiritual Counseling and Care.

Center for Values Education

## CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Preface 7

- |   |   |     |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | Integrating Spirituality into Patient Care from a Multicultural Perspective   | 9   |
|   | <i>Harold G. Koenig</i>   |     |
| 2 | Psychological Science and /or Theologies of Religiousness/ Spirituality: Use of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) in Healthcare, Hospice, and Prisons | 25  |
|   | <i>Raymond F. Paloutzian</i>  |     |
| 3 | Negotiating Religion And Spirituality In Public Healthcare And Prison Settings  | 45  |
|   | <i>Andrew Todd</i>  |     |
| 4 | Balm for the Troubled Soul - Spiritual Care and the Spiritual Transformation of Mourning Processes  | 65  |
|   | <i>Georg Wenz</i>   |     |
| 5 | Working with Religious Muslim Clients: A Dynamic, Qura'nic-Based Model of Psychotherapy   | 79  |
|   | <i>Hisham Abu-Raiya</i>   |     |
| 6 | Spirituality And Religion In The Life Of Muslim And Islamist Prisoners: Egypt And The Uk As Case Studies  | 99  |
|   | <i>Salwa El-Awa</i>   |     |
| 7 | Prison Chaplaincy and its Institutional and Legal Status in the Slovak Republic   | 129 |
|   | <i>Michaela Moravčíková</i>   |     |
| 8 | Spiritual Counseling and Guidance in Healthcare Institutions for Disabled Foreigners with Different Religious, Ethnic and Cultural Identities             | 139 |
|   | <i>Zeynep Sağır</i>   |     |

9	Legal structure and administrative functioning of the religious counselling and care system, in hospitals and prison in Romania <i>Laurentiu D. TĂNASE</i>	163
10	Muslim Chaplaincy and Spiritual Counseling in Bosnian Prisons: Case Study of Tuzla Muftiluk <i>Aid Smajić &amp; Hajrudin Baturić</i>	175
11	Imam-Chaplains In The Penitentiary System Of Ukraine <i>Brylov Denis</i>	191
12	The Concept of birr as a Theological Foundation of Pastoral Care A New Approach to Establishing Islamic Pastoral Care and Social Work <i>Mahmoud Abdallah</i>	203
13	The School of Joseph: Prisons as a Place of Transformation <i>David J. Goa</i>	219
14	Islamically Integrated Treatment of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Scrupulosity (Waswasa) in Muslim Patients <i>Hooman Keshavarzi &amp; Fahad Khan &amp; Beena Syed</i>	229
	Author Biography	253

# Imam-Chaplains in The Penitentiary System of Ukraine

*Brylov Denis\**

## 1) Prison Jamaats and Green Prisons

Active changes in the world, such as migration crisis, development of transnational networks of radical ideology (namely Al-Qaeda or “Islamic State”), slowly lead to an understanding of the role that imam-chaplains have in the state institutional system, primarily, in an army and penitentiary system. Not so long ago the researchers of radicalization noted that generally just a few jihadists were radicalized in a prison. Jerome P. Bjelopera stated that “the lack of conclusive prison-based radicalization among the jihadist terrorism plots and foiled attacks since 9/11 suggests that the threat emanating from prisons does not seem as substantial as some experts may fear” (Bjelopera 2011: 24).

Nevertheless, the situation is dramatically changing nowadays. In the post-Soviet countries, especially in Russia, so-called “prison jamaats” are actively developing, they first emerged after the First Chechen War (1994-96). As CSIS expert Denis Sokolov believes, a mass inflow of Muslims into the Russian prisons started after the launch of the Second Chechen campaign. Since then, Islam has been getting more and more popular in Russian prisons. Over recent years, it has become equal to so-called “Black Prisons” (“Black Zones” – *Chernaya Zona*)<sup>2</sup>, where informal power belongs to criminal leaders, a new term emerged, namely a “Green Prisons” (“Green Zone” – *Ze-*

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2 “Zone” being a slang term for “prison” in Russian.

*lyonaya Zona*) to describe prisons, where informal control was taken over by the Muslims (Tumanov, 2016).

Since the 2000s, natives of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan have been appearing among the convicts; they often had undergone through a special training to recruit members for radical organizations. According to the first deputy director of Federal Penitentiary Service (*Federal'naya Sluzhba Iсполneniya Nakazanii* – FSIN of Russia) Anatolii Rudoy, there are now 29 thousand convicts from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in Russian prisons; their number might increase due to labor migration (Kurilova, 2018).

