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A drone view shows the ruins of a church and buildings in the village of Marinka (Maryinka) in the Russian-controlled Donetsk region of Ukraine May 15, 2025. The village was destroyed during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. (OSV News/Reuters/Alexander Ermochenko)

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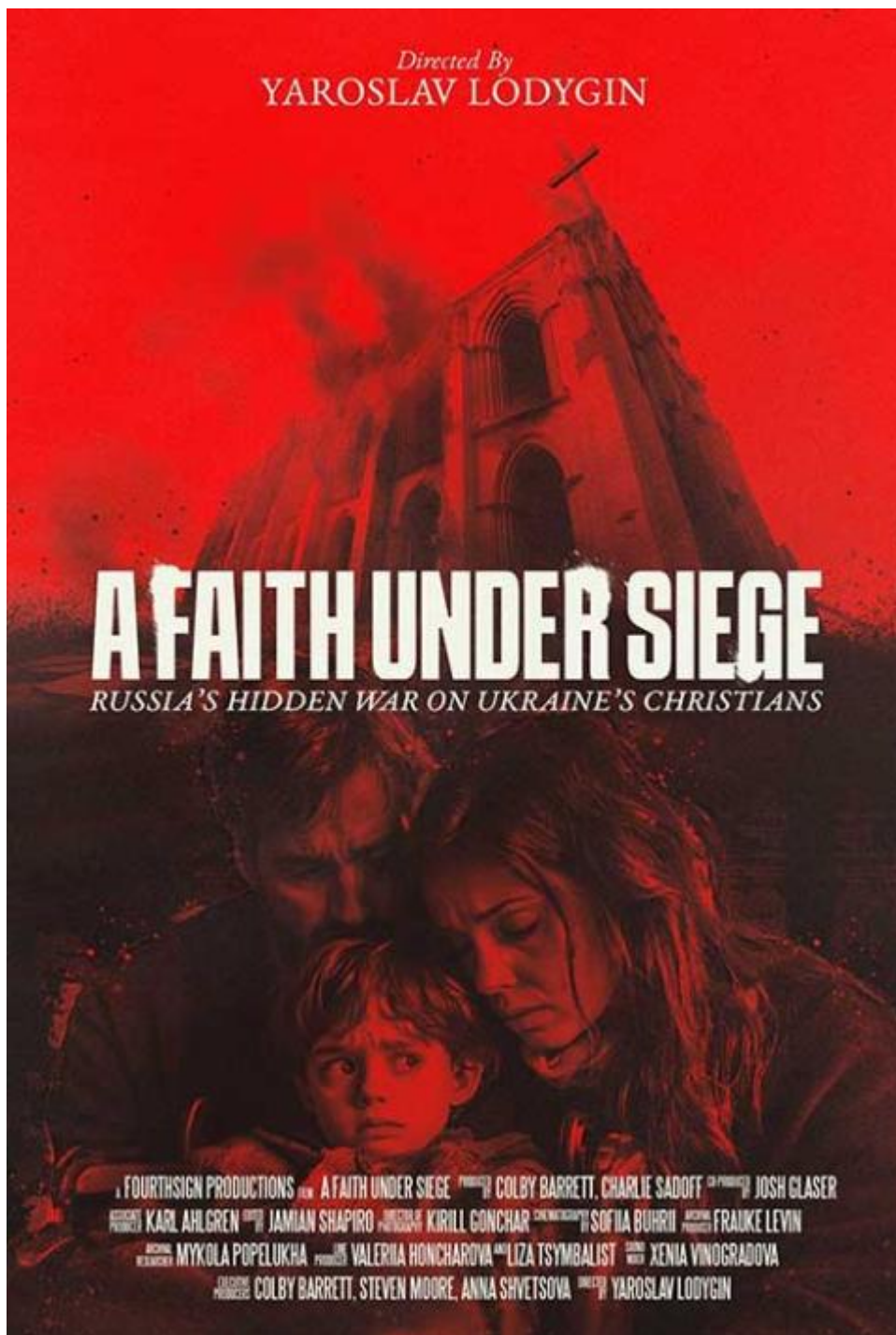
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Christians in Ukraine are "like the first-century Christians, hunted by an empire" and "horribly persecuted," the executive producer of a recently released documentary told OSV News.

Entrepreneur and former U.S. Marine Colby Barrett is part of the team behind "A Faith Under Siege," a film that examines attacks by Russian forces and officials on hundreds of Ukrainian faith communities, including Catholic and Protestant believers.

