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In Crimea, a criminal case under Article 205.5 has been opened

Searches were conducted in the homes of five Muslims

SOVA (12.10.2016) - http://bit.ly/2ejNaJ9 - On 12th October 2016, in the Art Institute in Kamenka (a Simferopol Suburb), police conducted raids on the homes of five Muslim men who had recently returned from the Hajj in Mecca and detained at least three of them under suspicion of collaborating with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

The searches were carried out in the framework of the criminal case initiated under Art. 205.5 of the criminal code (Organizing the activities of a terrorist organization and participing in the activities of such an organization).

The following persons are suspected of collaboration with the group "Hizb ut-Tahrir", which is banned in Russia:
Timur Abdullaev (ch. 1, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Uzeyir Abdullayev (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Rustem Ismailov (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Eider Saledinova (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code)
and Emil Dzhemadenova (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code).

Let it be known that we believe that the prosecution of member of "Hizb ut-Tahrir", the propaganda of terrorism only on the basis of party activities such as meeting and reading literature related to Islam and the Russian pursuit of their anti-terrorist articles are an unlawful oppression of the Muslim people.

(Translation Russian-English by Olga Vladimirovna Allen for HRWF)

Crimean Ukrainian activist detained on border, threatened with ban

KHPG (26.11.15) - http://bit.ly/1MT7BGv - Veldar Shukurdzhiyev, a member of the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, has again faced harassment, this time from Russian border guards and FSB officers as he tried to return to Crimea from mainland Ukraine. He was detained at around 22.00 on Nov 24, and only released close to morning.

According to the Crimean Human Rights Group, the border guards initially took his car away for inspection, then at about 23.00 he was informed that he was being detained. No reason was given, but his mobile phone, passport and car papers were taken away. FSB officers copied out the phone numbers from his mobile.

Two FSB officers told him that they had passed on his details and that they were waiting for instructions. The border guards told him that he might be banned from entering Crimea until 2030. It is not clear whether they genuinely planned to ban him, but there was every reason for concern. Since invading and annexing Crimea, Russia has imposed five-year bans on Crimean Tatar leaders Mustafa Dzhemiliev, Refat Chubarov and others.

Shukurdzhiyev informed around 5 a.m. that he had been allowed to continue on to Crimea.

Veldar Shukurdzhiyev has faced constant detentions, interrogations and prosecution on administrative charges since Russia occupied Crimea.

On Aug 12, he and another Ukrainian, Iryna Kopylova, were seized, together with a lawyer from Moscow and a Ukrainian flag in an operation involving **five police cars and officers from Russia's 'Centre for Countering Extremism'**

Shukurdzhiyev and Kopylova were simply trying to take photographs of themselves holding the Ukrainian flag near a monument to Vladimir Lenin, but were issued with administrative offence protocols, with the claim being that the Ukrainians had been holding an 'unauthorized public event'.

On March 9 this year, Shukurdzhiyev, Leonid Kuzmin and Oleksandr Kravchenko took part in a totally peaceful gathering marking the 201st anniversary of the birth of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. The event can be viewed here: http://bit.ly/1Oi2zrC At least two Ukrainian flags, one with the words: "Crimea is Ukraine" were held, as well as a Crimean Tatar flag. Many of the young people present also held balloons in the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

All three men were detained, interrogated over likely 'extremism' and sentenced to 40 hours of community service, with Kuzmin also threatened with dismissal from his teaching job.

Crimea is still without electricity and there are, unfortunately, good grounds for fearing that Russia and its occupation regime in Crimea will resort to repressive measures against all those who make no secret of their opposition to Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea.

Wish Crimean political prisoner Sasha Kolchenko Happy Birthday!

KHPG (26.11.15) - **It is Oleksandr Kolchenko's BIRTHDAY on Nov 26**. It is bleak spending your birthday in Russian captivity facing a monstrous sentence on trumped up charges. Please send him birthday greetings (and sign the petition demanding his release!).

The following birthday wishes would be fine.

С днём рождения! Желаю Вам крепкого здоровья, мужества и счастья. Надеюсь на скорое освобождение.

(Happy Birthday! Wishing you health, courage and happiness, and that you will soon be released.)

Oleksandr Kolchenko

344082, г. Ростов-на-Дону, ая 2710,
Кольченко Александру Александровичу (1989 г.р.)

LETTERS to all three men are much needed! Messages in Russian are most likely to get through, though short messages in simple English may also. Even if they do not, they will still help by demonstrating to the prison administration in Gennady Afanasyev's case, and to the Russian authorities, that the men are not forgotten and that Russia's treatment of them is under scrutiny.

Gennady Afanasyev
167028, Республика Коми, г. Сыктывкар, п. Верхний Чов, ИК-25,
Афанасьеву, Геннадию Сергеевичу (1990 г.)

Oleg Sentsov
344082, г. Ростов-на-Дону, ая 2710,
Сенцову Олегу Геннадьевичу (1976 г.р.)

The addresses can be copy-pasted) – the numbers in brackets are each man's year of birth, which is required for getting letters through:
SEE ALSO Sentsov & Kolchenko Appeal Rejected in Predictably Farcical Court Hearing

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Report of the OSCE Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea (6–18 July 2015)

http://www.osce.org/odihr/180596?download=true

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Statement of Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, at the OSCE/ODIHR HDIM in Warsaw

Astrid Thors wants to go to Crimea and to assess the situation

HRWF (05.09.2015) - On 30 September, Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, made a statement, a part of which was devoted to the situation in Crimea. In this context, she reiterated her call on the Russian Federation to facilitate her access to Crimea without further delay so that she can make a first-hand assessment of the situation, in line with her mandate.

OSCE/ ODIHR (30.09.2015) - http://www.osce.org/odihr/187141?download=true

Dear excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured and delighted to participate at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. I wish to warmly thank the Polish Government and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for continuing to host this important meeting.

As you recall, my mandate is essentially a conflict prevention one. Participating States have mandated my office to provide early warning and take early action to prevent tensions involving national minority issues from developing into conflict.

At the same time, participating States have acknowledged the inseparable linkage between minority rights, and peace and stability. This connection is part of the OSCE DNA. Indeed, ensuring respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is essential for the prevention of conflict. Key to addressing minority issues lies, therefore, in the full implementation of relevant international commitments, including OSCE Human Dimension commitments, related to the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The linkage between minority rights, and security and stability was reaffirmed by the participating States in the CSCE Copenhagen Document. This document, adopted 25 years ago, represents a milestone in the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

It is to be noted that the starting point of the provisions related to national minorities in the Copenhagen Document emphasize that questions relating to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law with a functioning, independent judiciary. This statement is more valid than ever. Unfortunately, we see today many instances where national minorities do not feel secure enough to seek legal remedy to their grievances. That is also why we have invited participants at the session devoted to the rights of persons belonging to national minorities on 1 October to discuss what can be done to guarantee access to justice for minorities. I hope that practical examples will enrich the discussion.

The Copenhagen Document played a key role in the development of international norms for minority protection and paved the way for the creation of my institution. Against this historical backdrop, I would like to underscore that the Copenhagen Document continues to be of crucial importance for minority protection. The commitments undertaken by the participating States in the Copenhagen Document remain highly relevant today and will remain so in the future.

The Copenhagen Document also inspired the creation of other international documents, including with relevance for national minorities, like the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Unfortunately, we have seen that the inspirational force of the Copenhagen Document has not been maintained; other binding multinational documents in the OSCE area have not been as clear regarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the protection of their identities.

Dear excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the crisis in and around Ukraine, and highlight the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. As you will have noticed, ODIHR and my institution, with input from the Representative for the Freedom of the Media, published the Report of the Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea (6–18 July 2015) last week. As you know, we will present the report in more detail with ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link on Thursday here in Warsaw.

The Assessment Mission found that since the annexation of Crimea, the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities have been subjected to increasing pressure on and control of the peaceful expression of both their culture and their political views. The situation is particularly precarious for those who have openly opposed the annexation or refused to take Russian citizenship.

Unfortunately, the Assessment Mission had to base its evaluation mainly on interviews, without visiting the peninsula. The Report of the Assessment Mission contains a simple recommendation on how to improve this assessment methodology: grant access to the peninsula to relevant international actors.

In this context, I reiterate my call on the Russian Federation to facilitate my access to Crimea without further delay so that I can make a first-hand assessment of the situation, in line with my mandate.

Dear Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The refugee crisis that is now a focus of the international community's attention cannot but touch all of us. We see the human desperation and the political tensions that are rising as a consequence. We can all ask ourselves why we did not listen to the warnings that were issued – warnings that the capacity of international organizations working in the countries neighbouring conflict areas had been drained. Once again, an international alert that was not heeded.

But we also see that not all participating States have lived up to another commitment in the Copenhagen Document: the commitment [40.1] to take effective measures […] to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to violence against persons and groups based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including anti-Semitism. The participating States also committed to promote tolerance and understanding. [40.3]

This commitment is reflected in subsequent OSCE decisions. It is followed by our colleagues in ODIHR and in the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, where Article 6 is a direct continuation of the OSCE commitment to take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding between all persons living on their territory.

Countries that have taken these commitments seriously are those that treat all human beings with respect.

My conclusion is that we must continue to work even more vigorously to promote understanding between all persons living on a country's territory. *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*, issued by my institution, is a good tool in this respect.

We are unfortunately witnessing increased politicization and instrumentalization of minority issues in the OSCE area. There is also a growing tendency to view national minorities as targets of regulation rather than as active participants in a society. These trends greatly worry me, as they risk jeopardizing the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and thereby increasing tensions in and between participating States. It is crucial that we promote the full implementation of international norms related to the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to address these trends.

Dear Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to our common deliberations at this meeting and wish us all a successful Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Thank you for your attention.

ODIHR and HCNM report identifies widespread human rights violations, discrimination and legal irregularities in Crimea

OSCE (17.09.2015) - http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=857c75b87e&e=db1e559388 - Since the occupation and annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in early 2014, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms has deteriorated radically for a large number of residents and displaced persons – particularly for pro-Ukrainian activists, journalists and the Crimean Tatar community, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) said in a report published today.

The 100-page Report of the Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea provides a comprehensive examination of the current human rights situation in Crimea, in light of developments since the release of a previous joint report by ODIHR and the HCNM, issued in May 2014.

