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ON THE NEED FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC CONTROL OVER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN RUSSIA: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR THEIR RESOLUTION

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the analysis of modern problems associated with the organization and implementation of public control over the activities of religious organizations in the Russian Federation, as well as the prospects for their resolution. The purpose of the research is to substantiate the role and place of religious organizations in the process of formation and functioning of the institution of public control, to identify contemporary problems associated with its implementation in relation to religious organizations, as well as to substantiate a set of measures for its development. The object of the research is social relations arising in the process of organizing and exercising public control over religious organizations in Russia. The subject of the research is the norms of the current legislation on public control, materials of legal doctrine devoted to the analysis of the formation and functioning of this institution of civil society in the Russian Federation and other countries in relation to the activities of religious organizations. The author substantiates the position according to which the activities of religious organizations act as one of the varieties of objects of public control in Russia. The main problems of the organization and implementation of this institution of civil society in relation to religious organizations are identified, both related to the general imperfection of Russian legislation on public control, and the need to optimize the system of normative legal acts regulating the activities of religious organizations. A system of measures for the development of the institution of public control in relation to the activities of religious organizations has been developed and substantiated, both in terms of consolidating their activities in the current legislation as a variety of objects of public control, and the development of its special forms, methods and measures in relation to the specifics of the activities of religious organizations.

Keywords: religious organizations, public control, civil society, object, subject, totalitarian organizations, constitutional principles, democracy, freedom of religion

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О НЕОБХОДИМОСТИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ И ОСУЩЕСТВЛЕНИЯ ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО КОНТРОЛЯ ЗА РЕЛИГИОЗНЫМИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯМИ В РОССИИ: СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ИХ РАЗРЕШЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. Настоящая статья посвящена анализу современных проблем, связанных с организацией и осуществлением общественного контроля за деятельностью религиозных организаций в Российской Федерации, а также перспектив их разрешения. Цель исследования состоит в обосновании роли и места религиозных организаций в процессе формирования и функционирования института общественного контроля, выявлении современных проблем, связанных с его осуществлением в отношении религиозных организаций, а также обосновании комплекса мероприятий по его развитию. В качестве объекта исследования выступают общественные отношения, возникающие в процессе организации и осуществления общественного контроля в России за религиозными организациями. Предметом исследования являются нормы действующего законодательства об общественном контроле, материалы правовой доктрины, посвященные анализу формирования и функционирования данного института гражданского общества в Российской Федерации и других странах в отношении деятельности религиозных организаций. Автор обосновывает позицию, согласно которой деятельность религиозных организаций выступает в качестве одной из разновидностей объектов общественного контроля в России. Выявлены основные проблемы организации и осуществления данного института гражданского общества в отношении религиозных организаций, как связанные с общим несовершенством российского законодательства об общественном контроле, так и необходимостью оптимизации системы нормативноправовых актов, регулирующих деятельность религиозных организаций. Разработана и обоснована система мероприятий по развитию института общественного контроля в отношении деятельности религиозных организаций, как в части закрепления в действующем законодательстве их деятельности в качестве разновидности объектов общественного контроля, так и разработки его специальных форм, методов и мероприятий применительно к специфике деятельности религиозных организаций.

Ключевые слова: религиозные организации, общественный контроль, гражданское общество, объект, субъект, тоталитарные организации, конституционные принципы, народовластие, свобода вероисповедания

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Introduction

The problems of defining the concept and system of objects of public control in the Russian Federation, as well as improving the legislative framework of this institution of civil society, have been widely studied in the works of Grib [4, pp. 32–37], Pishchulin [10, pp. 108–110], Mikheeva and Mikheev [7, pp. 16–17], Snisar [11, pp. 41–46], Elishev [2, pp. 3–14] and a number of other authors. These works are of great importance in the research of the role of the institution of public control as the main legal guarantee of the implementation, protection and protection of the constitutional principles of de-

mocracy and participation of the Russian population in the management of public affairs. However, the share of researches devoted to the possibility and necessity of the formation and functioning of the institution of public control over the activities of religious organizations is small.

Moreover, a significant part of researchers dealing with this issue, for example, Minin [8, pp. 96–101], Osipov [9, pp. 69–74], Tolstikov [10, pp. 63–76], Lomsadze [6, pp. 102–109], Vorobyova [13, pp. 103–09] analyze religious organizations as an element of civil society, ignoring the fact that the latter is built on the principles of tolerance, patience

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for the entire spectrum of social groups, classes, ethnic groups, etc., which contradicts certain segregation principles in the organization and activities of any religious organization, in one way or another the degree of dividing people in the "friend or foe" coordinate system. In this regard, the main purpose of this research is to identify and substantiate the need to organize and implement public control over the activities of religious organizations as the most important object of public control, to study the main problems hindering the development of this institution of civil society in relation to the activities of religious organizations, to develop and justify a system of measures to resolve these problems.

