



# HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED CRIMEA

by Andrii Klymenko

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Photo credit: Anton Holoborodko

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# FOREWORD

The “green men” who fanned out across Crimea in early 2014, establishing control over key infrastructure and clearing the way for once-marginal political actors to seize the reins of power, were the vanguard of a forced political change that has led to grave human rights abuses across the Crimean peninsula.

Firmly in control of the executive and law enforcement bodies, the so-called Crimean authorities ostensibly implemented the law of the Russian Federation but in reality created a hybrid system where Russian law is subsidiary to the whims of “self-defense forces” and “republican authorities.” Those forces derive their power from their weapons rather than from the support of the local population.

In an environment where brute force rules the day, the international community has lost access to basic information about political, economic, and social developments on the Crimean peninsula. As a result, human rights abuses, now a regular part of life in Crimea, are left unreported or poorly understood.

Freedom House and the Atlantic Council’s Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center are proud to present Andrii Klymenko’s report, *Human Rights Abuses in Russian-Occupied Crimea*. His work makes an important contribution to our understanding of what has happened in Crimea since the Kremlin forcibly seized the peninsula in February 2014, setting off a crisis that is transforming security calculations in Europe and Eurasia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has attempted to justify the intervention in Crimea by claiming that ethnic Russians and Russian speakers were under threat by Ukrainian authorities and nationalists. What Klymenko’s research makes clear, in a dispassionate parade of facts, is that the Russian invasion

introduced extensive repression on the peninsula. Under the laws and policies instituted by the Kremlin, any resident of Crimea who refuses to take Russian citizenship and a Russian passport, or who tries to retain Ukrainian citizenship, forfeits his/her right to live, to work in, or even to visit the peninsula.

These actions violate fundamental international human rights, including basic civil, political, and social rights. If for no other reason than this, events in Crimea deserve greater attention, and authorities there should be held accountable for compromising fundamental freedoms.

This report is part of the Atlantic Council’s Ukraine in Europe Initiative. This initiative was designed in early 2014 to help the Ukrainian people choose their own future in the face of increasingly autocratic leadership at home (under then-President Viktor Yanukovich) and aggression from Russia. As Ukraine elected a reform-minded president in May 2014, Petro Poroshenko, and a new parliament in October of that year, the Ukraine in Europe Initiative has focused on helping Ukraine implement democratic and market reforms at home and to withstand and deter further Russian aggression.

The Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center would like to thank the generous supporters of our initiative. They include the Ukrainian World Congress, the Smith Richardson Foundation, the George Chopivsky Foundation, Chevron USA, US State Department, and the Espirito Santo Financial Group.

The Eurasia Center also wishes to pay respect to the memory of Dinu Patriciu, its visionary founding sponsor, whose untimely passing in August 2014 saddened all at the Atlantic Council. Freedom House wishes to acknowledge the dedication of David Kramer to the issues confronting Ukraine and its neighbors.

**Frederick Kempe**, *President and CEO*, Atlantic Council

**Mark P. Lagon**, *President*, Freedom House

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2014, Russia forcefully and illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula from the territory of Ukraine. This first land grab on European soil since World War II exposed the Kremlin's imperialist ambitions and posed a serious threat to the post-Cold War international order.

Since the onset of Russian occupation, Crimea's residents have faced increasingly grave civic, political, and human rights violations. These include discriminatory policies against Crimea's ethnic Tatar minority, infringement of property rights, and intimidation of independent voices through selective use of the law and physical force. The Kremlin has sought to suppress reporting of many such abuses by creating a so-called "information ghetto" on the peninsula through a crackdown on local and foreign media. As Western media shifted its attention to the war in Ukraine's east, the human rights abuses in Crimea have gone underreported.

This report documents the alarming deterioration of human rights in Crimea under Russian occupation. Through a careful chronicling of evidence, Andrii Klymenko, Chief Editor of Black Sea News and Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Maidan of Foreign Affairs, exposes the Kremlin's repressive and discriminatory policies against three groups: ethnic, religious, or national groups that opposed the annexation, especially members of the indigenous Crimean Tatar community, independent voices seeking to report on the situation in Crimea (journalists, civil society activists, and members of nongovernmental organizations), and holders of Ukrainian passports.

The Crimean Tatars, estimated at three hundred thousand, have endured especially harsh treatment since the annexation. For their refusal to recognize the authority of the de facto government, Tatar leaders have been exiled or banned from public life, their public commemorations prohibited, and their media muzzled.

Activists and journalists who simply speak up for human rights have been subjected to torture, intimidated into emigration, and have had their property illegally confiscated. Some have gone missing, with authorities offering little to no evidence that they are investigating the disappearances.

Today, holding a Ukrainian passport as a Crimean resident is tantamount to treason. Crimean residents who hold Ukrainian passports are de facto disenfranchised from exercising their political and civic rights. They are blocked from accessing social services, including public healthcare, owning property, or finding legal employment.

The report is not a complete account of the many human rights violations in Crimea, but it makes clear that physical harassment, criminal prosecution, and forced emigration of potentially "disloyal" groups is part and parcel of Russia's control strategy for the peninsula. By documenting a small portion of such abuses, Klymenko provides a window into the "information ghetto" of the peninsula and the everyday lives of its residents in the year since Russian occupation.

# HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED CRIMEA

BY ANDRII KLYMENKO

This report seeks to chronicle the deteriorating human rights situation in Crimea since the occupation and annexation of the previously autonomous Ukrainian region by the Russian Federation. The crisis, which began in February 2014, continues to intensify due to Russian legislation and a series of oppressive measures carried out by the region's de facto authorities.

These actions, which are not widely reported abroad, include the imposition of Russian citizenship, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, takeover of private and Ukrainian state property, clampdowns on independent media outlets, persecution of annexation critics and proponents of Ukrainian unity, and harassment of ethnic and religious groups perceived as disloyal to the new order. They represent violations of basic human rights and, in some cases, contravene international law.

The report is based on the information available from Ukrainian and international media outlets, including official Russian sources and Ukrainian journalists working undercover in Crimea, human rights groups, and the author's own interviews with Crimean residents.<sup>1</sup>

Before Crimea's annexation by the Russian Federation in March 2014, the human rights situation in Crimea differed little from that in the rest of Ukraine. For the most part, residents of the peninsula enjoyed freedom of speech and assembly and had an active civil society. Numerous independent print, broadcast, and online media outlets operated. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots groups regularly

organized assemblies, rallies, and pickets on political, social, and environmental issues. Protests against corruption or illegal construction were commonplace, and Crimean Tatar organizations were particularly active.

Throughout the EuroMaidan period of mass protests from November 2013 to February 2014, this situation did not materially change.<sup>2</sup> However, the occupation and annexation of Crimea in early 2014 initiated a string of serious and ongoing human rights violations. This put the peninsula and its residents in an entirely new position—one predicated by Russia's need to quash unsanctioned political activity and pro-Ukrainian sentiment while presenting a picture of its actions as legal and locally supported.

To understand this crackdown it is important to recognize that, contrary to the Russian narrative, the annexation of the region was not the result of natural sociopolitical processes, nor did it grow from the aspirations of the Crimean population. In fact, residents of Crimea have actually grown more "Ukrainian" in their outlook in recent years. According to a 2011 survey by the Razumkov Center, an independent policy institute in Kyiv, 71.3 percent of respondents said they considered Ukraine their homeland—up from 39.3 percent in a 2008 poll.<sup>3</sup> Among ethnic Russian residents, 66.8 percent viewed Ukraine as their homeland; among ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, that

<sup>1</sup> Interviews with residents of Crimea took place during the author's visits to mainland Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> The day President Viktor Yanukovich rejected the Association Agreement with the EU, tens of thousands of protesters appeared on the Maidan, Kyiv's main square. When the authorities tried to disband the protesters by force, the demonstrations became much larger protests against Yanukovich's authoritarian policies.