"Fundamental freedoms of assembly, association, expression and movement have all been restricted by the de facto authorities in Crimea," said Michael Georg Link, Director of ODIHR. "This has occurred through the application of restrictive Russian Federation laws and through the sporadic targeting of individuals, media or communities seeking to peacefully present opposing views."

Based on interviews with more than 100 civil society actors, representatives of the Ukrainian authorities, Crimean residents and displaced persons, and people travelling between Crimea and mainland Ukraine, the ODIHR/HCNM report presents numerous credible, consistent and compelling accounts of serious human rights violations and legal irregularities in Crimea.

"We found in Crimea that those Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars who openly supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine, refused Russian citizenship or did not support the de facto authorities were in a particularly vulnerable position," said Astrid Thors, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. "Since the annexation of Crimea, the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities have been subjected to increasing pressure on and control of the peaceful expression of both their culture and their political views."

The allegations documented and trends established by the report demand urgently to be addressed by de facto authorities in Crimea, and underscore the need for systematic independent monitoring of the human rights situation in Crimea and access to the peninsula by impartial international bodies, ODIHR and HCNM say in the report.

The Report of the Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea, jointly published by ODIHR and HCNM, is available at:

English: https://www.osce.org/odihr/180596
Ukrainian: https://www.osce.org/uk/odihr/180606
Russian: https://www.osce.org/ru/odihr/180601

Another Crimean Tatar charged over pre-annexation demonstration

KHPG (17.03.2015) - http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1426428570 A fourth Crimean Tatar is in detention charged under Russian legislation in connection with a pre-annexation demonstration which took place under Ukrainian rule and according to Ukrainian law.

Zair Smedlyaev, head of the Qurultay or Crimean Tatar Congress's Central Election Commission, reports that Eskender Emirvaliyev from the Sudak region was first detained by 4 plain-clothed officers on Feb 18. They claimed that they were taking him for questioning as witness of a robbery, but on arrival at the Investigative Committee offices in Simferopol he was charged with taking part in the demonstration outside the Crimean parliament on Feb 26. The following evening, around 22.00 15-20 men in masks and armed with machine guns carried out a search of his home, where he lives with his wife and two children, a 6-year-old and 11-month-old baby. His wife had hypertonic shock as a result, was hospitalized for a week and has been sent for further examination.

As reported here, the Crimean Human Rights Field Mission has condemned the so-called 'February 26 Case' as legally unfounded and politically motivated, aimed solely at persecuting those who oppose the Crimea occupation regime.

As reported here, the first arrest on Jan 29 was of Deputy Head of the Mejlis or Crimean Tatar representative assembly, Akhtem Chyyhoz. As well as the lack of any legal grounds or jurisdiction for the prosecution over events before annexation, there is also ample video footage showing that Chyyhoz actively sought to calm protesters, as did other members of the Mejlis present. It seems quite clear that the occupation regime was targeting the leadership of the Mejlis. Since the Head of the Mejlis Refat Chubarov has already been banned from Crimea, they went for his deputy. Smedlyaev reports that the investigators tried to get Emirvaliyev to give false testimony against Chyyhoz, but he refused.

Eskender Kantemirov was remanded in custody shortly afterwards, and then on March 11 armed men in masks burst into the home of 31-year-old Talyat Yunosov and took him away. He has also been remanded in custody.

Russia and the 'government' it installed, with the use of armed Russian soldiers, on Feb 27, 2014, are trying to change historical fact and claim that the current 'prime minister' Sergei Aksyonov assumed control on Feb 26. He certainly did not do so in any legal faction. The large protest outside parliament that day was organized by Crimean Tatars to prevent an attempt to seize control of parliament. There were effectively two demonstrations in the same place: one organized by Crimean Tatars and EuroMaidan activists, the other by the Russian Unity party run by Sergei Aksyonov. Both he and his party were then extremely marginal in Crimean politics, yet Aksyonov then proclaimed himself 'prime minister' following a parliamentary 'session' under Russian soldiers' machine guns on Feb 27.

Two people died that day: one elderly man of a heart attack, and another elderly woman died later in hospital, possibly after being crushed by the crowd.

It is typical of the nature of this 'criminal case', that only Crimean Tatars are suspected of trouble. The Russian Investigative Committee in Crimea claims to have over 150 'witnesses' and reports that 40 people have been given victim status.

Wave of repression against independent Crimean journalists

KHPG (13.03.2015) - http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1426251053 - Update - Natalya Kokorina was released on Friday after over six hours in the FSB office in Crimea. According to Radio Svoboda's Crimean Service, her lawyer believes that other journalists from the Centre for Investigative Journalism are likely to face searches and interrogation. Kokorina was brought to the FSB offices at around midday after a 4-hour search of her parents' home. In an especially telling move, in the early evening an FSB officer came out to the journalists gathered outside waiting for Kokorina and her lawyer and asked who had a Russian passport saying that they could 'help' Kokorina. There was nobody, and a few minutes later a car drove up with a journalist and cameraman from the state-controlled 'First Crimean' Channel who, it transpired, were used as witnesses for the removal of Kokorina's laptop. It does indeed appear [see below] that the excessive measures taken against the journalist are related to an article written by Anna Andriyevska about the Krym [Crimea] battalion [see below]. Kokorina was interrogated as a 'witness'.

The Russian occupation authorities have launched a new offensive, this time against journalists from the Centre for Investigative Journalism, possibly following an article about Crimeans fighting in Donbas and their hope for Crimea's return to Ukraine

One journalist has been taken away by Crimean FSB officers following a search of her home on March 13. Another search was carried out of the home of parents of a journalist forced to leave Crimea after the so-called 'referendum' last March. As the anniversary of Russia's formal annexation of Crimea approaches, more arrests (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1426075551) have been made of Crimean Tatars over a demonstration *before* Russia's invasion.

Natalya Kokorina, an editor of the Simferopol-based Centre for Investigative Journalism, an independent journalist initiative, has been taken away (http://investigator.org.ua/news/150814) following a search by FSB officers. She was called in the morning and told to appear at the home of her parents where she is officially registered. In direct breach of the law the officers refused to allow lawyer Dzemil Temishev to be present during the search. Kokorina's parents' phone had been switched off, and presumably her phone has been taken away, with all direct contact lost after she arrived at the flat.

FSB officers also carried out (http://investigator.org.ua/news/150797/) a search of the home in Simferopol of journalist Anna Andrievska's parents. The journalist herself was previously an editor at the Centre for Investigative Journalism and still writes for the Centre, but from Kyiv where she has been living since she left Crimea following Russia's annexation. Her father was presented with a Simferopol court order stating that criminal proceedings have been initiated against her over material which allegedly contained calls to overturn the regime in Crimea.

The 'criminal proceedings' appear to be linked with one specific article written by Anna Andrievska and published by the Centre on Dec 11. The article "Volunteers of the Crimea [Krym] Battalion" (http://investigator.org.ua/articles/144257/) is about people providing support for the Krym [Crimea] volunteer battalion fighting in Donbas, and for other Crimean units fighting within other battalions.

The article is largely about those civic groups and individuals who are helping to provide Crimeans fighting with food and other assistance. The following excerpts may possibly be what over-zealous FSB officials have deemed 'criminal content'.

One Vinnytsa EuroMaidan supporter Taisiya Haida explains why she and others are providing assistance:

"Vinnytsa is very concerned about the fate of Crimea, we very much want it to remain in Ukraine. Therefore our local AutoMaidan [the car initiative linked with EuroMaidan] took on the task of helping displaced people and ATO fighters. We collect everything they could need and send it ourselves. Because they are our heroes. Our fate and the fate of our country depends on them. Many Crimeans hope that Crimea will return. And the Krym Battalion gives them hope of that".

The author adds that Haida reports that the number of people wanting to support the Krym Battalion is constantly growing.

"Of course the Krym Battalion, unlike other volunteer formations, has its own particular aim – not only to win the war in Donbas, but also to return Crimea to under the control of Ukraine."

The last words of the text are undoubtedly the author's. Given that the FSB may deem them 'incriminating', they are translated here in full:

She explains that any ceasefire has been breached, and that the needs of Ukrainian fighters are unlikely to decrease in the near future. *"Crimeans, for example, could more actively support the Krym Battalion. Considering that its soldiers say that their main aim is to return the occupied peninsula to Ukrainian control. It should be understood that it is this that businesspeople, many of whom also moved from Crimea after its Russian annexation, want. So is it not time to begin returning it?"*

A call to violent overthrow of the regime?

As reported here, a new law in Russia came into force on May 9, 2014, criminalizing 'public calls to separatism'. The move was seen as highly ironic given Russia's extremely direct role and massive funding and manning of the so-called 'separatists' in Donbas.

It was also immediately understood as posing a major threat to freedom of expression in Crimea. Media freedom was in any case significantly curtailed from shortly after Russia's invasion, with most Ukrainian channels removed from air altogether, and independent media like the Crimean Tatar TV channel ATR, Chornomorka and others under serious pressure or, in the case of Chornomorka, forced to broadcast from mainland Ukraine. A number of independent media, including QHA – the Crimean Information Agency - are likely to be shortly prevented from functioning after being refused registration under Russian legislation.

A year ago Russia's puppet 'government' installed in the presence of armed Russian soldiers organized a blitzkrieg 'referendum' and claimed nearly 100% support for joining Russia. The results were reported to be false even by Russia's own Human Rights Council (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1399238176) and not recognized by the international community.

A recent survey carried out by the pro-Russian Krymskaya Pravda was swiftly removed (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1425949061) after results showed majority support for greater autonomy within Ukraine and belief that if Russia had not annexed Crimea, everything would have been absolutely peaceful and fine.

Over recent months there has been a major escalation in repressive measures against the Crimean Tatars and their representative bodies, and against all those who openly

express their allegiance and retain their citizenship of Ukraine. On March 12, three Simferopol residents were sentenced to terms of community work (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1426162852) for supposedly using 'prohibited symbols' during a peaceful gathering marking the 201st anniversary of the birth of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. Both the police and a court in Russian-occupied Crimea decided that a Ukrainian flag was 'prohibited'.

Russia's constant narrative about rescuing Crimea from imminent bloodshed and supposed mass support in Crimea for joining Russia was always treated with scepticism in the West. The lie is made equally evident by such paranoid inability to cope with peaceful dissent and Soviet levels of repression against dissidents.