Directed by Ukrainian filmmaker Yaroslav Lodygin, the documentary — just under 60 minutes in length — features on-the-ground, often intensely emotional interviews with Ukrainian Christians from a number of denominations who have been systematically persecuted by Russian occupiers. Original footage of destroyed churches and houses of worship is included throughout the production.



This is the official poster from Angel Studios' "A Faith Under Siege." The film examines attacks by Russian forces and officials on hundreds of Ukrainian faith communities, including Catholic and Protestant believers. (OSV News/Angel Studios)

The film, [available in full on YouTube](#), has been augmented by additional interviews available as episodes through Angel Studios.

The producers are also preparing to release additional interviews detailing Russia's persecution of Ukraine's Catholics — including a sit-down segment with Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia. The metropolitan archbishop serves as head of external relations for the global Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and has consistently spoken out against Russia's attacks on Ukraine.

The targeting of Christians — as well as Jewish and Muslim communities — is a salient feature of Russia's war on Ukraine, which continues an invasion launched in 2014 and which has been described as genocidal in character in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, at least 670 churches and religious structures have been damaged or destroyed.

Barrett, a Protestant, admitted that prior to being invited on a Ukrainian humanitarian aid convoy, he had "no connection to Ukraine whatsoever."

In fact, he had initially declined the chance to participate in the convoy, until he began reflecting on and praying about the opportunity — and doing his homework.

Barrett was shocked to learn how many pastors had been killed and churches destroyed by Russia in Ukraine.

"I'm pretty well informed," he said. "But I didn't know about this stuff."

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However, his fellow executive producers were already well aware of the atrocities.

Steven E. Moore — a former chief of staff in the U.S. House of Representatives and founder of the Ukraine Freedom Project, a nongovernmental organization bringing humanitarian aid to the front lines of Russia's war in Ukraine — had testified about the attacks before the U.S. Helsinki Commission (also known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) in Washington.

Moore, now based in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, also launched the website RussiaTorturesChristians.org to highlight persecution of Christians outside the Russian Orthodox Church in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

Co-executive producer Anna Shvetsova, chief operating officer of the Ukraine Freedom Project, was raised near the Russian border, and frequently visits the front lines while meeting with U.S. congressional offices regarding policy in Ukraine.

Moore summed up the situation in Ukraine's occupied territories as "horrible," saying that "religious liberty doesn't exist" in such areas.

"Vladimir Putin has shut down every church in occupied Ukraine that he does not control," said Moore, referring to Russia's president. "Putin doesn't want Christians to worship. ... Putin is about control, and Christians have one leader, Jesus Christ — and people like that are very difficult to control."

Echoing an observation previously made by Gudziak and other experts to OSV News, Moore said that the Russian Orthodox Church — the flagship religious institution of Russia, which enjoys broad protection from the government — "is not a church as we would think one. It's a working arm of the government."



A church destroyed by a Russian attack on the village of Bohorodychne in Ukraine's Donetsk region is pictured Feb. 13, 2024. (OSV News/Reuters/Vladyslav Musiienko)

Russian Orthodox hierarchs have openly supported that nation's war on Ukraine, with Patriarch Kirill declaring soldiers killed in action as being absolved from sin. Dissenting Russian Orthodox priests have been expelled and imprisoned for expressing their dissent over the invasion, even on religious grounds.

With the Russian Orthodox Church and Russia's government deeply intertwined, Russian forces assume Ukrainian clergy are working on behalf of Western nations, said Moore.

"When a Russian soldier comes to a Ukrainian village and he finds a Baptist church, he's like, 'Oh, Baptist; this is an American religion,' " Moore explained. "And there are numerous, numerous, well-documented examples of priests and pastors being tortured and asked who their CIA handler is."

Amid the horrors, both Moore and Barrett said, the faith of Ukraine's Christians has been astonishingly resilient.

"I will tell you the miracles that I have seen here in Ukraine," said Moore, citing the example of one 4,000-strong Spasynnya evangelical community, which showed up for a service amid the ruins of its newly built sanctuary that had been destroyed in a September Russian drone strike.

"These are people who through faith have said, 'We're going to worship God. We're not going to let Putin tell us not to worship God.'"

Barrett agreed, saying the solidarity among faith communities amid Russia's war has been inspiring.

"You see (various types of) Orthodox (believers) helping Catholics, and Catholics helping Protestants," he said. "There is this global church concept there that says, 'We've got to stand together.' And it's really heartening to see."