<sup>3</sup> [http://razumkov.org.ua/ukr/files/category\\_journal/NSDI22\\_ukr\\_3.pdf](http://razumkov.org.ua/ukr/files/category_journal/NSDI22_ukr_3.pdf) (in Ukrainian).

**Andrii Klymenko** is Chief Editor of Black Sea News and Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Maidan of Foreign Affairs.



Pro-Russia forces patrol Simferopol International Airport on February 28, 2014. Source: Elizabeth Arrott/VOA.

figure was above 80 percent. Only 18.6 percent of respondents said they did not think of Ukraine as their homeland, while 10 percent said they could not answer the question.

In preparing to annex the peninsula, Russian state media launched a campaign to counter Ukrainian sentiments and inflame fears of impending repression by “Ukrainian fascists” among Crimea’s ethnic Russian population. This echoed similar rhetoric used by former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich’s Party of Regions toward the EuroMaidan movement.

Misinformation was followed in short order by infiltration and occupation (see appendix for a timeline of the occupation). The days immediately surrounding the start of the Russian occupation of Crimea on February 26 ushered in a series of escalating events: the arrival of Kuban Cossack fighters from Russia’s Krasnodar region, the covert deployment of Russian troops with military equipment and special-purpose airborne units, the seizure of Crimean airports, office buildings, and harbors, and a Russian military blockade of Ukrainian army and navy bases and law-enforcement facilities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cossacks are an official paramilitary formation of the Russian Federation. They are divided into regional territorial armies and Military Cossack Societies; the smallest of these is known as a “hundred” and derives from the World War I Cossack cavalry squadrons consisting of one hundred soldiers.

The Kuban Cossack Army (from Russia’s Krasnodar region) officially announced its support for the Russian population of Crimea on February 28. See Simon Shuster, “Armed Cossacks Flock to Crimea to Help

These blockades involved armed Crimean “self-defense” units, formed from the ranks of the Cossacks who had infiltrated the region and ex-members of the Berkut (the special Ukrainian police force that disbanded over the shooting of EuroMaidan protesters).<sup>5</sup> The executive branches of the Crimean regional and Sevastopol municipal governments were replaced, paving the way for the supposed legitimization of the occupation via a March 16 referendum, the legality and results of which

Russian Annexation Bid,” *Time*, March 12, 2014, <http://time.com/22125/ukraine-crimea-cossacks-russia/>; Roland Oliphant, “Ukraine Crisis: On the New Crimea Border the Russian Army Waits,” *Telegraph*, March 3, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10674305/Ukraine-crisis-On-Crimeas-new-border-the-Russian-Army-waits.html>). However, the first fifty-person Kuban Cossack Army group arrived in Crimea at the invitation of the Crimean Cossack Union on February 26, the day before the occupation began. Cossacks were urgently summoned in just two hours. Ukrainian border guards tried to prevent the passage of the delegation to the territory of Crimea. Russian media reported one thousand Kuban Cossacks arriving in Crimea at the end of February. According to unofficial information, however, there were about six thousand. Unofficial sources in the Cossack army reported that each Cossack was paid one thousand rubles per day for being in Crimea.

The Cossack grouping was dispersed throughout the peninsula. Together with alleged Berkut soldiers, the Cossacks took control of the checkpoints on all transportation routes and points of entry into Crimea (Chonhar and Turetskiy Val), as well as train stations and office buildings. The Cossacks set up camps, blocked entrances, and dug trenches and bunkers.

<sup>5</sup> On January 24, 2014, a congress of the Taurus “hundred” of the Tersk Military Cossack Society (from the Stavropol region of Russia) took place in Sevastopol. The congress demanded that the city administration created “people’s units” for protecting order in Sevastopol.

were overwhelmingly rejected by the international community.

This referendum was held under occupation conditions marked by the presence of Russian military troops, including Cossacks, and “self-defense” units sealing off border crossings, airfields, and military bases, and guarding polling stations and election commission offices. Such conditions persist in Crimea, with quasi-military, bureaucratic, and ostensibly legal mechanisms used to maintain an environment of misinformation and intimidation toward those who would question the legitimacy of Russia’s takeover.

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## CHANGING THE GUARD, REPLACING THE POPULATION

Maintaining this semblance of legitimacy requires establishing a new bureaucracy in Crimea and cultivating a “loyal” population incapable of organized protest or any other unsanctioned political activity. This is being accomplished in part by coercing Crimeans into obtaining Russian citizenship and supplanting key Crimean officials with Russian replacements.

In the year since the occupation began, Russia has removed Crimean professionals from strategically important posts throughout the peninsula. Major law enforcement officials, such as judges, prosecutors, investigators, police, and members of the security services, were steadily being replaced by personnel imported from different regions of Russia.

A partial sample shows the systematic nature of these replacements:

- March 25: After signing the treaty annexing Crimea, Russian President Vladimir Putin appoints Russian navy Vice Admiral Oleg Belaventsev as his official representative to the new Crimean Federal District.
- April 16: The port city of Feodosiia is assigned a new prosecutor from the Krasnoyarsk region of Russia.
- April 22: One hundred fifty employees from various Russian regions are detailed to the new investigative offices of Crimea and Sevastopol.

- April 25: A prosecutor from Orsk in the Orenburg region of Russia is appointed to a similar post in the Crimean city of Alushta.

ON MARCH 18, ALL CITIZENS OF UKRAINE LEGALLY RESIDING ON THE TERRITORY OF THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA AND SEVASTOPOL WERE AUTOMATICALLY DECLARED CITIZENS OF RUSSIA.

- May 16: A new head of the Crimean gas-producing company Chernomorneftegaz, a subsidiary of Ukrainian state energy company Naftogaz, is appointed from the Krasnodar region.
- May 18: Yevpatoriia in western Crimea gets a prosecutor from Russia’s Sverdlovsk.
- May 31: The Crimea and Sevastopol traffic police forces receive new management from the Russian Federation.
- July 28: Three regions of Crimea are assigned new prosecutors from the Russian Federation.
- August 25: Seventy-three staff members of thirteen territorial bodies of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service arrive in Crimea for placements.

Among the general population of Crimea, the Kremlin is seeking to ensure loyalty—or force emigration—by insisting that all residents take Russian citizenship. Those who refuse are subject to losing their jobs, property, and the right to reside in Crimea.

On March 18, all citizens of Ukraine legally residing on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol were automatically declared citizens of Russia. Those who wished to keep their Ukrainian citizenship had one month to inform the Russian occupation authorities.