OSCE: Media freedom in Crimea is 'deeply worrying'

QHA http://qha.com.ua/osce-media-freedom-in-crimea-is-deeply-worrying-133258en.html - Deteriorating media freedom in Russian-occupied Crimea is 'deeply disturbing and worrying', the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media said on Thursday.

Dunja Mijatović claimed that truth had been the first casualty of crisis and urged those responsible to stop media censorship and to ensure journalists' safety. Her comments were made in the regional capital Simferopol, where she met with local journalists and media associations.

The OSCE Representative claimed that dozens of journalists and bloggers had been threatened, physically attacked, interrogated or kidnapped since Crimea's joining Russia in March 2014.

In late January, Security Service officers raided the office of ATR-- first ever and the only Crimean Tatar channel-- reportedly searching for video footage of pro-Ukrainian rally in Simferopol of Feb 26, 2014.

Roskomnadzor-- Russia's mass media and telecom watchdog-- has denied Crimean News Agency a license to operate in Russia and Crimea.

New weapon against dissent in Crimea: 'Ideology of Terrorism'

KHPG (26.02.2015) - http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1424552129 - Try defining 'the ideology of terrorism', and it should be clear why human rights activists are concerned about new measures to *counter* such *ideology* that have been announced in Russian-occupied Crimea. They believe such measures will serve as yet another pretext for mass restrictions and rights violations. With Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1419727403) and two other Crimean opponents of annexation in detention for over 10 months on fabricated 'terrorist plot' charges, there are very real grounds for concern.

The new 'Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism from 2015-2018' (http://rk.gov.ru/rus/file/pub/pub_238807.pdf) was adopted through a decree passed by 'prime minister' Sergei Aksyonov on Jan 30. The plan, while broadly similar to plans

adopted for the Russian Federation in 2013, was put together by 'anti-terrorist commission' set up on April 15 last year, less than a month after Russia's annexation of Crimea.

The reason for such haste in drawing up – and applying – measures against 'extremism' and 'terrorism' became clear all too soon. Russia's dangerously broad 'anti-extremist' legislation has been repeatedly used against Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians who oppose Russia's occupation of their homeland.

There is every reason to fear that new measures to counter 'ideology of terrorism' will also be used against dissidents, not terrorists.

According to this document, by 'ideology of terrorism' is meant "*the sum total of ideas, concepts, beliefs, dogma, goals, slogans justifying the need for terrorist activities, as well as other destructive ideas which have led to or could lead to such ideology*".

Such as: "Crimea is part of Ukraine", for example?

If this seems overly cynical, consider who the people needing to be 'identified' and "persuaded to renounce their unlawful and destructive ways, repent and take part in prophylactic measures" are:

"*participants in armed conflicts on the territory of the Northern Caucuses and foreign states (Ukraine, Syria and others) and their accomplices;*

people spreading terrorist, extremist ideologies and information discrediting the Russian Federation;

active members and ideologues of non-traditional religious organizations and sects functioning in Crimea."

Would people supporting volunteer battalions fighting for Ukrainian unity in Donbas count as 'accomplices'? This cannot seem improbable given that since May 9, 2014, it has been a criminal offence in Russia (and Russian-occupied Crimea) to call for an end to Russia's occupation of Crimea,

There is plenty of entirely true information that discredits Russia. Take, for example, its military engagement in eastern Ukraine and support for those committing terrorist acts in different parts of Ukraine. Or the treatment of Sinaver Kadyrov, one of the founders of the Crimean Tatar Human Rights Committee, who was deported from his native Crimea (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1422062944) one week after the Committee organized a conference and initiated an appeal to the UN over ongoing rights violations.

What is meant by 'non-traditional' religious organizations? The only religious group that has not faced repressive measures since annexation is the Russian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate.

With respect to Muslims, in particular, there have been armed searches of mosques, religious schools and private homes. Crimean Tatars have been accused of 'extremism', on occasion for the use of words like 'annexation' and 'occupation'. There have also been attempts to present Crimean Tatars as 'radical Muslims' who could unleash a wave of violence in the Crimea.

'Identification' of groups regarding as suspect involves the making up of lists and requesting such lists from regional branches of the FSB [Russian Security Service]. Once

such individuals are 'identified', the municipal anti-terrorist commissions will draw up timetables and plans for "prophylactic measures with such people".

Records about such individuals are to be kept and updated on a permanent basis.

Other activities covered by this document include "monitoring of terrorist and **anti-Russian** activity on the Internet".

"Preparation and implementation of measures for protecting the Crimean Internet from penetration by terrorist and extremist material, destructive information, information on preparing explosive devices, calls to commit terrorist acts".

This may seem uncontroversial, but is not. Russia's register of "terrorists and extremists" includes 3 Kuban activists (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1411869882) who tried to hold a peaceful demonstration last August in support of greater autonomy for the region. Its Register of prohibited 'extremist' material includes books in which Holodomor, the artificially created famine in 1932/33 is called genocide, Jehovahs Witness material and Muslim prayer books. A Crimean librarian has already been fined (http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1421492068) for holding such 'seditious' material about Holodomor.

In August last year and later Russia's media regulator and, increasingly, censor, blocked or threatened to block a number of Internet publications, including Glavcom and the BBC Russian Service if they did not remove material about planned peaceful marches for greater federal autonomy. The excuse was that the material "was calling people to commit acts of extremism".

Regional branches of Romskomnadzor will be engaged in such 'extremist'-hunting in Crimea as well.

In short, the vocabulary has changed very slightly, the essence remains the same – Soviet and repressive.

Russia seeks to create Puppet Crimean Tatar self-governing bodies

KHPG (23.02.2015) http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1424446963 - Having tried and failed to cower Crimean Tatar leaders into submission, the Crimean puppet government installed after Russian soldiers seized control last February is now attempting to replace elected members of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis and Qurultay with 'reliable people'.

The methods are not new – there are always people who can be enticed or pressured into collaborating with an occupation regime, some perhaps who even genuinely support it.

The other means applied also have disturbingly Soviet antecedents. Refat Chubarov, head of the Mejlis, or Crimean Tatar representative assembly, was banned from entering his homeland at the beginning of July, 2014, and is now forced to lead the Mejlis from mainland Ukraine. The deputy – and, because of this ban, the acting – head of the Mejlis, Akhtem Chyyhoz has been arrested and is in detention in Crimea on preposterous charges laid under Russian law although pertaining to a demonstration held before Russia invaded and annexed Crimea.

Under these circumstances, the occupation regime was clearly hoping to be able to slip their man in as head of the Mejlis. This person, Remsi Ilyasov, is currently deputy speaker of the Crimean parliament. Other 'malleable' Crimean Tatars would also receive posts in an attempt to seize control of the Mejlis and Qurultay.

Refat Chubarov has issued a statement as head of the Mejlis in which he spells out both the aims and the methods being applied by the Russian occupation authorities.

"*The most brutal punitive policy carried out against the Crimean Tatar people since March 2014 is ultimately aimed at totally crushing the will of the Crimean Tatar people and their struggle for their rights in their native land*".

Chubarov lists the abductions, murders, arrests and trials, the bans or deportation of Mustafa Dzhemiliev, himself, Ismet Yuksel and Sinaver Kadyrov, the offensive against the Mejlis, and other measures which are "aimed at establishing a state of total terror and despair in Crimea, and total submission from the Crimean public to the lawlessness and arbitrary rule imposed by the authorities."

"*The events that have followed the arrest of Akhtem Chyyhoz, a man committed to his people and to the principles of the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people demonstrates that the occupation regime has set about direct actions to destroy the Crimean Tatar Mejlis whose activities even under the arbitrary lawlessness in place in Crimea have been aimed at protecting the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatar people*."

Chubarov goes on to explain that since the occupation regime is aware of the particular role and enormous authority enjoyed, both among Crimean Tatars and abroad, by the Mejlis and Qurultay and is therefore trying to 'reformat' it and change its leadership. He mentions a small number of Crimean Tatars whose expulsion from the Mejlis was first announced in September after the Mejlis responded to ongoing repression by recalling representatives holding public office within the occupation authorities and calling on Crimean Tatars to boycott the so-called elections on Sept. 14. As well as Ilyasov, he names Zaur Smirnov and Teifuk Gafarov, as well as Ruslan Balbek, now officially a deputy head of Crimea. He says that over recent weeks they, and some others close to them, on the direct instructions of their bosses – Sergei Aksyonov and his deputies, "have been resorting to various forms of pressure on members of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people and delegates of the Qurultay, including direct blackmail in order to persuade them to call a meeting of the Mejlis and pass decisions prepared by the occupiers."

These 'decisions' would include the 'appointment' of Remi Ilyasov as head of the Mejlis and adoption of a special statement to the international community regarding "recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea".

Chubarov points out that any decisions regarding the makeup of the Mejlis are made solely by the Qurultay which comprises 248 elected delegates. Attempts to bypass would have no legally standing.

"I am convinced that delegates of the Qurultay, members of the Mejlis, activists of the Crimean Tatar national movement will not allow provocateurs to trample the principles and values of the Crimean Tatar national movement."

Efforts have been made, presumably to test the water, in Feodosiya, with the pro-regime movement Kyyrym, led by Remzi Ilyasov, trying to change the leaders of the regional Mejlis. Some indication of the validity of this change can be seen in the fact that it was learned about from the Kyyrym's Facebook page, which even *named* 'the new head'.

The Qurultay Central Election Commission pointed to flagrant infringements in the procedure for such elections and said that they will not recognize the supposed result.

It is worryingly likely that this will not be the last attempt. A member of the Mejlis who asked not to be named told Radio Svoboda's Crimean Service that after failing to change the makeup of the central Mejlis, Kyyrym is now trying to achieve this via regional Mejlis. "Various methods are used: intimidation, being summoned for integration, and so forth. The main message – you have to support the regime".

The list of methods used to cower and intimidate Crimean Tatars and all those opposed to Russian rule is long and has formed the content of many of the reports here since Russian annexation in March 2014. As the first anniversary of those events approaches, the situation for Crimea's indigenous people is ever more tragic

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Silencing 'hostile' media? Crimean News Agency refused licence

KHPG (23.02.2015) http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1424467740 – Roskomnadzor, Russia's media regulator has turned down QHA Crimean News Agency's application for a licence. This comes just days after Russian-installed 'prime minister' Sergei Aksyonov made it clear that 'hostile' media who talk of a return to Ukrainian control, etc. have no place in annexed Crimea.