Not only a weak control over labor migration but also strict reprisal policies in the states of origin towards the adherents of radical groups contributed to their entry into Russian Federation. Such persons, especially those convicted for criminal extremism (crimes of extremist subtext and terroristic nature), refused to accept the status of an “ordinary” convict, considering themselves to be “prisoners of war” (members of illegal armed units acting in the North Caucasus) or “prisoners of conscience”, convicted for their beliefs (such as “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami” members) (Sysoev 2014 : 93).

Moreover, as the director of Center for Studies of Religion and Society of Institute of Europe of Russian Academy of Sciences Roman Lunkin believes, criminalization of Islamic communities and strengthening of prison jamaats can be largely explained through the adoption on June, 25, 2002 of the federal law “On Combating Extremist Activities” (Kurilova, 2018). As a result of this law, a lot of Islamic groups were criminalized, from Said Nusri followers up to members of Tablighi Jamaat.

According to the data of FSIN of Russia, in 2013 there were 279 Islamic communities (embracing about 10,600 Muslim convicts), 51 mosques and 228 prayer rooms (musallas); more than 85 Muslim courses on Traditional Islam were organized for convicts, there are more than 7,800 students. A growth in the number of convicts, propagating extremist ideologies, is also to observe, at about 40% annually (Chislo propovednikov... 2013).

The situation with the prison jamaats got substantially worse, as the “Islamic state” terrorist organization emerged and its adherents started to get into prisons. It should be taken into consideration, that it was the post-Soviet countries, especially Russia, that became the source for the “IS” recruits. Recruitment networks of the “IS” militants within Russian prisons contributed

heavily to it. Particularly, an investigation into the FSIN's functioning, conducted by the Prosecutor General of Russia, established that prisoners were being recruited. The convicts were induced to pledge the allegiance for the "IS" (Osuzhdennyh... 2018).

A similar situation, though with its own peculiarities, emerged in Ukraine, that over the last years has become a transit base for radical Islamists. In particular, there are channels of illegal migration and further transit of the former "IS" militants to the EU states. For a long time, there has been a similar migration channel from Turkey to Ukraine. As an activist of the muhajir movement, Salman Sever, states, Turkey offered to those with Russian citizenship (or from post-Soviet countries in general), who were expelled on suspicions in terrorist activity, to choose the third, safe country; this is why the main flow went to Georgia and Ukraine (Tuaev, 2016).

Former "IS" militants estimate that in Ukraine there could be up to several hundreds of former combatants from war fields in Syria and Iraq. Several factors contribute to the accumulation of illegal jihadist migrants in Ukraine (mainly from the former USSR-countries). To name a few: 1) popularity of Russian language in Ukraine; 2) confidence that Ukraine does not extradite aliens to the countries of origin; 3) neutral stance towards Muslims; 4) simplicity of obtaining forged documents to travel freely. As the leader of Nogai diaspora in Turkey, Abu Mansur Nogaiskii, notes, confirming the aforementioned Salman Sever's position, Ukraine is a temporary haven for those captured in Turkey and deported to Ukraine (Sergatskova, 2017).

Moreover, Ukraine remains an attractive destination for members of the political movement of "Hizb ut-Tahrir"; they also propagate actively their ideology in prisons, where a lot of illegal Muslim migrants are. After 2014, "Hizb ut-Tahrir" members departed en masse from the Crimean peninsula to the Kyiv-controlled territories. Thus, imam-chaplains in Ukraine are forced above all to combat the distortions of the Islamic dogma among the most vulnerable Muslim groups — those in prisons.

## **2) Prison Imams And Their Role In Ummas**

Islamization of the underworld, emerging prison jamaats, growing numbers of those returned from the "IS" and other regions of high terrorist danger challenges modern society to combat radicalization in prisons. Several scholars believe that one of the possible ways to do this is to introduce service of prison imam-chaplains. As noted by A. Wilner, correctional service must em-

ploy enough qualified imams to attend to prisoners' religious needs, screen them properly to be sure they are not part of the problem rather than the solution, and train them in confronting extremism effectively. And correctional service must scrutinize the literature available in prisons, removing texts that support terrorism and providing ones published by tolerant religious authorities (Wilner, 2010).