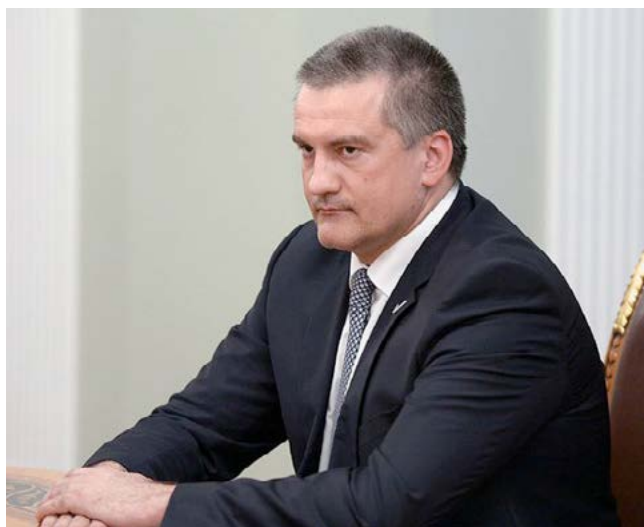


This procedure violated all norms of international law related to citizenship. Moreover, it was purposely complicated. In all of Crimea, an area of 10,000 square miles, only four offices—in Sevastopol, Bakhchysarai, Simferopol, and Bilohirsk—were designated to receive the paperwork for those wishing to retain Ukrainian citizenship. Applications by mail or proxy were not accepted. Some people had to travel as far as 150 miles to get to the nearest office. (Due to enormous lines, three additional offices, in Alushta, Yalta, and Kerch, were opened on April 12, five days before the deadline.) Those who rejected Russian citizenship, or have not yet received their Russian passports, are required to obtain a residence permit. In a territory with a population of 2.4 million, the issuance of residence permits is limited to 5,000 per year.<sup>6</sup>

People not granted residence permits are considered foreign nationals with no right to be on the “territory of the Russian Federation” for more than 180 days per year. Natives of Crimea with family, jobs, and property in the region will have to regularly travel outside the peninsula for long periods of time, without guarantees that they will be allowed back in. They will not be able to work without a residence permit and will be subject to employment quotas for foreigners.<sup>7</sup>

In response, Ukraine’s parliament passed a law on April 15 suspending the country’s dual citizenship prohibition for Crimeans who had Russian citizenship forced upon them.<sup>8</sup> In a tit-for-tat measure, Russia’s Duma then passed legislation on May 28 setting criminal penalties for Russian citizens who hold dual nationality but have not disclosed that fact to the Russian authorities. Penalties include fines of up to 200,000 rubles (about \$5,200) and up to 400 hours of community service. The law comes into force on January 2016.<sup>9</sup>

Public servants in Crimea, such as judges, police officers, and government officials, are required by the Russian Federation to turn in their Ukrainian passports.<sup>10</sup> According to numerous personal accounts from Crimean residents, all employees of state



In April 2014, Sergei Aksyonov was appointed acting “Governor of Crimea” by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Source: [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru).

institutions, including hospitals and schools, are unofficially required to do the same.

The authorities of occupied Crimea declared that Ukrainian passports would only be permitted until January 1, 2015, after which citizens with Ukrainian passports residing in Crimea would be considered aliens. As such, they would not be able to obtain free treatment at state health-care facilities, purchase mobile phone starter kits, register property, pay utilities, or be admitted to a university or work. Since the law came into effect, Ukrainian passports are de facto useless for everyday life.

By effectively coercing Crimeans into getting Russian citizenship, the Kremlin indirectly restricts Crimeans’ freedom of movement to the territory of the Russian Federation. Ukrainian law does not recognize documents issued by the occupation authorities; therefore, holders of Russian passports issued in Crimea will not be able to use them to enter other parts of Ukraine. And because Ukraine has notified other states that it considers such passports illegal, Crimeans will likely encounter problems when traveling abroad, especially in countries that require visas. This will also affect those who were under eighteen years of age on March 18, 2014, and had not yet been required to obtain a passport for foreign travel.<sup>11</sup>

6 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/85896> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/87562> (in Russian); <http://www.c-inform.info/news/id/10994> (in Russian).

7 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/85239> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/81225> (in Russian).

8 <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1207-18> (in Ukrainian).

9 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80869> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80309> (in Russian).

10 <http://investigator.org.ua/news/124274/> (in Russian).

11 At the age of sixteen, every Ukrainian citizen must obtain a do-



Council of Ministers of Crimea “Chairman” Sergei Aksyonov, State Council of the Republic of Crimea “President” Vladimir Konstantinov, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and “Mayor” of Sevastopol Alexey Chaly sign a treaty making Crimea part of the Russian Federation on March 18, 2014. Source: [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru).

## RESTRICTING COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA: AN “INFORMATION GHETTO”

Russia is working to turn the Crimean peninsula into an information ghetto, where citizens are denied the opportunity to receive news and communication from the rest of Ukraine. On the heels of the annexation treaty, Russia took steps to replace Ukrainian Internet service providers on the peninsula. Access to Ukrainian television has been virtually eliminated, and major Ukrainian mobile phone services have been disconnected, with occupation authorities openly touting a new Russian provider.

An amendment to Russia’s criminal code was passed in the Russian Federation on December 25, 2013, before the Crimean annexation. The law took effect in the territory of the Russian Federation on

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mestic passport, which becomes his or her primary official identification document. However, to travel internationally, adults must obtain a foreign travel passport. Those under eighteen can travel internationally by having their name included in their parents’ foreign travel passport or by obtaining a child travel passport.

May 9, 2014, which at that point included the Crimean peninsula, and made it illegal to publicly call for “actions aimed at violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.”<sup>12</sup> Public calls to action are defined as oral or written suggestions or requests to act addressed to a particular person or persons, or to the general public. Neither the context in which those calls are made nor whether they generate actual action matters from the perspective of the law.

Crimean media outlets were forced to re-register in accordance with Russian law, and, as a result, independent media essentially ceased to exist on the peninsula. Online publications were particularly affected; under Ukrainian law they were not required to register with state authorities, but under Russian law both online and print outlets must do so.

Today, challenging Crimea’s status as part of Russia or supporting its return to Ukraine—in the media, on social networks, or in a public place—is a prosecutable offense. The law also carries a potential three-year prison term and fines of up to three hundred thousand rubles or two years of the convicted person’s wages. Harsher penalties, including up to five years in prison,

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80195> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80100> (in Russian).

are reserved for making such calls “with the use of media, including information and telecommunications networks, including Internet.”<sup>13</sup>

As with Russian laws on “instigating extremism,” determining what constitutes such a call and the intent of the speaker or writer is up to law-enforcement bodies. Lawyers, therefore, recommend that Crimeans choose words carefully and even watch their intonation when addressing topics related to Crimea, Ukraine, and Russia in public—be it online, in a store, or on public transport—to avoid their comments being interpreted as a “call” or “appeal.”

In such an environment, numerous independent media outlets and NGOs that do not agree with the annexation of Crimea have left the peninsula for mainland Ukraine, including the Center for Investigative Journalism, Black Sea News, Crimean Events, the Black Sea TV and Radio Company, the Information Press Center, and the Taurus Institute of Regional Development. The result is that Crimea now has only pro-Russian media.

Since the occupation began, all broadcasts of Ukrainian TV networks have been shut down. On cable systems, the situation ranges from the complete elimination of Ukrainian outlets in some places to the airing of a few, mostly entertainment channels in others.

Internet traffic from elsewhere in Ukraine was also swiftly cut. Within days of the annexation, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev ordered state-owned communications company Rostelecom to provide Internet service to Crimea as soon as possible. Over the next month, the firm laid a submarine cable across the Kerch Strait from Russia. In May, Rostelecom acquired three Crimean fiber-optic-cable owners.<sup>14</sup> It began providing service to Crimea in late July.<sup>15</sup> Private Internet service providers are now required to operate in accordance with Russian law, under which they must store information on users for six months and disable access to any site if so ordered by Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB).

13 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80195> (in Russian).

14 Ilya Kharennikov, “Rostelecom Wins \$4.7 Billion Internet Job, Buys Crimea Operators,” Bloomberg, May 13, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-13/rostelecom-wins-4-7-billion-internet-job-buys-crimea-operators.html>.