Main text. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, human and civil rights and freedoms are the highest value in the state¹. All subjects of Russian law are obliged to comply with them. At the same time, for public authorities (state authorities and local self-government bodies), the recognition, observance and protection of constitutional rights and freedoms of man and citizen is the main goal of their creation and activity.

The Russian multinational people are the bearers of the right to exclusive supreme sovereignty in the country; they act as the only source of power in Russia, delegating their powers to elected officials of state authorities and local self-government bodies through the institutions of free elections and referendums.

However, any delegated authority needs constant monitoring. Otherwise, there is a danger that they will either be illegally appropriated by a public authority whose competence they do not belong to, or seized by any public authority or its official.

In this regard, the constitutional rights and freedoms of man and citizen, constitutional principles (including the constitutional principle of democracy and the participation of the multinational people of the Russian Federation in the management of state affairs) need a system of legal guarantees, that is, a system of legal norms and mechanisms through which their implementation, security, protection, as well as restoration (in case of violation) is ensured.

One of the main elements of this system is the institution of public control, which has been enshrined in Russian legislation relatively recently (since the mid-2000s), but has gained quite a lot of popularity in the population of the country.

In accordance with the current legislation, in particular, the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL "On the Foundations of Public Control in the Russian Federation", the essence of this institute of civil society consists in organizing and exercising public control over the activities of not only federal and regional authorities, local governments, but also the activities of various bodies and organizations that exercise certain public powers².

However, the organization and implementation of public control in Russia are associated with many problems of both subjective and objective nature.

First, this institution of civil society is a very young phenomenon in Russian legislation and, therefore, is experiencing various "growing pains" inherent in new political and legal institutions.

Secondly, the population of the country is distinguished by a low level of legal culture and legal awareness, which prevents the active participation of the general public in public control measures.

Thirdly, this institution of civil society is becoming particularly relevant in the light of the processes of globalization, which require the concentration of efforts of the state and civil society in order to maximize the effective implementation, protection and protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of man and citizen in the Russian Federation.

Fourthly, Russian legislation on public control is extremely imperfect. In particular, in Article 2 of the above-mentioned Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL, a number of objects of public control were removed from the subject of jurisdiction under the pretext that separate federal laws would be adopted on them. However, 7 years have passed since the adoption of this Federal Law, but none of the federal laws that should have regulated the procedure for organizing and exercising public control over the above-mentioned objects of public control has been adopted! The idea arises that this was done deliberately in order to take out of the control of civil society the activities of a number of federal bodies of state power (state security bodies, courts, army, police, investigative bodies, etc.), as well as public relations in a number of areas (for example, relations in the field of elections and referendums).

These problems give rise to another important problem in the organization and implementation of public control in Russia – the uncertainty of the

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¹ Constitution of the Russian Federation (adopted by popular vote on 12.12.1993). Available at: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202007040001. (accessed 09.01.2023).

² On the Basics of Public Control in the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 212-FL of 21.07.2014. *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 2014, no. 30 (part 1), article 4213.

range of objects of public control, as well as the list of necessary and sufficient features possessed by legal entities (their activities), so that they can be classified as objects of public control.

In particular, in the educational and scientific literature in the Russian Federation, there is a debatable issue regarding the role and place of religious organizations in the system of organization and functioning of the institution of public control in Russia [3, pp. 24–45].

A number of authors believe that the current legislation does not provide for the possibility of civil society control over the activities of religious organizations [14, pp. 108–115]. This approach is justified by the argument that neither the Federal Law of 26.09.1997 No. 125-FL "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations"¹, nor the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL mention anything about the possibility of exercising public control over religious organizations.

However, in our opinion, this does not correspond to reality. First of all, Article 1 of the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL provides for the right of civil society to exercise public control over bodies and organizations exercising certain public powers. The current Russian legislation does not contain a clear definition of the concept of "public powers". But, obviously, they should be understood as the totality of powers possessed by public authorities and which are derived from the power of the people, who delegates them to public authorities (and their officials). Therefore, they need public control.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish whether religious organizations have any public powers. An analysis of the current legislation shows that positions have been introduced in the ranks of the armed forces to work with religious servicemen, who are occupied by persons of the spiritual rank of one of the three religious denominations (Islamic, Orthodox or Judaism). That is, in the Armed Forces of Russia, clergymen work at the expense of the federal budget, conducting appropriate religious propaganda at the expense of taxpayers. Considering that the activities of the Armed Forces of Russia in accordance with the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL have been removed from the jurisdiction of legislation on public control (and a separate Federal Law

"On Public Control over the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" has not been adopted), it turns out that civil society has no control over the activities of the Armed Forces, nor the activities of military priests (mullahs, rabbis). Although even the fact that such actions diminish the religious rights of believers of other religious confessions (in particular, evangelical Christian organizations, Catholics), as well as atheists, is obvious, which is clearly not consistent with global trends in the field of religious rights and freedoms of person and citizen.