QHA Director Gayana Yuksel has said that they had anticipated something like this. As reported here, in August last year her husband Ismet Yuksel, QHA General Director and adviser to the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People was banned from entering Crimea for 5 years.

All media in Crimea have until the beginning of April to obtain a Russian licence. QHA applied for theirs in October, 2014. They were initially told that there was an inaccuracy which needed to be rectified. They consulted with lawyers and sorted out the problem, but the second time were told that their application had been declined. They have asked for an explanation which should come by March 12. Gayana Yuksel is clearly not hopeful, and points out that if they want to reject an application, they can always find some pretext.

It seems likely that the Crimea's Russian-installed leaders have viewed QHA as 'hostile' effectively since they were brought to power. Since April last year QHA journalists have been refused accreditation for parliamentary sessions and other government events. The excuse given was that they didn't have a Russian licence, however this is hardly credible since other Crimean media were allowed to work without re-registering until Jan 1 2015, with that period then extended to April 1 2015.

Most Ukrainian TV channels were replaced by Russian channels soon after annexation. The opposition TV channel Chornomorska [Black Sea Channel] was taken off air at the beginning of March and then in August effectively prevented from functioning at all following enforcement of a questionable writ.

Aksyonov's remarks on Feb 13 were mainly directed at the Crimean Tatar TV channel ATR which has been under serious pressure since annexation, with this intensifying recently.

He spoke with journalists immediately after his meeting with members of the Bulgarian far-right Ataka Party. Asked to comment on the fact that Roskomnadzor is planning to prevent Crimean broadcasters from taking part in a tender for radio frequencies on the grounds that they have not yet received Russian registration, he said the following:

"We want all Crimean radio stations and Crimean TV channels to work systematically, normally, but we're against the way that some TV channels cover events inaccurately, distort objective information, and sometimes openly lie on some points". He claimed that an event has scarcely happened when ATR "has already turned it upside down".

"And of course, media that stir up hysteria and give some citizens hope that Crimea will return to Ukraine, thus carrying out destructive activities – the actions of such channels and their work will definitely not be welcome on the territory of the republic. What do we need hostile media for - who stir up the population and untruthfully cover the situation?"

There was pressure on ATR from annexation onwards, however this began looking like a major offensive towards the end of January this year when the ATR headquarters was subjected to an all-day search by men from the Investigative Committee and counter-terrorism department, as well as masked men carrying machine guns. The pretext given was that the search was part of the investigation linked with a many-thousand strong demonstration outside parliament on Feb 26, 2014, the day before Russian forces seized control. Russia's Investigative Committee claimed that the channel had refused to hand over material. This is vehemently denied, and in fact Budzhurova says that the fact that the channel had already handed over any material in their possession indicates that an order was issued from above to carry out this operation.

For the moment the channel is still broadcasting, however both Aksyonov's words and Roskomnadzor's refusal to grant QHA a licence make it difficult to feel any optimism about its future. Or for freedom of expression in general - a mere year after Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea.

Crimean Tatar leader's detention upheld, arrests continue

KHPG (09.02.2015) http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1423232068 - Yet another Crimean Tatar has been arrested in connection with a criminal investigation by the occupation regime that indicates either legal illiteracy or truly staggering disregard for rule of law. The arrest comes a day after the Crimean Supreme Court upheld the detention of Akhtem Chyyhoz, deputy head of the Mejlis or Crimean Tatar representative assembly, over the same 'case' which he calls politically motivated.

Eskender Kantemirov was arrested on Feb 7 after a search was carried out of his home, and then remanded in custody for two months by a court in Simferopol Asan Chebiyev, a close relative of one of the coordinators of the Crimean Tatar Rights Committee Abmedzhyt Suleymanov, appears to also be facing similar charges, but has been released from custody.

The detention until Feb 19 of Akhtem Chyyhoz was, however, upheld on Feb 6, with the Crimean Supreme Court ignoring both the evidence, including video footage, pointing to Chyyhoz's innocence of the charges, but also to the legal absurdity of the charges he

faces.. Chyyhoz is accused of 'offences' according to Russian law which took place before Russia annexed Crimea.

Akhtem Chyyhoz was arrested on Jan 29. The following day the FSB and armed officers carried out a 10-hour search of his home in Bakhchysarai. His wife, Elmira Ablyalimova was alone and none of the people who came to show support were allowed in to the premises. She reports that she was surrounded throughout the search by around 10 men whose treatment of her was cynical, insolent and shamelessly boorish. "Two officers – senior representative of the Crimean Police Alexei Malivanets and senior FSB officer Andrei Kudashov, without watching their words, belittled me as a person, a citizen, a Crimean Tatar, as a woman and as a person who follows Islam". There were gross infringements of procedure for such searches with the supposed independent witnesses brought with the officers and on first name terms with them.

The officers left with one bullet from a hunting gun, computer technology, mobile phones and savings (2 thousand USD and 100 EUR). The photos at the time show that the search was carried out with considerable damage to the property.

Demonstrative repression

Chyyhoz is accused of 'organizing and taking part in mass disturbances'. Two courts under Russian rule have now ignored clear evidence, including video footage, showing that Chyyhoz actively sought to calm protesters, as did other members of the Mejlis present.

The head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov has stated from Kyiv that it was in any case he who organized the demonstration outside the Crimean parliament on Feb 26. The Russian occupation regime has banished him, as well as veteran Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemiliev, from their homeland placing them out of reach in this latest offensive which seems at least in part another attack on the Mejlis.

On Feb 26, 2014 there were two demonstrations – one by Crimean Tatars, the other by supporters of the Russian Unity party whose leader Sergei Aksyonov was installed in power by Russian soldiers the following day, Feb 27. Not unexpectedly, all mention of planned prosecutions targets Crimean Tatars.

A protest is planned in Bakhchysarai for Feb 19, the day when Chyyhoz is due to be released. Notification of the plan to hold the meeting was lodged on Feb 5 by Ilmi Umerov, a member of the Mejlis. He explains that on that same day officers from the FSB Centre for Fighting Extremism turned up at his home, asking how they were planning to hold the protest. Umerov says that the city authorities have 10 days to respond and he expects them to refuse to sanction the demonstration.

The same Crimean Supreme Court also rubber stamped three other rulings on Friday. It rejected the appeals against his deportation from Crimea of Ukrainian national and Crimean Tatar human rights activist Sinaver Kadyrov; against the detention of Edem Osmanov, the latest person arrested with a delay of 6 months and on highly questionable charges linked with the peaceful protest on May 3; and the detention of Seidamet Gemedzhi, a land protests activist, also remanded in custody on Jan 28 for 2 months.

Less than a year after Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, there are ever more grounds for the belief held by many Crimean Tatars that these repressive measures, arrests, disappearances, etc. are aimed at forcing all but the most passive Crimean Tatars to flee their homeland.

Crimean Tatar leader arrested in new wave of repression

KHPG (30.01.2015) http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1422581395 - Akhtem Chyyhoz, Deputy Head of the Mejlis or representative assembly of the Crimean Tatar People was arrested on Thursday evening on charges of 'organizing and taking part in mass disturbances'. The move is one of truly unprecedented cynicism. Not only is there video footage demonstrating that Chyyhoz tried to calm protesters, but the demonstration in question took place on Feb 26, 2014, the day before Russian soldiers seized control and weeks before Russian illegally annexed the peninsula. This is the latest of many repressive moves against the Mejlis, and Crimean Tatars in general under Russian occupation.

Following repeated attempts since annexation to undermine the Mejlis which represents the vast majority of Crimean Tatars, the Russian Investigative Committee's statement constantly refers to it as the "civic organization "Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People", i.e. one NGO among many. The statement directly blames only "unidentified persons of Crimean-Tatar nationality" for trouble on Feb 26, with members of the marginal nationalist organization 'Russian Unity' which had organized a counter-demonstration at the same time and place, presented as victims of violence. This is doubtless because the head of 'Russian Unity' is Sergey Aksyonov who was installed in power at gunpoint by the Russian soldiers who seized the parliament building on Feb 27, 2014.

The IC statement clashes with reports at the time, and Radio Svoboda informs that it has both photographic and video footage refuting the charges laid against the Deputy Head of the Mejlis. One of the few truthful elements in the IC version of events is the mention of 'legitimate demands by representatives of the *Ukrainian* police during the demonstration, making the attempt by Russia to pursue any prosecution under Russian law not in effect at the time particularly grotesque.

Representatives of the Mejlis and human rights groups believe that Chyyhoz's arrest is the latest attempt at political pressure on the Mejlis, and a new phase in the ongoing repression by the Russian-installed 'government' under Aksyonov. Chyyhoz has been remanded in custody until Feb 19, and his colleagues fear that other arrests are likely.

Natalya Poklonskaya, whom Aksyonov installed as 'Crimean prosecutor', was present at the court hearing on Thursday evening. She told journalists that Chyyhoz is accused of a serious crime, under Article 212 of the Russian criminal code which could carry a 10-year prison sentence. "And as the result of the given crime there were two victims – two deaths, as well as people with varying degrees of injury".

At the time one of the people was reported to have died of a heart attack. Even if it were proven that both deaths were as a direct result of the demonstration, the charges seem unrelated to the person arrested, and are in any case from a criminal code which was not in force at the time of the alleged offences.

The Head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov writes of a "new spiral of repressive measures against activists of the Crimean Tatar national movement. Clearly, as always, the main attack will be against the Mejlis and its members."

The Head of the Mejlis has had direct experience of this attack since both he and the veteran Crimean Tatar leader, member and former head of the Mejlis Mustafa Dzhemiliev have been banished from their homeland by the occupation regime. The repressive measures against Dzhemiliev and Chubarov, who had never concealed their opposition to

Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea, did not silence protest within the Mejlis. The next crackdown began on September 16, following the Mejlis' call for all Crimean Tatars and other Crimeans concerned about violations of Crimean Tatar rights to boycott the pseudo elections on Sept. 14 . The mounted attack against both the Mejlis and the Crimea Foundation, a charity closely linked with the Mejlis, has continued.