15 Doug Madory, “No Turning Back: Russia Activates Crimean Cable,” Dyn Research, July 31, 2014, <http://www.renesys.com/2014/07/no-turning-back-russia-crimea/>.

De facto authorities in the Crimea and Sevastopol administrations declared that they could disconnect mobile phone users in the region from the Ukrainian providers that held most of the market before the occupation.<sup>16</sup> Before annexation, mobile users in Crimea were mainly served by the three largest Ukrainian operators: MTS Ukraine (57 percent), Kyivstar (21 percent), and Astelit (16 percent).<sup>17</sup>

SINCE THE OCCUPATION  
BEGAN, ALL BROADCASTS OF  
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HAVE BEEN SHUT DOWN.

In early August, connection in Crimea to both MTS Ukraine and Kyivstar was stopped. Both companies said they were not responsible for the disruption of service.

On August 4, Russian operator K-Telekom announced the launch of service on the peninsula to replace MTS Ukraine.<sup>18</sup> The following day, MTS Ukraine said it was unable to control an important node responsible for communications in Crimea. Then, on August 8, the Ukrainian firm began roaming service in Crimea, using K-Telekom’s network, making it much more expensive to use MTS Ukraine in the region. Dmitry Polonsky, Crimea’s “Deputy Prime Minister,” said the move indicated that MTS Ukraine now recognized it was operating in a foreign country.<sup>19</sup>

Kyivstar’s press office said that on August 11, unidentified armed men entered the company’s

16 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/87640> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/87181> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/84999> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/84927> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/84876> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/84724> (in Russian).

17 <http://ria.ru/economy/20140401/1002141618.html> (in Russian).

18 James Barton, “MTS Ends Ukraine Services as Russia Reviews Crimea Telecom Options,” Developing Telecoms, August 6, 2014, <http://www.developingtelecoms.com/business/deals/121-operators/5392-mts-ends-ukraine-services-as-russia-reviews-crimea-telecom-options.html>.

19 Ibid.

Simferopol office and began installing alternative equipment. Its service remains disabled in Crimea. The de facto authorities say these mobile operators have been kicked out because Ukrainian legislation supposedly prohibits them from paying for property leases, electricity, and equipment maintenance in Russian rubles. As of the time of this writing, there are no longer any Ukrainian mobile operators in Crimea.

As of August 25, Ukrainian fixed-line operators had also been shut down in Sevastopol and their customers switched to Rostelecom. According to Black Sea News and the Maidan of Foreign Affairs think tank, Ukrtelecom, the main fixed-line operator in Crimea, will likely have to either register its business in Crimea in accordance with Russian legislation or sell its assets to Russian operators.<sup>20</sup>

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## TARGETING ANNEXATION CRITICS AND “DISLOYAL” GROUPS

From the first days of the occupation, the Russian Federation organized a large-scale campaign of physical harassment and criminal prosecution of potentially disloyal groups and anyone who opposed the annexation of Crimea. On the pretext of ensuring security, the peninsula’s de facto authorities have limited the locations where mass gatherings can be held. They have also changed the school curriculum, harried certain religious groups, and persecuted individuals through detentions, property seizures, and police raids.

At first, these actions were carried out largely by the so-called “self-defense” forces, but they have since evolved into a systematic campaign conducted in concert with police and the FSB. The chief targets can be divided roughly into three groups (with some overlap):

- ethnic Ukrainians and other ethnic, religious, or national groups viewed as favoring Ukraine’s position

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<sup>20</sup> Maidan of Foreign Affairs is a Kyiv-based nonprofit organization that aims to formulate an independent vision of Ukrainian foreign policy. The Black Sea News is a Crimean media outlet forced to flee the peninsula in March 2014 and is now based in Kyiv.

in the conflict, including members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate; Catholics; Jews; and immigrants from Poland, Belarus, and the Baltic states

FROM THE FIRST DAYS OF THE OCCUPATION, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ORGANIZED A LARGE-SCALE CAMPAIGN OF PHYSICAL HARASSMENT AND CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF ANYONE WHO OPPOSED THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA.

- the Crimean Tatar community, particularly officials of its self-governing body, the Mejlis, and other Muslim organizations, including the Spiritual Administration of Crimea Muslims and groups designated as extremist by Russia but not by Ukraine
- journalists, civil society activists, and members of NGOs existing prior to the occupation

### Ukrainians

The communal targeting of ethnic Ukrainians has often involved religious institutions and schools, where the Ukrainian curriculum is being curtailed through both official and unofficial means. In April and May 2014, Crimean departments of education announced that Ukrainian language and literature would be studied only as an elective.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the number of Russian language and literature lessons doubled; Russian history and geography lessons also increased. This, and the general anti-Ukrainian political climate, dissuaded most parents and students from electing to take Ukrainian classes. On October 9, the de facto Crimean Minister of Education, Science, and Youth, Nataliya Goncharova, said that the demand

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<sup>21</sup> <http://crimea.vgorode.ua/news/sobytyia/224277-ukraynskyi-yazyk-v-krymskykh-shkolakh-budut-yzuchat-po-zhelanyui> (in Russian).

for Ukrainian instruction in Crimea was rapidly declining.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, there is no longer a single one of the six hundred schools in Crimea offering instruction fully in Ukrainian, and only twenty have separate Ukrainian classes. This has led to massive job losses among teachers of Ukrainian, who now have to choose another source of income or retrain at their own expense.<sup>23</sup> In addition, high school students planning to take the External Independent Evaluation (the Ukrainian equivalent to the United States' Scholastic Aptitude Test) in order to enter universities in Ukraine are thus deprived of an opportunity to study in accordance with the Ukrainian curriculum.

Many children in Crimea now face additional obstacles outside of the classroom. As of January 1, 2014, the Child Services Registry of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea included 4,323 orphans and children deprived of parental care;<sup>24</sup> some were living in special boarding schools on the peninsula. After the annexation, they were automatically recognized as Russian citizens and thus deprived of the option to choose their citizenship and place of residence.<sup>25</sup>

The recognition of these children as citizens of the Russian Federation significantly complicates the procedure of adoption or guardianship by citizens of Ukraine or elsewhere, given Russia's increasing restrictions on foreign adoptions. Full information on how the rights and interests of these children are being protected is not available. This situation potentially violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by interfering with the exercise of a child's right to preserve his or her identity, including citizenship, name, and family relations.

## Religious Groups

Members and leaders of Ukraine's indigenous religious groups, who stood with EuroMaidan protesters against Yanukovich's presidency and have spoken out against Russia's annexation of Crimea, have been intimidated and harassed by the authorities or unknown attackers.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after expressing support

for besieged Ukrainian military units in February and March, members of Crimea's five parishes of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) began receiving threats that they would be prosecuted and their parishes eliminated.

THERE IS NO LONGER A SINGLE ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED SCHOOLS IN CRIMEA OFFERING INSTRUCTION FULLY IN UKRAINIAN.

In March, three of its priests—from Sevastopol, Yalta, and Yevpatoriia—were kidnapped and later released. One of them, Mykolai Kwich, said he was questioned by members of the Crimean “self-defense” force and Russian intelligence officers and charged with extremism.<sup>27</sup> The priests refused to talk about any further details of their detention or release. Later in the spring, the three priests left Crimea, but they returned to their parishes in late August. On September 2, the priest from Yevpatoriia, Bohdan Kostetsky, and twelve parishioners were detained on the way to Yalta, placed in a basement, interrogated, and released the following day without charge. These actions were likely acts of intimidation related to the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Maidan position of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine.<sup>28</sup> The Greek Catholic priests remaining in the peninsula await clarification of the church's legal status.