Meanwhile, one should not put too much hope onto prison imams. According to G. Marranci, "prisoners of Muslim backgrounds, after having ceased to practise Islam, rediscover their religion more through an 'epiphany' than a theological commitment. This process has an impact on how some Muslims react to the official version of Islam sponsored by the prison authorities and which the prison imam embodies. The emotional impact of prison, the frequent extreme lack of dignity perceived by some Muslim prisoners and the feeling that, despite their crimes, they are in prison because of a deeply rooted, eschatological injustice, provoke not only those 'cognitive openings' that many Muslim prisoners experience, but also a rarer spontaneous exegetical rejection. Imams within the prison (as indeed outside) operate inside a 'doctrinal mode of religiosity' that is based upon doctrines derived from scriptures (as in all monotheistic religions). However, since the majority of Muslim prisoners have had very little exposure to the doctrinal mode of Islamic religiosity, the traumatic experience of prison facilitates 'insights' and 'mystical' experiences (i.e. spontaneous exegetical rejection) in which emotions and feelings matter more than theological orthodoxy (of which very few Muslim prisoners have pre-prison knowledge). It is perhaps, then, unsurprising that the doctrinal mode of Islam offered within prison has little, if any, appeal to some Muslim prisoners" (Marranci, 2009: 18).

On the post-Soviet space, especially in Russia and Ukraine, there is one more problem linked to the prison imams' activities, namely diversity of Muslim religious unions that often have contradicting ideological stances. Roman Lunkin points out the notion that Muslim clergies in Russia also belong to various directions. There are spiritual administrations not ready to call Salafists and Wahhabis extremist. Hence, in jail people from various religious directions may be unsatisfied talking to imam from another school of thought (Kurilova, 2018).

Additionally, imams' job in prisons is complicated due to the fact that adherents of radical views do not essentially acknowledge imams from official religious structures. According to Shamil Arslanov, the head of the

department of cooperation with armed forces, law enforcement and prison service of Spiritual Administration of Russian Federation (DUM RF), there are cases when Muslim prisoners refuse the services provided by an official imam since the latter isn't imprisoned. Adherents of radical beliefs in Islam think that an imam should be in opposition, he should be a martyr, a prisoner, since authorities are evil (Shyrizhik, 2018).

Conflicts between radical Muslim prisoners and imams from official religious unions can lead to fist fighting. The imam from Kazan Burnaiev mosque, Farkhad Mavliutdinov, tells that there are several adherents of radical views among Muslim prisoners; the former strive to convert their inmates to their own version of Islam. If that doesn't happen, they try to use force, thereby propagating the rightness of their *aquidah* (belief system). Mavliutdinov gives an example of an imam beaten up in one of the Kazan prisons as he came there to preach a sermon on the necessity of following Hanafi, a traditional for Tatars Islamic school (Suleimanov, 2012).

### 3) Prison Imams In Ukraine

The situation in Ukraine is more difficult. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has more diverse religion policies, there is no list of forbidden organizations (in Russia those are "Hizb ut-Tahrir", Tablighi Jamaat etc.). Moreover, Ukrainian Umma is highly fragmented, that intensifies competition between religious centers. By 2013, despite the small scope of Ukrainian Muslim community there were 7 spiritual Muslim centres, organized mainly by ethnics<sup>3</sup>: Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Crimea (DUMK), Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine in Kyiv (DUMU), Spiritual Center of Ukraine's Muslims in Donetsk (DCMU), Religious Administration of Independent Muslim Organizations of Ukraine (RUNMOU) "Kyiv Muftiate" in Kyiv, Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine "Umma" in Kyiv (DUMU-Umma), Spiritual Center of Muslims in Crimes (DCMK) in Eupatoria and All-Ukrainian Spiritual Union of Muslims "Yedinenie" ("Unity") in Makiivka. After 2014, DUMK and DCMK (whose alumni created Central spiritual board of Muslims "Tavric Muftiate") got out of Ukraine's legal field, whereas "Yedinenie" and DCMU turned out to be on the territory of an armed conflict (self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic). The other spiritual administrations (the aforementioned DUMU, DUMU-Umma

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3 Aside from Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine and, with some reservations, DUMU-Umma.

and RUNMOU, as well as registered in late 2017 Spiritual Board of Muslims of Autonomous Republic of Crimea, DUM ARC), and independent Muslim communities, not joined one of the spiritual board, continue their activities on the Kyiv-controlled Ukrainian territory.