Repressive measures have not been confined to the Mejlis alone. Over recent months there have been an increasing number of arrests on highly dubious charges laid 6 months after the May 3 peaceful protest at the Armyansk border crossing when a mass contingent of OMON riot police and others prevented 71-year-old Mustafa Dzhemiliev from entering Crimea. On Jan 23 one of the coordinators of the Crimean Tatar Rights Committee Sinaver Kadyrov, a Ukrainian citizen living in his native Crimea, was 'deported' from Crimea. He had been stopped together with the other coordinators – Eksender Bariyev and Abmedzhyt Suleymanov at the Armyansk Crossing as they attempted to cross into mainland Ukraine. Only Bariyev and Suleymanov, both members of the Mejlis, were able to make the flight. Colleagues now believe that they could face arrest if they return.

There has also been an open attack on the only Crimean Tatar TV channel ATR. The pretext used this time was the demonstration on Feb 26, 2014, however the channel has already faced two warnings over so-called 'extremism'.

The question in one report on the arrest of Akhtem Chyyhoz seems all too bitterly obvious: after 11 months of Russian occupation, who will be the next victim of repression?

Freedom in the world 2015: No civil liberties in Crimea after annexation

Kyiv Post (28.01.2015) - http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/freedom-in-the-world-2015-ukraine-bypasses-russia-in-civil-liberties-378692.html - Freedom in Ukraine has improved, while civil liberties are on the decline in Russia. The situation in Russian-annexed Crimea is even worse than in the Russian Federation as a whole. These are the results of the research "Freedom in the World - 2015," (*) published by the international human rights organization Freedom House.

Ukraine's status is "partly free," the general freedom rating is 3 (1 = best, 7 = worst). It is based on two main indicators: political rights and civil liberties. Ukraine's political rights rating rose from 4 to 3. The study authors explain this by improvements in political pluralism, parliamentary elections, and government transparency following the departure of President Viktor Yanukovych.

Russia's status is "not free," the general freedom rating is 6. Civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to expanded media controls, a dramatically increased level of propaganda on state-controlled television, and new restrictions on the ability of some citizens to travel abroad.

Annexed by Russia, Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, evaluated separately for the first time for Freedom in the World 2015, emerged with a dismal freedom rating of 6.5 on a 7-point scale and a "not free" status, reflecting repressive conditions in which residents-

especially Crimean Tatars and others who opposed the forced annexation-were deprived of their political rights and civil liberties.

"The Russian occupation authorities use intimidation and harassment to eliminate any public opposition to the annexation of Crimea and to the current government. The Russian Federal Security Service, the local police, and "self-defense" units made up of pro-Russian residents enforce this political order," states the report.

Generally the level of freedom in the world is reduced ninth year in a row and is now the worst in the last 25 years. The state of freedom in 2014 worsened significantly in nearly every part of the world, stated in the report of the Freedom House.

Researchers admit a more explicit rejection of democratic standards. Until recently, most authoritarian regimes claimed to respect international agreements and paid lip service to the norms of competitive elections and human rights. They now increasingly flout democratic values, argue for the superiority of what amounts to one-party rule, and seek to throw off the constraints of fundamental diplomatic principles.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including the outright seizure and formal annexation of Crimea, is the prime example of this phenomenon. The Russian intervention was in direct violation of an international agreement that had guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity. President Vladimir Putin made his contempt for the values of liberal democracy unmistakably clear. He and his aides equated raw propaganda with legitimate journalism, treated human rights activists as enemies of the state, and denounced the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community as moral degenerates. ", vice president for research Arch Puddington says in his statement.

It is also mentioned that both China and Russia have made use of one of the Cold War's most chilling instruments, the placement of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals.

The authoritarian regimes continue to use the quasi-democratic camouflage that allowed them to survive and prosper in the post-Cold War world. Again, the most blatant example is Russia's invasion of Ukraine, whose official justifications included ethnic nationalist, irredentist claims and which quickly drew comparisons to the land grabs of Hitler or Stalin.

"The move exposed Moscow as a committed enemy of European peace and democratization rather than a would-be strategic partner," - Arch Puddington concluded. - "Authoritarian Russia's invasion has created a crisis like none seen in Europe since the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The aggression was precipitated in part by a confrontation between the Ukrainian people and their increasingly authoritarian president, following decades of corrupt Ukrainian administrations."

(*) Freedom in the World 2015 (https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2015#.VMoRibktHIX)

Armed offensive against independent Crimean Tatar TV channel

KHPG (27.01.2015) http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1422314807 Monday's armed search of TV ATR was the most dramatic, but not the only offensive against the only Crimean Tatar TV channel since Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014 and appears part of mounting efforts to intimidate, silence or banish Crimean Tatars

"How will the regime look Crimean Tatars in the eye?", the channel's director Lidia Budzhurova asked in an address while the channel's headquarters swarmed with men from the Investigative Committee and counter-terrorism department, as well as masked men carrying machine guns. She explained that the search was supposedly part of an investigation linked with a many-thousand strong demonstration outside parliament on Feb 26, 2014, the day before Russian forces seized control. Two people died as a result of the demonstration by Crimean Tatars, as well as supporters of the Russian Unity party, communists and others. At the time it was reported that one of the people had died of a heart attack, and there does not appear to be any suggestion that the two were deliberately killed. Russia's Investigative Committee claimed that the channel had refused to hand over material. This is vehemently denied, and in fact Budzhurova says that the fact that the channel had already handed over any material in their possession indicates that an order was issued from above to carry out this operation.

"*From time to time ATR has come under pressure however they did not dare up till now to apply measures of force since we did not and do not infringe the law. But seemingly the current Crimean authorities do not like the very existence of a channel not under their control. The authorities don't like the very existence of the world's first and only Crimean Tatar television channel whose main aim is not politics, but the preservation and development of the language and culture of our people…. I don't know how, after the closure of ATR, if there are such plans, the authorities will look Crimean Tatars in the eye. I don't know how these actions can be reconciled with the Russian President's decree about the rehabilitation of deported peoples, including the Crimean Tatars.*"

Budzhurova mentioned one of the first demonstrations of the occupation regime's treatment of the Crimean Tatars – the ban on all public remembrance gatherings to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People on May 18. In doing that, she says, the occupation regime "*prohibiting Crimean Tatars from mourning [lit. weeping]. Now they, seemingly, want to prohibit them from seeing, hearing and speaking. However for now we have the right to live in our native land which nobody will take away. And while we are alive, we will use all legal means in our fight to ensure that the Crimean Tatars keep their national channel. We are not bidding farewell and await development of events and the further actions of the local authorities who, I hope, realize the blow they are dealing not only Crimean Tatars, but also their own reputation and the reputation of the federal authorities"*.

It is easy to see what prompted such bitter words. At around 11.00 on Monday several dozen men in full military gear appeared at the channel's headquarters. The men, who identified themselves as being from the Crimean 'Berkut' special force, prevented people from entering or leaving the channel's headquarters on the outskirts of Simferopol, and prohibited any filming of the search underway.

Hundreds of people came to the building to demonstrate their support. More OMON riot police were brought in and they tried to disperse the crowd, threatening administrative proceedings – and fines of 10 -20 thousand roubles - for what they called 'an unauthorized rally'. There were people overtly photographing and videoing those present, and judging by the months of Russian rule, repressive actions against participants are likely.

The search ended close to 18.00 and the men left taking part of the channel's archives on the hard drive, as well as data from staff members individual computers. The analogue signal, which had disappeared when the search began, was restored. During the day the channel had been accessible only to viewers with satellite television or online.

Natalya Poklonskaya, the 'prosecutor general' installed by the occupation regime, claimed on the official website, that the search accompanied by men with machine guns "had been in strict compliance with the law".

Or not so strict…

Poklonskaya also "informed that the republic's prosecutor's office had previously twice issued the channel's management with warnings about the inadmissibility of infringements of legislation on countering extremist activities".

This has been Poklonskaya's refrain since early May when the head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov was read the same warning over the peaceful protest after veteran Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemiliev was banned from his homeland. Chubarov was also issued the same 5-year-ban in early July with supposed infringements of Russia's dangerously loose law on extremism used as a pretext.

In September, for example, the channel received a letter from the Centre for Countering Extremism. This stated that Roskomnadzor [the supervisory body increasingly turning into the Russian state censor] had been informed by the police that ATR '*is persistently fostering the idea of possible repression on ethnic or religious grounds, is fostering the formation of anti-Russian public opinion and is deliberately stirring up distrust of the authorities and their actions among Crimean Tatars, with this indirectly creating the threat of extremist activities*."

The accusations made it quite clear that any suggestion that the Russian occupation authorities are harassing Crimean Tatars or infringing their rights would be termed 'extremism'.

Over the last week, as well as the armed search of ATR, there has been renewed harassment of members of the Mejlis and Qurultay, or Crimean Tatar National Congress and another arrest on highly dubious charges more than 6 months after the May 3 peaceful protests. The last week also saw a particularly sinister development in the 'deportation' from his native Crimea of Sinaver Kadyrov.

Kadyrov is one of the three leaders of the Crimean Rights Committee who organized a conference on Jan 17 which adopted an appeal to the UN over infringements of Crimean Tatar rights.

Also, presumably, an 'extremist document'

Masked forces raided Tatar ATR Television

Raid on ATR television channel in Crimea unacceptable, a clear intrusion of media's independence, says Mijatović

OSCE (26.01.2015) – OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović today condemned the raid by masked forces in Crimea on ATR television station in the city of Simferopol.

"I have repeatedly reminded of the need to safeguard the work of journalists and media outlets. This practice of intrusion of free and independent media cannot be tolerated in the OSCE region," Mijatović said.

On 26 January masked forces raided the ATR offices and newsroom in Simferopol. They searched the premises and detained the staff of the television station. The masked forces also confiscated equipment and shut down ATR's analogue broadcasting.

"It is crucial for the Crimean Tatars to be able to receive and obtain information and news from ATR. ATR must be allowed to resume its broadcasting as soon as possible," Mijatović said.

The Representative's previous statements involving ATR are available at http://www.osce.org/fom/116240 and http://www.osce.org/fom/119887.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States. She provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promotes full compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments. Learn more at www.osce.org/fom, Twitter: @OSCE_RFoM and on www.facebook.com/osce.rfom.