Parishioners and the priest of St. Clement of Rome, a Ukrainian Orthodox church in Sevastopol that sits

22 <http://ria.ru/education/20141009/1027621414.html> (in Russian).

23 [http://ipc-bigyalta.org/new\\_big\\_yalta/14463.html](http://ipc-bigyalta.org/new_big_yalta/14463.html) (in Russian).

24 Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea* (June 2014), [http://crimeahr.org/sites/default/files/crimea\\_field\\_mission\\_report\\_june\\_2014\\_eng.pdf](http://crimeahr.org/sites/default/files/crimea_field_mission_report_june_2014_eng.pdf), p. 18.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

26 “Battle of Orthodox Christian Patriarchs as Ukraine's Filaret

Denounces Russia's Kirill,” *Kyiv Post*, January 8, 2014, <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/politics/battle-of-orthodox-christian-patriarchs-as-ukraines-filaret-denounces-russias-kirill-334763.html>.

27 Sonya Bilocerkowycz and Sofia Kochmar, “Ukrainian Catholics Experiencing ‘Total Persecution’ in Crimea,” Catholic News Agency, March 18, 2014, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/ukrainian-catholics-experiencing-total-persecution-in-crimea/>; <http://investigator.org.ua/news/122162/> (in Russian); <http://investigator.org.ua/news/122277/> (in Russian).

28 <http://ru.krymr.com/content/article/26565233.html> (in Russian); <http://www.unian.net/society/958567-v-kryimu-zaderjali-svyaschennika-ugkts-i-gruppu-prihojan-iz-evpatorii.html> (in Russian).

on the grounds of a Ukrainian Naval Academy facility, have been barred from using the building.<sup>29</sup> On July 1, a group of armed men in Russian Cossack dress broke into a Ukrainian Orthodox church in Perevalnoye village, in the Simferopol district, and destroyed religious relics. During the attack, a pregnant parishioner and a priest's daughter who suffers from cerebral palsy were hurt, and the priest's car was broken into. Archbishop Klyment of Simferopol and Crimea reported that the police took the invaders' side and refused to register a complaint.<sup>30</sup>

FOR THEIR REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE AUTHORITY OF THE DE FACTO GOVERNMENT, TATAR LEADERS HAVE BEEN EXILED OR BANNED FROM PUBLIC LIFE, THEIR PUBLIC COMMEMORATIONS PROHIBITED, AND THEIR MEDIA MUZZLED.

The pastor of the Salvation Army's Crimean branch, Ruslan Zuyev, who had reported on the pressure applied to representatives of Protestant religious groups in Crimea, was forced to leave Crimea with his family in June. He had been repeatedly summoned by the FSB for airing "pro-Ukrainian" views.<sup>31</sup> In early March, Rabbi Mikhail Kapustin of the Communities of Reform Judaism of Simferopol and Ukraine fled Crimea with his family. Kapustin had denounced Russian aggression in Crimea. In late February, someone painted a swastika and anti-Semitic graffiti on his Ner Tamid synagogue.<sup>32</sup> In April, vandals

29 <http://www.segodnya.ua/regions/krym/v-krymu-otbirayut-hramy-kiievskogo-patriarhata-516020.html> (in Russian).

30 <http://ru.krymr.com/archive/news-ru/20140701/16898/16898.html?id=25408930> (in Russian).

31 "Crimea: Enforced Departure of Turkish Imams; FSB Surveillance," Forum 18 News Service, September 3, 2014, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1992](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1992).

32 <http://rus.newsru.ua/ukraine/21mar2014/kapustin.html> (in Rus-

defaced Sevastopol's monument to the 4,200 Jews, including Crymchaks (a small and separate indigenous group of Tatar-speaking Crimean Jews), who were murdered by the Nazi occupiers on July 12, 1942.<sup>33</sup>

On June 13, the façade of the Chukurcha Jami mosque in Simferopol was damaged when someone threw a Molotov cocktail at it. A surveillance camera recorded the attack, but a perpetrator has yet to be identified or arrested. In addition, the fence next to the mosque was painted with a black swastika and the arson date.<sup>34</sup>

## Crimean Tatars

The Tatars of Crimea have endured especially harsh treatment since the annexation. Although there are no recent official statistics, it is estimated the Tatars number at approximately three hundred thousand.<sup>35</sup> For their refusal to recognize the authority of the de facto government, Tatar leaders have been exiled or banned from public life, their public commemorations prohibited, and their media muzzled.

One of the earliest signs that Tatars would receive brutal treatment came on March 15, when the body of Reshat Ametov, a Crimean Tatar activist, was found roughly two weeks after he attended a peaceful protest in front of the occupied Crimean parliament.<sup>36</sup> Witnesses reported seeing men in military uniforms leading Ametov away from the protest. His relatives later told Human Rights Watch that police had classified his death as violent.<sup>37</sup> Prosecutors have released no information on the progress of the investigation into his death.

About three weeks later, on April 8, a monument to the renowned twentieth-century Crimean Tatar choreographer Akim Dzhemilev was demolished in the village of Malorechenske. In the same village, a red

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sian).

33 <http://www.newsru.com/russia/22apr2014/ussr.html> (in Russian).

34 [http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/mechet-v-simferopole-zabrosali-kokteyley-ami-molotova-146989\\_.html](http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/mechet-v-simferopole-zabrosali-kokteyley-ami-molotova-146989_.html) (in Russian).

35 "Russia's Annexation of Crimea Upends Lives of Tatar Minority," Associated Press, December 10, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-s-annexation-of-crimea-upends-lives-of-tatar-minority/513093.html>.

36 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/04/8/7021747/> (in Russian).

37 Human Rights Watch, "Crimea: Disappeared Man Found Killed," March 18, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/18/crimea-disappeared-man-found-killed>.



Russian servicemen attempt to block the way for Crimean Tatars crossing a checkpoint connecting Crimea and the Kherson region in May 2014. Source: Reuters.

swastika was painted on the windows of a school whose headmaster is a Crimean Tatar.<sup>38</sup>

On April 21, members of “self-defense” units arrived at the office of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis in Simferopol and removed a Ukrainian flag that had been raised on the building two days earlier. A similar event played out in mid-September, followed by a Russian security service search of a Mejlis member’s home and a raid on the Mejlis and a Tatar newspaper.<sup>39</sup> In the following days, the Tatars were evicted outright from the Mejlis building.<sup>40</sup>

In late April, the press secretary to Mustafa Dzhemilev, a Crimean Tatar and Soviet-era dissident who formerly led the Mejlis, said he and another Tatar leader had been banned from broadcasts of the Crimea State TV and Radio network.<sup>41</sup> Two weeks later, Dzhemilev was barred from the territory of Russia and Crimea, although Russian authorities denied it at the time.

He was returning to Crimea through the Turetskiy Val checkpoint in Armiansk, northern Crimea, and was blocked by Russian special forces and Crimean “self-defense” forces. In response, Tatars broke through the security line at the checkpoint to meet Dzhemilev. For that, the prosecutor of Crimea, Natalya Poklonskaya, ordered the Russian Investigative Committee and the FSB to investigate the protesters on charges of mass rioting, using force against officials, and illegally crossing the state border.<sup>42</sup> Poklonskaya also threatened to dissolve the Mejlis because of “extremist” actions by Tatars.<sup>43</sup> The prosecutor’s office refused to provide Tatar leaders with a copy of the warning, which would have allowed them to appeal it.

