

EXCLUSIVE: Acting President of Ukraine Speaks Out in First International Interview

In the midst of ongoing turmoil that has enormous global significance, God is mightily at work in Ukraine, the nation's acting president said Wednesday in an exclusive interview for *Decision* magazine.

"Stories of God's hand abound," Oleksandr Turchynov, a devout evangelical, said during a private meeting with BGEA Vice President of Crusades Viktor Hamm.

BGEA President Franklin Graham, who preached in Kiev in 2007, requested Hamm travel to Ukraine and meet with Turchynov because of Hamm's deep ties to the country. Born in a Soviet labor camp, Hamm has led 15 crusades in Ukraine between 1994 and 2006 as a BGEA associate evangelist.

Turchynov has declined requests from internationally prominent news organizations but granted *Decision* magazine the interview that will appear in more detail in a special report on the Ukrainian crisis in April's edition.

Hamm also has met with some of the nation's top evangelical leaders this week while in Kiev to show BGEA's support. *Decision* traveled with him to cover the story that has gripped the world.

"Truth was on the side of those who stood for their rights, and (chose not to) be slaves, without rights and without voice," acting President Turchynov said of the near-miraculous victory of thousands of unarmed protesters over the regime of now-deposed former President Viktor Yanukovich.

"All events demonstrated the greatness of God," Turchynov

said.

Turchynov was named to his position on Feb. 23, two days after Yanukovych was found to have fled the country amid a massive uprising against his regime.

During three months of protests in which Yanukoych's Berkut riot police beat and shot protesters, it appeared the many freedom fighters had little chance in a David vs. Goliath kind of confrontation. A fiery showdown ensued and hit its violent peak from Feb. 18-20, when Berkut snipers shot down and killed protesters. Nearly 90 have died in all.

Yanukovych, who fled on or around Feb. 21, is now charged with mass murder by authorities in his country.

Turchynov said only God could have delivered those who refused to be oppressed any longer. The acting president noted how, during the war-like events that took place during the confrontations at Maidan (the city square), huge clouds of smoke would drift toward the Berkut riot police and away from protestors, obstructing the view of the perpetrators. Turchynov said there was also a time when a grenade was thrown near him, but that only one fragment hit him on the cheek, causing no lasting injury.

"I see God's hand in every little detail that took place as unarmed people went out to defend their freedom and the independence of their country against a fully armed professional army, many times bigger in size," Turchynov said. "Their faith was victorious. God granted them victory."

God's grip on Ukraine has been strong for more than two decades. Hamm says it's the most evangelical nation in Europe.

Ukraine and Turchynov now face another massive challenge—overt Russian interference. Leaders around the world accuse Russia of invading and taking over the Ukranian territory of Crimea.

Turchynov asked BGEA's supporters and believers worldwide to "pray for us so that peace would return and people would be able to live peacefully."

His hope for another victory, preferably without armed conflict with Russia, is based on a Biblical promise.

"If God is with us," Turchynov said, "no one can be against us."

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