Crimean Tatar rights activist 'deported' from his native Crimea

KHRPG (24.01.15) - http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1422062944 - The Crimean authorities under Russian rule have 'deported' a Crimean Tatar activist with Ukrainian citizenship, Crimean registration, but with views and a concern over human rights violations that the occupation regime clearly finds inconvenient. The message this sends any Crimean is chilling.

Under Stalin the entire Crimean Tatar people were deported from their homeland. Later the Soviet Union deported those like Alexander Solzhenitsyn it could not imprison with impunity, or – like Petro Grigorenko - stripped them of their citizenship while abroad. The latter methods, with little or no pretence of legality, are now being used in Russian-occupied Crimea.

In the early hours of Jan 23 the three coordinators of the Crimean Tatar Rights Committee – Sinaver Kadyrov; Eksender Bariyev and Abmedzhyt Suleymanov – were stopped by Russian border guards at the Armyansk Crossing as they attempted to cross into mainland Ukraine. They were due to fly to Istanbul from Kherson that afternoon. Only Bariyev and Suleymanov, both members of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis or representative assembly, were able to make the flight.

All three were held for some time before being summoned one by one to FSB [Russian security service] officers who drew up protocols in which it was claimed that as 'foreign nationals', they had infringed the rules for being in Crimea which under Russian occupation is governed by Russian legislation.

All have Ukrainian passports and Crimean registration ['propiska'] but are being treated as 'foreign nationals' because they have not assumed Russian citizenship.

According to Russian law, 'foreign nationals' may not stay on Russian territory [including Russian-occupied Crimea] for more than 90 days. In practice that normally means without crossing the border to get the relevant arrival date in your passport. Radio Svoboda's Crimean Service points out that Friday's detention and then deportation refute the assurances given that people retaining Ukrainian citizenship would not be stopped from living in Crimea.

All three men were, even under Russian law, legally in Crimea, yet only the two members of the Mejlis were finally allowed to proceed. Sinaver Kadyrov had crossed into mainland Ukraine in November, meaning that he was well within the (Russian) law.

The fact that he was legally in Crimea was ignored first by the FSB, then by the court in Armyansk. The latter also refused to even consider Kadyrov's application for the hearing to be postponed as he was travelling to Istanbul for an examination following a heart operation. A ruling was produced within 20 minutes, without a lawyer being present. The court imposed a two thousand rouble fine for supposedly having committed an 'administrative offence' and ordered his 'administrative removal from the Russian Federation'.

Kadyrov's wife Emine khanum told QHA that her husband had been given 10 days to pay the fine, but removed from Crimea immediately. Although her husband last left Crimea in November, the FSB and court claimed that the last time he'd crossed the border was Sept. 29. She says that they have their own mathematics and do what they want regardless of the law.

She promises that they will appeal the deportation, but clearly does not expect a positive outcome.

It is difficult not to share her pessimism. Three Crimean Tatar rights activists were stopped at the border crossing. All were within the law, yet two were allowed through and one deported from his native Crimea.

The occupation regime has received deservedly bad press over its overt attempts to crush the Mejlis and 5-year-bans imposed on three people closely associated with it: veteran Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemiliev; the head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov; and Ismet Yuksel, advisor to the Mejlis. This is one possible reason why Kadyrov, the only non-member of the Mejlis was targeted.

Or it may be as banal as that one target only was required, and any of the three would do. Not even a week had passed since participants in a conference organized by the Crimean Tatar Rights Committee sent an appeal to the UN Secretary General over grave violations of Crimean Tatar rights. The conference went ahead despite major attempts by titushki or government-paid thugs to disrupt it. There have been other attacks on the members of the Committee, including Kadyrov. The deportation of all three would certainly have attracted too much adverse publicity.

The deportation from his native Crimea of one Ukrainian citizen and member of the Crimean Tatar national and human rights movement is also profoundly scandalous and warrants the widest attention. Kadyrov is doubtless right in calling this a "test run" and a threatening message about what people can expect if they don't 'behave themselves.'

Under Russian occupation, it seems, they can expect persecution, imprisonment or deportation.

Crimean librarian fined for 'anti-Russian' books about Holodomor

KHRPG (23.01.15) - http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1421492068 - Russia's Sova Centre reports that the director of the Feodosiya Central Library has been fined for supposedly holding 'extremist material', in the form of 12 books about the Ukrainian Holodomor, or man-made Famine of 1932/33.

The specific book published in 2007 by Vasyl Marochko under the title 'Genocide of Ukrainians': Holodomor 1932/1933' is on Russia's Federal List of Extremist Material (no. 1154).

The Feodosiya Prosecutor did not stop at simply quoting the relative number on the list of prohibited materials, but asserted that the book had "an anti-Russian orientation" and used language "aimed at inciting inter-ethnic enmity on the basis of belonging to a particular social group." The material analysed "contains derogatory descriptions, negative emotional judgements about an ethnic group and individual within in, and calls to incite ethnic enmity which could result in it being used to change mass awareness and serve as the basis for ultra-radical and nationalist views".

The Director of the library explained that she had only learned in Sept 2014 that the book was prohibited in Russia (unlike in Ukraine) and had not had time to remove it. She was nonetheless fined 2 thousand roubles and the book has been confiscated.

The Sova Centre notes that the book by Marochko was originally removed together with other material during a search of the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow at the beginning of 2011. This was part of a criminal investigation which was finally terminated 'for lack of elements of a crime', however a number of books were then added to the federal list of banned material which then contained just 1271 works, and now holds more than double this number.

The books deemed 'extremist' included publications about Holodomor as an act of genocide of the Ukrainian people, as well as material about the crimes of the NKVD, the Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, etc. They were all placed on the Federal List on the basis of a ruling of the Meshchansky District Court in Moscow from 01.12.2011.

This is by no means the first time that Crimeans have been penalized over books which are freely published and sold in Ukraine. On a number of occasions there have been armed searches of homes, mosques and religious schools with the FSB and police supposedly looking for 'arms, narcotics and prohibited literature'. The head of a Muslim school was fined back in August in a case which looked suspiciously like intimidation since the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims had already announced that measures would be taken by the beginning of the new year in September.

It should be stressed that Russia's list simply needs to be remembered, since many of the works – whether Muslim books of worship or historical books about Holodomor or the Ukrainian nationalist movement – would be most unlikely to be deemed as 'extremist' in other countries.

At a press conference on January 12, the Crimean Field Mission on Human Rights named Russia's Law on Extremism as one of the five laws which have had the most detrimental effort on the human rights situation in the Crimea since Russia's annexation. One of the main reasons is the dangerously broad interpretation given to the term 'extremism' and

the fact that in the Crimea and, of course, in Russia it is most often used against those the authorities deem dissidents rather than those actually inciting inter-ethnic enmity.

Poroshenko: Almost 100 judges who delivered illegal verdicts against Maidan activists hiding in Crimea

Interfax (17.01.2015) - Punishment for the crimes of the previous government, which led to the deaths of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes in the center of Kyiv, is inevitable, despite the fact that the organizers and executors of these crimes are hiding abroad and in the occupied territories, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko has said.

"The executors and organizers of these crimes are hiding from the people's wrath and fair punishment, abroad and in the occupied territories. According to the Ministry of Justice, almost 100 judges who imposed unlawful decisions against Maidan activists are now hiding in Crimea," the president's press service quoted him as saying on Friday.

According to the president, the death of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes was caused by the signing of dictatorial laws a year ago, on January 16, 2014. "We have no right to forget this," Poroshenko noted.

The President stated that he would sign the Law "On amendments to several legislative acts on the inevitability of punishment of persons, who have absconded to the temporarily occupied territories in Ukraine or to the anti-terrorist operation zone," and noted that the legal basis for trials in absentia of criminals place on the international wanted list had already been made. "We cannot waste a single hour. Our law enforcement agencies will have an opportunity to submit the criminal proceedings to the courts immediately," the President said.

The President also requested that MPs reach a compromise on selective confiscation. "The regime of special confiscation shouldn't be comprehensive, but the decision to allow the return of stolen property to Ukraine is an issue of principle," Petro Poroshenko said.

According to the President, this doesn’t mean that innocent people would be convicted. "Still, if a person is guilty, he shouldn't think that he will manage to hide money in foreign accounts… This money will be returned to Ukraine. Just as we returned UAH 3.7 billion stolen in the course of the annexation of Crimea to Ukraine yesterday… We will also work on the return of funds stolen from Ukraine by the previous authorities," the President said.

As reported earlier, the Verkhovna Rada passed the corresponding bill No. 1767 in the first reading and adopted it as a whole on Thursday.

The president's press secretary Sviatoslav Tsehalko said that Poroshenko was willing to sign the law foreseeing the possibility of trials in absentia of those suspected or accused of crime if they had been put on the international wanted list, or if they are hiding in temporarily occupied Crimea or in the anti-terrorist operation zone.

In turn, Justice Minister Pavlo Petrenko said that law enforcement agencies were investigating a number of criminal proceedings regarding former high-ranking officials, over the theft of Ukraine's money. He specified that it was connected to the improvement of procedures for trial in absentia, so that «scoundrels hiding from Ukrainian justice could incur legal liability, and Ukraine could receive the badly needed money".

Thus, if a person fails to appear after being summoned by an investigator, the prosecutor's office or a court, a suspect or those accused, who have been placed on the international wanted list, might be tried in absentia.

Before that, the law had foreseen that the reason for a trial in absentia was that a suspect was outside Ukrainian territory.

Jemiliev: Russian FSB snooping even in Crimean mosques

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (23.04.2014) - Mustafa Jemiliev, MP and former head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People has spoken of repressive measures against the Crimean Tatars since Russia's invasion of his homeland.

"Russian FSB [Federal Security Service] officers are present almost officially and openly in the Crimea's mosques, taking note of whose beard is longer, how religious people are, so that [those more religious] automatically are accordingly categorized as Islamic radicals", Jemiliev explained.

He described as repression the primitive behaviour of the so-called "self-defence of Crimea" thugs. The latter, as reported, used violence against a young man and three women in the Mejlis building on Monday who tried to stop them from bursting in and pulling down the Ukrainian flag hoisted over the building.

Jemiliev has also reported that Crimean Tatars who refuse to take Russian citizenship have lost their jobs as a consequence.