Ideological disunity and low level of Ukrainian Muslims' religious knowledge also contribute to the competition between religious centers. Since the early 1950s, Islam has not existed *de jure* in Soviet Ukraine. It was reduced to the level of local communities, gathered around a small group of people who still had certain religious knowledge and skills.<sup>4</sup> Such a situation could be observed in 1960-80s within the main communities of Volga Tatars in Donbas and Crimean Tatars in Kherson oblast, as well as in exile. Hence, a small part of Ukraine's Muslim communities continue the communities created then, still leaning to this "tradition", matured in the Soviet era, when public practice of Islam was not possible, and the religious rites associated with religious holidays (Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, and Mawlid) and life-cycle rituals (naming, circumcision, nikah, janaza, funeral) remained viable (Brylov, 2018b: 182).

Currently, it is possible to distinguish two main religious centers that are in a fierce confrontation, including competing with each other on the field of prison chaplaincy: the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine (*Dukhovne upravlinnia musulman Ukraïny* – DUMU) headed by Sheikh Aḥmad Tamīm; and the All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organisations Al-Ra'id (which in Ukraine is referred to simply as Alraid) together with its proxy-muftiat, called *Dukhovne upravlinnia musul'man Ukraïny 'Umma'* – DUMU-Umma (mufti – Sheikh Said Ismagilov), that draws on the activities of Arab students who study in Ukraine.

The DUMU emerged as an off-shoot of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims in the European Part of Russia and Siberia (DUMES) that was re-established in 1948 in Ufa (Soviet Bashkiria) and which had also been formally responsible for the needs of Ukrainian Muslims, even though it did not engage in any activities on Ukrainian soil. On 14 August 1992 the DUMES agreed on the creation of a Ukrainian regional unit (*mukhtasibat*) within the DUMES, and appointed Ahmad Tamim as its head (with the function of imam-muḥtasib). In April 1993 this mukhtasibat was re-registered as the Kyiv Muftiate, known as the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine (DUMU) with Sheikh Ahmad Tamim operating independently from Ufa.

<sup>4</sup> This group usually consisted of mullahs, their assistants, and women specialized on Quran reading and funeral rites (*abistay* in the Volga Tatar tradition).

The DUMU is an association of members from various ethnic groups, not only from the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of law that are predominant in Ukraine but also from the two other Sunni madhhabs. In addition, the DUMU aims at uniting representatives of different Sufi groups. Most common are the groups that are widespread in the North Caucasus and Central Asia, especially the Naqshbandiyya (in its various branches), as well as the Qādiriyya and Shādhiliyya; there are also followers of the Rifā'iyya in the DUMU.

The Alraid was established in 1997 and represents the reformist trend in Ukrainian Islam. Ideologically, organisationally and financially it is connected with the global Muslim Brotherhood movement. As Ukrainian researchers have argued, the Alraid typifies a new type of Islamic organisation that reflects the efficiency of contemporary Middle Eastern Islamic movements, bringing together the traditions of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and modern methods of social project management. Because of its charitable-organisation status, Alraid could not register as another Muftiate in Ukraine; the solution to this problem was the establishment in 2008 of the DUMU-Umma, seen as the 'front Muftiate' for Alraid in Ukraine (Brylov, 2018a: 160-161).

The system of prison chaplains in Ukraine started its formation not so long ago, and now the main structure responsible for prison chaplaincy is the Pastoral Council for religious guardianship in the penitentiary system under the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. The Council coordinates pastoral care of convicts and detainees in institutions, penitentiaries and investigation departments of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine, as well as the staff of these institutions.

According to the Statute, the Pastoral Council is a permanent interfaith advisory body working on a voluntary basis. Its members may be official representatives of registered religious centers and administrations.

The Pastoral Council has the following tasks.

Coordination of activities of pastoral care of convicts and detainees, pastoral care of prison staff and institutions, as well as making proposals on these issues to the Ministry of Justice.

1. Promotion of tolerant and friendly relations, mutual respect among believers of different churches (religious organizations), prevention and elimination of the causes of possible interfaith conflicts, development of interfaith cooperation in matters of pastoral care in penitentiaries and related institutions.

2. Discussion of current issues and preparation of mutually agreed proposals on draft legislation on humanization, implementation of citizens' right to freedom of conscience, reform of the penitentiary system.
3. Monitoring of the state of compliance with the right to freedom of thought and religion in penitentiary institutions and centers.

Additional functions of the Pastoral Council are the following.