In June, Dzhemilev’s son, Khaizer, was taken into custody and charged with murder in connection with the May 2013 shooting of a security guard who worked for his family. Khaizer Dzhemilev’s case was being reviewed for a possible downgrade from murder to manslaughter when Crimea was annexed. The de facto authorities now say he is subject to Russian justice. At a July 16 press conference, Dzhemilev and his lawyer said that the European Court of

38 <http://investigator.org.ua/news/124075/> (in Russian).

39 “Crimean Tatar Mejlis Raided, Searched by Police,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 16, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/crimean-tatar-mejlis-raided-police-search-avdet-simferopol/26587038.html>.

40 “Russian Officials Impound Crimean Tatars’ Assembly,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 18, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/crimean-tatar-mejlis-russia-impounded/26592606.html>.

41 “Crimean Tatar Leaders Banned on Crimean State TV,” Crimean News Agency, April 22, 2014, <http://qha.com.ua/crimean-tatar-leaders-banned-on-crimean-state-tv-131226en.html>.

42 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/79292> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/79825> (in Russian).

43 “Protestors Warn Crimean Tatars Over ‘Extremism’ Amid Protests,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, May 4, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-crimea-tatars-warned-extremism/25372706.html>.

Human Rights had ordered his son's release, but in late September he reported that his son had been transferred to a prison in Russia's Krasnodar region.<sup>44</sup>

On May 15, FSB officers raided the home of Ali Khamzin, head of the Mejlis' Foreign Relations Department, on allegations that they had found Khamzin's business card in the possession of members of Pravyi Sektor, a Ukrainian political group demonized by the Russian authorities. As Khamzin was in Kyiv at the time, his son, who also lived in the house, was summoned by the FSB the following day.<sup>45</sup>

IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO MAY 18, THE ANNUAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR TATARS WHO WERE EXPELLED FROM CRIMEA IN 1944, THE DE FACTO AUTHORITIES SOUGHT TO PREEMPT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC GATHERINGS.

In the days leading up to May 18, the annual day of remembrance for Tatars who were expelled from Crimea in 1944, the de facto authorities sought to preempt opportunities for public gatherings. On May 16, Sergey Aksyonov, Crimea's de facto Prime Minister, issued a decree prohibiting mass events until June 6.

In mid-June, the Simferopol City Council denied a request by Tatar officials to hold their annual Flag Day celebrations on June 26 in a city center park that had hosted the event in previous years. The council refused, saying that a "mass gathering in an area not intended to accommodate the expected number of the event participants can create conditions for

44 <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/vidiogallery/gallery?galleryId=247461056&> (in Russian); "Dzhemilev's Son Transferred in Custody from Crimea to Krasnodar;" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 29, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/khaiser-dzhemilev-son-custody-crimea-arrest-transfer-krasnodar-tatar/26611103.html>.

45 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/80412> (in Russian).

violating the public order and the rights and lawful interests of other citizens."<sup>46</sup>

On June 24, masked men unlawfully entered the house of Eider Osmanov, the Deputy Director of a madrasa in the Simferopol village of Kolchugino, while he was at home with his wife and two young children.<sup>47</sup> Later that day, a group of masked men invaded the school itself when students were present, according to Eider Adzhimambetov, Press Secretary of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea and Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis. The invaders searched the school and took the Deputy Director with them. He was released several hours later without any charges.

On July 5, Mejlis Chairman Refat Chubarov was banned from Crimea and Russia for five years on the grounds that he and the Mejlis had engaged in extremist activity. Chubarov had been traveling back to Crimea from a neighboring part of Ukraine when he was stopped at a checkpoint and barred from entering the peninsula.<sup>48</sup>

### *Journalists and Political Activists*

The list of abuses against journalists and activists since the Russian takeover of Crimea could comprise an entire report in itself. However, this abridged version highlights the severity of the current situation. The tone was set in early March, when armed men cut Ukrainian radio and television signals and Russian channels took over the airwaves.<sup>49</sup> Since then, journalists have been subject to an ongoing campaign of harassment, violence, and threats.

On March 1, several members of the Crimean "self-defense" forces entered the editorial office of the Center for Investigative Journalism in Simferopol.<sup>50</sup> According to center director Valentina Samar, the

46 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/82155> (in Russian).

47 <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/82533> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/82539> (in Russian); <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/82564> (in Russian).

48 Amnesty International, "Document—Ukraine: Crimean Tatar Leader Banned from Homeland," July 9, 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR50/035/2014/en/82d8d901-6885-4bd3-81a0-e9752db-cff03/eur500352014en.html>.

49 Reporters Without Borders, "Freedom of Information in Dire Straits in Crimea," March 7, 2014, <http://en.rsf.org/ukraine-freedom-of-information-in-dire-07-03-2014,45960.html>.

50 David E. Caplan, "Masked Gunmen Seize Crimean Investigative Journalism Center," Global Investigative Journalism Network, March 2, 2014, <http://gijn.org/2014/03/02/masked-gunmen-seize-crimean-investigative-journalism-center/>.



paramilitaries demanded to see the organization's media registration documents and office lease agreement. Samar said that shortly afterward the Federation of Crimean Trade Unions, which owns the building, asked the center to vacate the premises by the end of the month.<sup>51</sup> On May 17, FSB officers detained and interrogated Waclav Radziwinowicz, a Moscow-based reporter for the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, for several hours. Various reports say he was accused of misrepresenting his identity or crossing the border illegally.<sup>52</sup> Nikolai Semena, a Crimea-based reporter for the Ukrainian newspaper *Dien* and photographer Lenyara Abibulayeva were also detained.

Those attempting to cover the cancellation of the commemoration of the Tatar deportation, and reporters in the Tatar community itself, have been especially visible targets. On the eve of the Tatar deportation anniversary, a photographer from the *Crimean Telegraph* newspaper was detained by “self-defense” forces while recording a story about the maneuvers of police special units.<sup>53</sup> On May 18, the deportation anniversary, “self-defense” forces detained Crimean Tatar journalist Osman Pashayev and Turkish cameraman Cengiz Kizgin for several hours at the paramilitary group's headquarters in Simferopol. Pashayev stated on his Facebook page after their release that the two journalists were threatened with physical violence and subjected to psychological abuse.<sup>54</sup> They were also robbed of equipment and personal belongings valued at seventy thousand hryvnya (approximately six thousand dollars at the time). Afterward, they were transferred to police custody and interrogated with no attorney present.

On the same day, a journalist for Russia's Dozhd TV was shooting a video in the central square of Simferopol when “self-defense” forces told him to delete the footage. He complied but still was brought to the “self-defense” office, where his equipment was damaged.<sup>55</sup>

On June 2, “self-defense” forces detained journalist Sergei Mokrushin and producer Vladlen Melnikov of the Center for Investigative Journalism for making “inappropriate remarks” about top Russian officials.<sup>56</sup> They were handcuffed and taken to the headquarters of the “self-defense” forces, where their telephones and social media accounts were inspected. Both men say they were beaten and Mokrushin appeared to have bruising around the ribcage and possibly broken ribs.<sup>57</sup>

JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO AN ONGOING CAMPAIGN OF HARASSMENT, VIOLENCE, AND THREATS.