Mustafa Jemiliev has every cause to speak of the repressive measures adopted by Russia directly and the puppet administration it has installed in the Crimea. On Tuesday morning he was handed a document informing him that he has been banned entry to the Russian Federation until 2019. Since the Crimea is now under Russian occupation and Moscow claims it to be Russian territory, the ban extends to Mustafa Jemiliev's Crimean homeland.

Russian annexation - Crimean Tatar tragedy

By Halya Coynash

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (22.04.2014) - Mustafa Jemiliev, Ukrainian MP, former head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People and veteran leader of the Crimean Tatar rights movement, has been presented with a document banning his entry to the Russian Federation. This, according to Moscow and the puppet government installed in Simferopol includes the Crimea. The move coincides with measures to prevent broadcasts with Jemiliev, the current head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, and other Mejlis representatives on Crimean radio and television. It comes less than a month before the seventieth anniversary of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People and demonstrates how well-founded Crimean Tatar fears of Russian rule of the Crimea were.

The document was handed to Jemiliev as he and the deputy head of the Mejlis, Aslan Omer Kirimli left the Crimea for Kyiv. It calls Mustafa Jemiliev a "foreign national", a citizen of Ukraine and bans him from entering the Russian Federation up till April 19, 2019. Jemiliev commented that although representatives of many authoritative international organizations and diplomats had been stopped from entering the Crimea in recent months, this move is something entirely different. He calls it an indicator of the kind of "civilized" country we are dealing with and adds that he will come to the Crimea regardless of any bans.

Mustafa Jemiliev had only arrived in the Crimea on Saturday for the first time since armed Russian soldiers seized government buildings in Simferopol on Feb 27. He and Chubarov were initially held at the border into the Crimea by men with rifles who claimed that they had been declared persona non grata. They were finally allowed through, with Jemiliev who had not been in the Crimea since the invasion receiving a warm welcome en route.

In Simferopol Jemiliev noticed that for the first time the Ukrainian flag was not flying over the Mejlis building and ordered it to be reinstated. This led first to a visitation from the police who demanded that it be removed since it could cause "provocation and attacks on the building". Under the puppet regime of Sergei Aksenov this proved to be a promise and on Monday morning three women present in the building were injured when around 40 "Crimean self-defence" thugs burst in and removed the flag. It was later reinstated.

A little earlier, Lilia Muslimova, press secretary for the Mejlis (and one of the three women injured) cited sources in the State-owned Crimean Radio and TV broadcasting company Krym as saying that staff had been instructed to avoid taking interviews with Jemiliev , Chubarov and other members of the Mejlis or generally providing information about them. The chief editor of the Crimean Tatar programme on TV Krym, Shevket Ganiev and the director of this programme have also been removed.

There have been many reports over these last months of Crimean Tatars being asked when they are leaving. At more official levels Crimean Tatars have been placed under immense pressure to accept Russian citizenship. They, and the international community, were assured that their rights would be fully respected under Russian rule. These latest events make their distrust understandable.

Mustafa Jemiliev was just 6 months old in May 1944 when his family and more than 200 thousand Crimean Tatars were forced to leave their homes. Nearly half died during the Deportation and in the first two years of exile. He has now been told that he is a "foreign national" and cannot enter his homeland
On April 21 Russian president Vladimir Putin signed a decree on the "rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatar population and other ethnic groups of the Crimea who suffered from repression." The decree sets out measures for the "socio-economic development of some territories".

Whatever Putin's objective in taking this measure, the last words sound positively menacing. As reported, Aksenov's deputy, Ruslan Temirgaliyev announced almost immediately after the takeover that they would be "asking" Crimean Tatars to vacate land supposedly required "for social needs".

This decree comes a couple of weeks after the publication of a new "Crimean constitution" drawn up following the Russian annexation behind closed doors. The Crimean Tatar response was swift and negative. This "constitution" contains no recognition of their status as indigenous people. The document does not contain any norms guaranteeing the participation of the Crimean Tatars in public life, nor are there the previously promised 20% quotas of positions within government.

Mustafa Jemilev called Putin's decree a political step aimed at strengthening Russian policy in the Crimea and said that the Crimean Tatars do not need "rehabilitation" from Russia. On the contrary, Russia should rehabilitate itself before them for the crime committed in 1944. He adds that such a step is clearly belated. Russia should have declared back in 1991 that the Deportation had been a crime and taken on the commitment to help Crimean Tatars return. "Why have they decided to issue this decree now after occupying our territory?", he asks.

If Putin genuinely wished to demonstrate that the Crimean Tatars have nothing to fear under Russian rule, he should have organized proper legislation recognizing the Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people and setting out real guarantees for their rights. Inserting a puppet government who use thugs prepared to beat up women to pull down a flag, introduce repressive measures and ban Crimean Tatars from their homeland is a rotten way to begin.

Attack on Crimean Tatar Mejlis

By Halya Coynash

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (22.04.2014) - Three women were injured during the forced removal of the Ukrainian flag over the premises of the Mejlis on Monday. The flag has now been reinstated but members of the Mejlis have called on all concerned residents of the Crimea to help them protect the building against further attack.

The women were hurt when around 40 men from the so-called Crimean self-defence burst into the premises of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People in Simferopol. Although the men did not identify themselves, their actions followed a visit from the police shortly after the flag was raised on April 19 and it is difficult to believe that Monday's visitation was not sanctioned from above. The three women - Lilia Muslimova, Press Secretary; Marlena Seitasanova, Chief Accountant of the Crimea Foundation, the NGO which owns the building and Zodiye Saliyeva, concierge - had tried to stop the men.

As reported, on Saturday Jemiliev and the current head of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, were held at the border into the Crimea by men with rifles who initially claimed that they had been declared persona non grata. They were finally allowed through, with Jemiliev who had not been in the Crimea since the invasion receiving a warm welcome en route. It was he who noticed that the Ukrainian flag had been taken down and demanded its restoration. The building belongs to the Crimea Foundation and is therefore private property which was explained to the police on Saturday. This doubtless prompted the use of more thuggish methods on Monday.

Violence and intolerance of opposition have become standard in the Crimea and the peninsula's newly ensconced leaders give no grounds for optimism. It seems almost certain that quite shockingly intolerant "tweets" reported by Ukrainska Pravda on Sunday as from the new Crimean "prime minister", Sergei Aksenov were fakes. It is disturbing that they did not seem implausible following many other highly questionable statements made by the same man. Aksenov is from a marginal Russian nationalist party which gained 4% of the votes in the last elections to the Crimean parliament, and only 3 seats in that body. He himself is widely known by the nickname "goblin" due to criminal connections, and has now gained new prominence as Russia's choice for frontman to carry out its annexation of the Crimea. He was supposedly "elected" after armed men in

uniform without insignia (but now acknowledged by Vladimir Putin to have been Russians) seized government buildings in Simferopol.

Crimean Tatars vote to create a national autonomy in the Crimea

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (29.03.2014) - The Kurultai or assembly of the Crimean Tatar People, meeting in special session, has voted to begin "the political and legal procedure for the creation of a Crimean Tatar national territorial autonomy in their historical homeland - the Crimea.

The resolution "On the exercising by the Crimean Tatar People of their right to self-determination in their historical homeland - the Crimea" was adopted on Saturday, March 29. The Kurultai is calling on the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU, OSCE and Organization of Islamic Cooperation to support the right of the Crimean Tatar People to self-determination in the form of a national and territorial autonomy in the Crimea.

Refat Chubarov, head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People stresses that the Kurultai's decision is based on the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples from 13 September 2007. This affirms the right of an indigenous people to self-determination; to autonomy and self-government; to take part as they choose in the political, economic, cultural and social life of the state in which they are living.

Military action may not be carried out on the territory of an indigenous people without their consent or request (Article 30 of the Declaration).

Chubarov points out that "the change in status of the Crimea at the present time is being carried out without the consent and clear will of the Crimean Tatar People, the indigenous people of the Crimea."

One of the suggestions put to the Kurultai was to reject any relations with the occupying authorities and government headed by Sergei Aksenov which have not been recognized by most countries. The Kurultai seems to have decided to not fully close the session but rather await the return from Mustafa Jemiliev and another delegate who are currently in New York, presenting the position of the Crimean Tatars at the United Nations.

The Kurultai was addressed by Aishe Seitmuratova, veteran of the Crimean Tatar national movement. She expressed distrust in the Russian authorities and pointed out that Russia had deceived the Crimean Tatars three times. "It is not we who rejected Russia. Russia rejected us three times." In 1774 the Crimean Khanate was recognized as an independent state, then 9 years later, in 1783 Russia seized the Crimea through a war and revoked their statehood. Then during the Crimean War from 1853 to 1856 Russia forced a huge number of Crimean Tatars to flee to Turkey. "*We remember also that in 1921 Russia formally declared the creation of the Crimean Autonomous Republic of the USSR, yet that didn't save the people from numerous repressions, executions, various forms of persecution. And in 1944 Russia, to whom we're being called now, dissolved our last form of statehood in the Crimea - the Crimean autonomy and at 4 a.m. deported everybody, to the last person, by force from their homeland. We must therefore say bluntly that we know what Russia is*". Aishe Seitmuratova went on to say that in the 1990s Ukraine had accepted them as one of the peoples of Ukraine.

"*Yes, Ukraine was not able to give us all that we wanted. Yet Ukraine itself has yet to raise itself up fully, and I am convinced that at the present time we should build our*

statehood together with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. And together with Ukraine we will achieve success and flourish".

The Kurultai has been meeting in Bakhysarai, rather than Simferopol as is usually the case because the Crimean Tatars feared provocation from pro-Russian forces.

As reported, the Mejlis called on all Crimean Tatars and other residents of the Crimea to boycott the so-called referendum held on March 16. This, as expected, was claimed to have given overwhelming support for the Crimea "joining" Russia.

In fact, Mustafa Jemiliev, former head of the Mejlis and veteran defender of Crimean Tatar rights, has presented evidence suggesting that only 34% of Crimean residents actually took part in the vote. The puppet government installed at gunpoint on Feb 27 after Russian soldiers seized government buildings in Simferopol claimed a much higher figure and that a large number of Crimean Tatars had taken part.

The "referendum" gave only two options, neither of which offered retention of the status quo. There was no minimum turn out and a huge number of procedural irregularities. It was, for example, possible to turn up and vote on the day even if ones name was not on the list and people reported being able to vote without showing their passports. The possibility of casting multiple votes was thus enormous.