In addition, in a number of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, subjects of religious content have been introduced into educational programs of state and municipal educational institutions (for example, school education). That is, in fact, representatives of religious organizations participate in the educational process, which is, in fact, the exercise of certain public powers. And, therefore, this activity of representatives of religious organizations needs public control. Such lack of control, according to a number of authors, poses a threat to the security of the education system in Russia [5, pp. 36–44].

Currently, the possibility of organizing and exercising public control over the activities of religious organizations is associated with a number of problems.

Firstly, as noted earlier, Russian legislation does not contain clear definitions of the concepts of "object of public control", "subject of public control", "public authority", which makes it difficult both to classify the activities of religious organizations as objects of public control and to determine the limits of this control.

Secondly, in Russia there are processes of ignoring the constitutional principle of the secular nature of the Russian Federation, through the gradual desecularization of public (including legal) relations. Moreover, these processes are accompanied by the imposition of a number of religious denominations of their worldview on the broad masses of the population (and even at the expense of taxpayers).

Thirdly, the lack of the legislator to adopt federal laws on the organization and implementation of public control over objects removed from the jurisdiction of the Federal Law No. 212-FL, has led to the fact that this institution of civil society is becoming more decorative and not a real character.

The above-mentioned problems are not exhaustive, since the imperfection of the current legislation

¹ On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations: Federal Law No. 125-FL of 26.09.1997. *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 1997, no. 39, article 4465.

on public control generates new problems in this area of public relations.

In this regard, it seems necessary to develop and implement a set of measures to resolve these problems in order, on the one hand, to create an effective system of public control in the country as a whole, and on the other hand, to ensure proper control of civil society over all subjects of Russian law, which public powers are exercised, or whose activities are directly related to the realization of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of a person and a citizen in the Russian Federation.

At the same time, these measures should include several interrelated areas: 1) to optimize the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL (for example, fixing the concepts of objects, subjects of public control, public powers, their signs; 2) on the adoption of certain federal laws dedicated to the regulation of public control processes in relation to objects removed from the subject of the above-mentioned federal law; 3) to ensure the uniformity of regional legislation, as well as municipal regulations in the field of public control in the Russian Federation; 4) to develop, together with various subjects of civil society, as well as with representatives of religious organizations, approximate criteria for organizing and exercising public control over the activities of religious organizations (limits, methods, forms, types of events, frequency of their conduct, etc.).

Conclusion

- 1. Due to the fact that the Russian legislation does not formalize the concept and features of objects and subjects of public control, and there is no exhaustive list of them, there is no consensus in the Russian scientific and educational literature on the place and role of religious organizations in the system of formation and functioning of the system of public control in the Russian Federation.
- 2. It seems that the activities of Russian religious organizations are one of the varieties of objects of public control due to the fact that, in accordance with the provisions of the current legislation, religious organizations exercise certain public powers. Moreover, the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the current legislation are gradually moving away from the principle of the secular nature of the

Russian state, consistently incorporating the activities of religious organizations in the fields of education, culture, science, and even state defense.

- 3. The main problems of organizing and exercising public control over the activities of religious organizations are: a) the concepts and features of objects and subjects of public control are not fixed in the Russian legislation; b) the lack of a common understanding in the definition of the concept of "public powers", which acts as a qualifying sign of attribution of bodies and organizations (their activities) to the category of objects of public control; c) removal from the subject matter of the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL of a number of objects of public control for which there are no special federal laws, for example, activities in the field of national defense in which religious organizations take an active part (officially and without fail); d) the lack of proper control of civil society over the activities of religious organizations, coupled with the attempt by a number of religious organizations (in particular, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate) to consistently impose the system of religious values of these religious confessions on the entire population of the country (including atheists and people of other religious views).
- 4. These problems require the development and adoption of a number of measures, including in terms of improving Russian legislation, both regulating the organization and activities of religious organizations, and the formation and functioning of the institution of public control, including: a) through legislative consolidation of concepts and signs of the object and subject of public control, public authority; b) by including religious organizations in the comprehensive list of objects of public control; c) by adopting certain federal laws on the organization and functioning of the institution of public control in relation to certain types of activities and certain public relations, deduced from the scope of the Federal Law of 21.07.2014 No. 212-FL, in which Russian religious organizations take an official and obligatory participation; d) by including in the Federal Law of 26.09.1997 No. 125-FL provisions fixing specific forms, methods, measures of public control over the activities of religious organizations, as well as the limits of their implementation.

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^{1.} Elgina K. A. Religiya i sotsial'nyi kontrol' [Religion and social control]. *Razvitie territorii* = Territory Development, 2016, no. 2 (5), pp. 65–68. Available at: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/religiya-i-sotsialnyy-kontrol (accessed 11.01.2023). (In Russ.).

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The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

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