1. Approval of candidates for positions of the clergy (chaplains) in penitentiary bodies and institutions, authorized by the governing bodies of churches (religious organizations) to take the pastoral care of convicts.
2. Restoration (construction, reconstruction) of religious buildings and other premises for worship and religious meetings at penitentiary bodies and institutions, and organization of their activities.
3. Study and analysis of the results of pastoral work with convicts.
4. Organization of spiritual, educational and charitable events of interfaith cooperation in penitentiary bodies and institutions, as well as providing assistance for education, correction, and reintegration of former convicts into society.
5. Approval of the procedure of special training for clergymen (chaplains) and granting of power to carry out the activities of pastoral care of convicts and detainees, the staff of penitentiary bodies and institutions in coordination with the Ministry of Justice (Minyust sozdal... 2017).

The Council consists of representatives of all major denominations of Ukraine, including representatives of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (DUMU) — the largest Association of Sunni Muslims in Ukraine. Within the framework of cooperation with the Penitentiary Service of Ukraine, imams of the DUMU visit Muslims serving sentences in different regions of Ukraine. The DUMU, through its communities in the regions, regularly maintains contact with prisoners, visits them, tries to help morally and financially, for instance, providing necessary drugs, clothing etc. Moreover, an important place in the work of the DUMU imams is given to the religious education among prisoners, the transfer of reliable religious knowledge to them in order to assist in compliance with the rituals (primarily – Friday prayer, Salat al-Janazah, etc.), performance of their duties, repentance from past sins, and also assists in the opening of religious libraries for prisoners. The DUMU also tries to help some prisoners by applying for a review of

the sentence or reducing of the term of conviction, after release they help to find a job and adapt to this society. Particularly, the DUMU imams are active in the Southern Ukraine (Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts). For example, on February 10, 2013, there were meetings between the convicts and the head of Mykolaiv city and oblast community, imam Ruslan Binali-ogly, in the penal colonies № 72 and № 83 (Blagoslovennyi Maulid... 2013).

Aside from working directly with Muslim prisoners, representatives of the DUMU conduct training courses for employees of the penitentiary system of Ukraine. During such courses, the instructors of the DUMU explain the religious needs of Muslim prisoners, such as the need for daily five-fold prayer, Friday prayer, Halal food, and others. Additionally, the employees of the penitentiary system get explanations of the danger of extremist ideas among prisoners, the mechanisms of recruitment by adherents of radical ideologies who remain in freedom (Kazhdyi imeet shans ispravit'sya... 2018).

In addition to the DUMU, whose imams are part of the aforementioned Pastoral Council, Muslim prisoners are actively working with representatives of the Alraid and DUMU-Umma, connected to the global network of "Muslim Brotherhood" (Brylov 2016). Unlike the imams of the DUMU, who try to work centrally, through the management of the Penitentiary service and the administrations of the colonies, Ukrainian Islamists work targeted, at the request of the prisoners themselves. Namely, DUMU-Umma supports 173 convicts from Ukraine and neighboring countries (Russian Federation, Belarus, Czechia). Each of these persons once showed their initiative and started to correspond with the religious administration. The address was to find in the literature sent to prison libraries. Through private correspondence, the Muslim convicts get moral support as well as literature and prayer mats. Those Muslim prisoners with no relatives outside the prison walls to help them are provided with clothing, shoes, and food if necessary. According to Igor Karpishen, chairman of the DUMU-Umma, the empowerment of prisoners depends solely on them; no one outside will be able to arrange their routine and provide conditions for the implementation of religious practice if they do not show initiative (Malen'kaya mechet'... 2012).

Among the institutions of the penitentiary system of Ukraine, where representatives of Alraid and DUMU-Umma work actively with Muslim prisoners, one should mention Kholodnogorsk penal colony №18 (Kharkiv oblast). There, in 2012, a prayer room for Muslim prisoners was opened.

Zhytomyr penal colony № 4 is also to name. At the same time, both colonies are for convicts for grave and especially grave crimes.

To sum up our study, one can state that today in Ukraine a system of prison chaplaincy is actively forming; Muslims take part in it. Meanwhile, the main problems that prison imams and Ukrainian penitentiary system generally face could be split into two groups. On the one hand, it is penitentiary staff's weak awareness of Muslims' distresses, spiritual needs, namely individual fivefold and Friday collective prayers, as well as food restrictions. On the other hand, in a very short period of time Ukraine has become a place of concentration for post-Soviet jihadists who use places of detention to promote their radical ideology. The state was not ready for such a turn of events. At the moment, it is difficult to determine how successful and effective the institution of prison imams in Ukraine will be. Nevertheless, one can state that certain changes have begun.

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