On June 3, the Editor-in-Chief of the Crimean Tatar newspaper *Avdet*, Shevket Kaybullaev, was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office of Simferopol, where he received notice that the newspaper was being investigated for extremist activity because it referred to “Russia's annexation of Crimea” and to Crimea as an “occupied territory.”<sup>58</sup> Two days later, a founder of the Events of Crimea website, Ruslan Yugosh, reported on attempts by Crimean police to put pressure on him by interrogating his seventy-three-year-old mother. According to Yugosh, representatives of the police came to his house and summoned his mother to testify in the district police station; no summons papers were served.<sup>59</sup>

On June 22, Sevastopol occupation police detained reporter Tatiana Kozyreva and cameraman Karen Arzumanyan of independent Ukrainian channel Hromadske TV, who were broadcasting from a rally at a city square.<sup>60</sup> The journalists said they were interrogated by staff members of the Leninsky district

51 <http://investigator.org.ua/news/120460/> (in Russian).

52 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, “Conflicting Sides Should Stop Targeting Media Professionals Covering Ukraine Crisis, Says OSCE Representative,” May 19, 2014, <http://www.osce.org/fom/118686>; Reporters Without Borders, “Ukrainian and Russian Authorities Step Up Arrests of Journalists,” May 21, 2014, <http://en.rsf.org/ukraine-ukrainian-and-russian-authorities-21-05-2014,46320.html>.

53 <http://investigator.org.ua/news/127662/> (in Russian).

54 <http://investigator.org.ua/news/127425/> (in Russian).

55 Reporters Without Borders, “Ukrainian and Russian Authorities Step Up Arrests of Journalists,” May 21, 2014.

56 Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea*, p. 5.

57 Reporters Without Borders, “More Journalists Abducted in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea,” June 4, 2014, <http://en.rsf.org/ukraine-more-journalists-abducted-in-04-06-2014,46399.html>.

58 Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea*, p. 6.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 6.



Protesters in Moscow carry a banner reading "Occupation of Crimea Is the Shame of Russia" during a peace march in March 2014.  
Source: Bogomolov.PL.

police department and the Department for Combating Extremism.

Similarly, activists who oppose Russia's annexation of Crimea or simply speak up for human rights have been subjected to torture or hounded out of the peninsula, losing their property in the process. Some have gone missing, with authorities offering little to no evidence they are investigating the disappearances.

Andrey Schekun, a EuroMaidan activist and representative of the education and culture center Ukrainian House,<sup>61</sup> fled to Kyiv with his family after being abducted by "self-defense" forces on March 9, tortured, and eventually released on March 20. His apartment in Bakhchysarai, Crimea, was sealed by unidentified men on June 7.<sup>62</sup>

On May 10 (by some accounts, May 11) Crimea-born filmmaker Oleg Sentsov was detained by the FSB. Sentsov had participated in the AutoMaidan protests and helped bring food and supplies to Ukrainian soldiers trapped in Crimean bases during the early days of Russia's occupation. He was charged with plotting to destroy key infrastructure in Simferopol, Yalta, and

Sevastopol.<sup>63</sup> Along with Sentsov, activists Gennady Afanasiev, Alexei Chirni, and Alexander Kolchenko were also detained. The FSB claims they belong to Pravyi Sektor, but that organization and the detainees both denied their membership. On June 4, Sentsov's lawyer, Dmitry Dinse, said his client had been tortured in an attempt to coerce him into confessing. Dinse has filed a complaint with Russia's Investigative Committee. Sentsov and Kolchenko's requests to see the Ukrainian Consul were denied.<sup>64</sup> A court has ordered Sentsov and his co-defendants to be held in pretrial detention until mid-January.<sup>65</sup>

The fate of Vasyl Chernysh, a resident of Sevastopol and an AutoMaidan activist who was reported missing on March 15, the eve of the Crimean referendum, remains unknown. His family fears he is no longer alive.<sup>66</sup>

63 Ibid., p. 17.

64 Amnesty International, "Ukrainian Detainee Threatened with Rape," June 24, 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/EUR50/027/2014/fr/740a7dff-12c4-4685-8e57-159c923fa4ac/eur-500272014en.html>.

65 "Moscow Court Prolongs Detention for Ukrainian Director," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 29, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/sentsov-crimea-terror-pretrial-detention-prolongation-lefortovo/26611965.html>.

66 Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea*, p. 4.

61 The Ukrainian House Crimean Center for Business and Cultural Cooperation is an NGO engaged in educational and cultural activity. It supported the EuroMaidan, and during the 2013-2014 "Revolution of Dignity" organized pro-EuroMaidan meetings in Crimea.

62 Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea*, p. 17.

The Prosecutor's Office and law enforcement agencies of Crimea have not provided information on the progress of investigations into the late-May disappearances of three other activists: Leonid Korzh, a member of Ukrainian House, reported missing on May 22; Timur Shaimardanov, reported missing on May 26; and Seiran Zinedinov, kidnapped on May 30. All were active in the movement for Ukraine's territorial integrity and provided aid to Ukrainian military units trapped by the initial Russian takeover in February and March. Their relatives and friends believe their disappearances were connected and politically motivated.<sup>67</sup>

On June 29, houses in Simferopol were pasted with leaflets calling on residents to inform the Crimean Department of the FSB—anonously, if necessary—of people who were “against the return of Crimea to the Russian Federation or participated in the regional Maidan.”<sup>68</sup>

Not all victims of violence or abuse since the annexation belong to the above groups. Still unsolved, for instance, are the April 6 murders of Ukrainian Navy Major Stanislav Karachevskyi and sixteen-year-old Mark Ivaniuk, who witnesses said was beaten by a police officer after being heard speaking Ukrainian. The boy later died of his injuries.<sup>69</sup>

## PROPERTY RIGHTS

Since the annexation, property rights in Crimea have been violated on a massive scale. All Ukrainian state property on the peninsula is now being expropriated under the rubric of “nationalization” by the Republic of Crimea. Private companies have also been effectively confiscated through hostile takeovers and forced management changes carried out by “self-defense” forces. Crimean authorities decreed on July 30 that all lease contracts on property dated before the annexation could be terminated prematurely and

unilaterally. So far, four hundred public companies have been “nationalized” and the list is constantly growing. It includes all seaports, airports, railroads, wineries, grain elevators, agricultural enterprises, water and energy supply infrastructures, and some two hundred health resorts. The famous Nikitskyi Botanical Gardens, the Artek Children's Center, the oil and gas company Chernomorneftegaz, and the More shipyard have also been seized.<sup>70</sup>

ALL UKRAINIAN STATE PROPERTY ON THE PENINSULA IS NOW BEING EXPROPRIATED UNDER THE RUBRIC OF “NATIONALIZATION” BY THE REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA.

The expropriation is not limited to Ukrainian state property. Many “nationalized” entities also include trade unions, higher education institutions, the Academy of Sciences, and civic organizations.

Private companies are not officially expropriated, but are instead subject to hostile takeovers and smear campaigns from the region's de facto authorities. For instance, officials may spread false information that a private enterprise is bankrupt or faulty before seizing it.<sup>71</sup> This has been especially true of property belonging to Ukrainian businessmen who oppose the Russian takeover. In one August 24 incident, “self-defense” henchmen blocked managers of the large Zaliv shipyard in Kerch from entering—supposedly at the request of the workers. The plant belongs to Ukrainian billionaire Konstantyn Zhevago, a member of parliament who supports the democratic changes in the country.<sup>72</sup>

Russian authorities avoid taking part in these “nationalizations” directly, instead deeming property taken from the Ukrainian government to have been

67 Ibid., p. 4.

68 Ibid., p. 6.

69 “Russian Soldier Kills Ukrainian Officer in Crimea,” Unian Information Agency, April 7, 2014, <http://www.unian.info/politics/904792-russian-soldier-kills-ukrainian-officer-in-crimea.html>; Crimea Field Mission on Human Rights, *Brief Review of the Situation in Crimea*, April 2014, <http://helsinki.org.ua/index.php?id=1400849870>.

70 Monitored by the Black Sea News and Maidan of Foreign Affairs.

71 <http://www.sobytiya.info/public/14/44006> (in Russian).

72 “Zaliv Goes to Court,” *Tradewinds News*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.tradewindsnews.com/shipsales/344853/Zaliv-goes-to-court>.

transferred to the Republic of Crimea. Similarly, Russia's largest state-owned monopolies have not taken direct control of the expropriated enterprises in Crimea, fearing international sanctions. Instead, the occupation authorities created de facto government enterprises to assume control.

The concentration of a vast number of enterprises in the hands of the "Crimean authorities" has worrying economic implications. The authorities of autonomous Crimea have never run so many state businesses at once and have no pool of top state managers to draw from, because Russian personnel has been limited largely to military, law enforcement, and security agencies. This creates a serious management problem that will likely lead to a severe economic crisis in Crimea. The danger is compounded by the inability to attract private foreign investment to occupied Crimea. The expropriated businesses in Crimea have lost old markets and contracts and are in the process of switching to Russian legislation. They are kept afloat only by Russian bank loans that are allocated mostly for salaries.

Russia's approach to economic development in the occupied territory has been opportunistic and chaotic. Plans for the funding and construction of a bridge over the Kerch Strait change every few weeks. There is also a kaleidoscope of ideas on how to supply the peninsula with water, ranging from building desalinization plants to bringing it by tankers, to laying an underwater pipe network across the strait.

Russia will likely have to continue heavily subsidizing Crimea just to keep pensions and public employees' salaries at levels promised before the referendum. To do so, Moscow is already using national retirement savings funds, as well as the budget reserves of some regions of Russia, which increasingly fuels local irritation.<sup>73</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

The Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea has unleashed an ongoing chain of human rights violations across the peninsula. The de facto government and so-called "self-defense" units have incapacitated Crimea's military and effectively cut off its citizens from the outside world. This approach has led to the detention and disappearance of dissenters, the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, the stifling of the media, and the forced nationalization of Ukrainian state property. Many of these abuses are not widely known due to the effectiveness of the occupying forces' media crackdown and a Russian political narrative that masks the stark reality faced by the Crimean people.

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73 [http://www.ng.ru/economics/2014-06-26/1\\_pensii.html](http://www.ng.ru/economics/2014-06-26/1_pensii.html) (in Russian); <http://www.newsru.com/finance/25jun2014/siluanovdenegnet.html> (in Russian); <http://inosmi.info/cctv-moskva-vkladyvaet-v-krym-milliardy-no-ne-vidit-blagodarnosti.html>. (in Russian).

# APPENDIX: TIMELINE OF THE ANNEXATION

## February–March 2014

On February 20, as Vladislav Surkov, an aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin, visited Crimea, social networks reported that a column of armored fighting vehicles was seen leaving the Kazachya Bay, where the Marine Brigade of Russia's Black Sea fleet was based, and was headed toward Sevastopol. The following day Russian authorities said the move was intended to enhance protection of the fleet in light of the difficult political situation in Ukraine. Supposedly, the marines were to step up the protection of the Black Sea fleet military units in other parts of Crimea.

On February 23, the rally in Sevastopol illegally “elected” a so-called “People’s Mayor” and on February 24, Russian armored vehicles blocked all entrances to Sevastopol.

On February 25, a Russian Black Sea fleet squadron that had just returned from the Sochi Olympics transported eleven thousand soldiers with assault weapons from Novorossiysk. In Sevastopol, Russian Black Sea fleet servicemen submitted lists of their family members in the event of evacuation. The Marine Brigade was put on high alert. Two military vehicles with Russian license plates and carrying special forces entered Yalta and settled in the Black Sea fleet’s resort hotel.

On the night of February 26, a reconnaissance and sabotage group of Russia’s airborne special forces arrived from Sevastopol in uniforms without insignia and seized the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea in Simferopol. They raised Russian flags and erected barricades in front of the buildings.

On the morning of February 27, the Russian military set up checkpoints on the Isthmus of Perekop and the Chonhar peninsula, which connect Crimea and mainland Ukraine. The Cossacks, who had arrived in advance, guarded them together with the Russian military.

On February 28, at an emergency session of the occupied Crimean parliament, “Chairman” Vladimir Konstantinov instructed the Council of Ministers to ensure the rights and freedoms of Crimeans, and promote law enforcement and public safety by establishing bodies made up partly of former members of the Berkut special police units. These units had been disbanded in Kyiv during the Maidan protests in the winter of 2013/2014 for participating in shooting peaceful Maidan protesters. A vigorous campaign of organizing self-defense groups from ex-Berkut members, the military, veterans’ organizations, Cossack organizations, criminal elements, and other Crimean residents, as well as volunteer Russian citizens, ensued.

On February 28, special military forces of the Russian Federation without insignia captured the Simferopol and Belbek (Sevastopol) airports. Eleven Russian MI-24 combat helicopters entered Crimean air space from Russia, and eight Russian IL-76 military-transport aircrafts landed on the Gvardeyskoye airfield in Simferopol. It was announced that planes would land every fifteen minutes without the consent or participation of the State Border

Service of Ukraine. Several dozen Russian-made armored vehicles, among which observers noticed Tigers (Tigr), and other types of equipment and weapons not previously seen at the units of the Russian fleet in Crimea, headed from Sevastopol and Gvardeyskoye in the direction of Simferopol. Unidentified armed men surrounded the State Border Service of Ukraine's Balaklava unit.

On March 1, two large landing ships of the Baltic Fleet, Kaliningrad and Minsk, arrived in Sevastopol harbor from Novorossiysk (Russia) with paratroopers and equipment on board.

On March 2, two large landing ships, Russian Northern Fleet's Olenegorsky Gornyyak and Russian Baltic Fleet's Georgiy Pobedonosets, arrived in Sevastopol harbor from Novorossiysk with more paratroopers and equipment.

On March 3, the Russian military began a blockade of all Ukrainian military units and bases in Crimea that continued through March 25.

The commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Admiral Alexander Vitko, ordered the Ukrainian military to surrender by 5 a.m. on March 26 or face attacks on all units and bases in Crimea. This ultimatum was delivered to all Ukrainian military personnel by Russian soldiers. A Russian Black Sea fleet missile boat blocked several exits from Sevastopol bays into the open sea for Ukrainian Border Service vessels, including the Balaklava Bay exit. The Moskva missile cruiser, missile boat Squall, and two other Russian missile boats blocked the Donuzlav Ukrainian naval base north of Yevpatoriia.

On March 4, at a press conference, Putin claimed local self-defense forces and not Russian troops were blockading Ukrainian army facilities.

On March 5, Russian officials continued to deny the presence of Russian servicemen in Crimea, including Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

On March 7, before the Russian military in Sevastopol began its assault on the Ukrainian Air Force's Crimea task group command, Cossacks rammed the gates of the base with heavy trucks. And on March 8, one hundred so-called "self-defense" troops equipped with automatic weapons, bulletproof vests, and portable radios arrived in three buses to the military registration and enlistment office in Simferopol and stationed machine-guns on all the floors. This "self-defense" unit was led by a retired general who identified himself as an adviser to the Crimean government.