The referendum was condemned beforehand by Ukraine's main election watchdogs and western countries. The only "observers", invited by Russia proved to be people from far right or neo-Stalinist parties (see, for example, *The Crimean Referendum's Neo-Nazi Observers*)

As reported, Ukraine's parliament passed a law on March 20 declaring the Crimean Tatars to be an indigenous people of Ukraine.

Russia's military aggression and annexation of the Crimea give little scope for optimism regarding respect for the wishes of the Crimean Tatar People. On the other hand, Saturday's decision must be an embarrassment to the Kremlin and a clear statement to the international community.

Human Rights in the Crimea Crisis: The council of Europe Should Consider Suspending Russia

By Aaron Rhodes (*)

HRWF (16.03.2014) - Human rights defenders have generally, and correctly avoided making judgments about political decisions and territorial disputes, and focus on whether or not human rights standards are violated, by any authoritative parties, in the processes of political change.

The events unfolding in Crimea involve very serious violations of human rights, and these need to be factored in with respect to how political figures and international institutions address them, because human rights standards in large part define the legitimacy of government actions and political changes.

Ukraine and Russia are both bound by the complex and overlapping array of legal and political human rights obligations established by the Council of Europe, the United

Nations, and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). I would thus like to offer a modest commentary on some aspects of the Crimea situation from a human rights perspective.

The conclusion drawn from this overview is that the Council of Europe must carefully examine the issue of the political transition in Ukraine. The Council of Europe should, furthermore, consider a motion to suspend Russian membership based on its actions in Crimea, which are at variance with Chapter I of the Statute of the Council.

This recommendation is endorsed by Human Rights Without Frontiers International (Brussels) and the International Centre for Policy Studies (Kyiv).

The Change in the Ukrainian Government

First, were civil and political rights violated in the course of the political transition in Ukraine? While it has been charged that the government was "overthrown" in a "coup d'etat," in fact the president was impeached on 22 February by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) on the basis of abuse of power. A majority of 328 of 447 deputies backed this measure, but this was less than the three-quarter majority required by the Constitution, nor did the Constitutional Court review the case. The new government has set an early election in accordance with the law. It appears that the charge of an illegal coup is not accurate, and yet the ouster of the president apparently lacked full legality.

Furthermore, the president allegedly had responsibility for the deaths of many demonstrators who were exercising their human rights of freedom of expression and association. Over 70 demonstrators or bystanders were shot dead by security forces on 20 February alone, and video footage and reliable independent accounts converge to support the conclusion that the shootings were deliberate, were intended to kill the targets, and took place on orders, and did thus gravely violate standards defined by the United Nations, the European Convention and the OSCE on the proportional use of force.

The Abortive Changes in the Language Law

There are allegations that the new government abridged a number of OSCE commitments, at least in spirit, by deciding by a slim margin on 23 February 2014, to repeal a law on regional languages. Russian had been a regional language in those regions where Russian-speaking citizens constituted over ten percent of the population, that is, in 13 of 27 Ukrainian regions. The repeal was harshly criticized by a range of international political figures and human rights authorities, and Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov subsequently vetoed it. The new government has shut down Russian language TV and radio stations citing their use for militant propaganda. This has been called censorship by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic; Ukrainian civil society activists believe the international community needs to take into account the threats to security posed by how the channels were being used to foment violence and war.

Military Takeover of Crimea

Since 27 February, masked, unidentified military forces without insignia have seized control of Crimea, beginning with Simferopol International Airport. In general, the militarization of Crimea has created a thoroughly illegal situation where all residents have been deprived of civil and political rights. The fact that many of these citizens, perhaps a majority, may not have concerns about their lack of freedom, and may welcome the military presence, in no way diminishes from the severe problem that fundamental rights and freedoms cannot be enjoyed. Crimea has become a police or national security

state, a situation made even more egregious because concealing the identities of military forces makes individual accountability for crimes impossible, as per the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security of 1994.

The political institutions of Crimea have been taken over by force by unidentified armed units. Following the forced occupation of the Parliament by armed men, a new prime minister was elected in a closed meeting, following which the presence and the role of the Russian Federation in the region became more overt.

On 7 March, three television services have been taken over and shut down by the new authorities, with one being replaced by Russian state broadcasting, obviously severely restricting and distorting the flow of information to the population.

There is a profound lack of transparency regarding the transformative events underway, due to the sometimes violent repression of independent civil society activity. There are highly credible reports, including from the historian and journalist Anne Applebaum, that irregular "police" forces, not constituted by a legal authority under civil control, have and continue to interrogate, harass and arrest citizens on arbitrary and politicized bases.

Amnesty International official John Dalhuisen has stated that, "Attempting to monitor the human rights situation in Crimea has become a near impossible task. Self-styled Crimean self-defense groups are harassing pro-Ukrainian protesters, journalists and human rights monitors with complete impunity." Amnesty International noted that monitors from the OSCE as well as the UN Special Envoy to Crimea had been forced to suspend their activities due to threats from hostile crowds or such activities were prevented by "unidentified military personnel." The group also reported that citizens peacefully demonstrating against the military incursion and political changes had been threatened by "pro-Russia activists," and not protected by any security forces. The Amnesty International report of 7 March goes on:

> *Police are often absent, present in small numbers, or fail to intervene when journalists and protestors are attacked....5 March, 100 aggressive men who identified themselves as the Crimean Self-Defence League forced some 40 women to end their peaceful protest in front of the Ukrainian Naval headquarters in Crimea's capital, Simferopol. The women were holding placards calling for peace and denouncing Russia's military intervention in Crimea.*
>
> *The men also attacked a journalist from "News of the Week - Crimea" as he tried to film the event. They pushed him into the road and threatened to beat him.*
>
> *Crimean police officers who were standing about 30 metres away did not react to the incident. In a separate event on 6 March, a journalist from Kerch.fm was threatened by men wearing Russian Cossack uniforms and men from the Crimean Self-Defence League when she and a colleague visited the border ferry crossing which they heard had been occupied by Russian forces. The men told her: "Switch off your camera or we will kill you."*

Amnesty International has subsequently reported on continuing violent harassment of civil society activists, including the disappearance of three activists on 13 March.

The evident denial of virtually all civil and political rights in Crimea is a matter that needs to be thoroughly investigated by independent monitors, and acted upon by human rights bodies and by courts. It casts profound doubt on the legitimacy of any and all political changes that are taking place, and could lead to a syndrome of unrest and violence much more severe than is already seen.

While the focus here is not on the political question of Russian involvement in Crimea,

the claim that threats to the security and human rights of the majority Russian-speaking population justify an exceptional humanitarian intervention in Crimea lacks credibility. I am not aware of a single piece of objective documentation that confirms threats to ethnic Russians in Crimea that would constitute a legal justification for such an interference in the affairs of another state. Two independent human rights organizations in Ukraine, the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group and the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, have not found significant violations of the rights of Russian speakers. At the same time, there have been numerous credible reports of clashes between Ukrainian and Russian speakers instigated by pro-Russian agitators.

The Referendum and Human Rights

Referenda have been misused to the detriment of human rights a number of times in the post-Soviet political space, and the referendum on 16 March is unquestionably another example. The poll fails to meet legal criteria, and the way it was prepared and executed violates standards for free and fair elections, for example those enumerated in the OSCE Copenhagen Document.

Ukrainian law, according to Article 3, demands that a referendum on territorial questions must be open to all voters in the country, not just those in an effected region. The Ukraine's Central Election Commission also denounced the referendum.

The date and content of the referendum have been changed abruptly. The timing has been accelerated as the date was moved ahead on two instances. The questions were initially to concern the degree of autonomy of the region, but subsequently the content changed to become a question of joining the Russian Federation. To maintain the status quo is not an option on the ballot.

None of the requirements for free and fair election as enumerated, for example, in the OSCE Copenhagen document have been met. Especially because of an overbearing military presence, the atmosphere of political intimidation against the opponents of the referendum proposal to become part of Russia has made it impossible for those citizens to express their opinions. In the run-up to the referendum, the new authorities have ensured that the public space is saturated with symbols and messages favorable to joining Russia, but opposition to the proposal is suppressed. Opposition to the referendum, and to the proposal to join Russia, is often portrayed as "fascism" in these symbols and messages. Voting has taken place amidst overt pressure by armed "self-defense" militia. There are no independent or expert election observers, although some international journalists have filed reports.

Thanks to Russian involvement, Crimea is in a state of political limbo where legal accountability for human rights has become blurred because of the actions of Russian forces on Ukrainian territory. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in responding to concerns about the legality of the referendum, suggested that Ukraine's separation from the Soviet Union lacked legality, implying that such problems somehow justify the referendum not adhering strictly to law. But it is a principle of human rights analysis that one wrong -- assuming hypothetically that his claim has any validity - does not justify another.

About 12 percent or over 240,000 of the population of Crimea consists of members of the Tatar community, a Turkic Muslim group with a tragic history of oppression by the Soviet state, having been subjected to mass executions and starvation since the formation of the USSR, and then deported to Central Asia in the 1940s. There have been violent clashes between Tatar and pro-Russian demonstrators. The head of the assembly of the Tatars has urged fellows to boycott the current referendum, and it is apparent that other significant groups will also not participate. According to the New York Times, all but one of the main Tatar leaders have been either kidnapped or fled the region. There are well-founded fears about persecution of the Crimean Tatar population, a process that

could lead to radicalization, as has been the case in the Northern Caucasus. Such conflict could be subject to political exploitation, giving a pretext for intrusive security measures.

Violations of Russian Citizens' Human Rights

Media reports suggest that the Russian invasion of Crimea and the Russian government's manipulation of events leading toward the referendum enjoy wide support from citizens of Russia. But it should be pointed out that Russian citizens do not enjoy the civil and political rights that would allow them access to diverse opinions, the ability to elect representatives in opposition to government policies, or confidence to express their own views in public without the fear of violence or other repercussions. Even if the Russian democracy were fully consistent with international standards, that would not affect the legitimacy of its actions in terms of international law. According to Amnesty International, "Russian authorities have launched a full-scale onslaught on the few remaining independent media in Russia, blocking a number of internet sites in order to stifle free media." Nonetheless, around 50,000 persons reportedly demonstrated their disapproval of Russian actions on 15 March in central Moscow.

Conclusion

The crisis in Crimea poses the most severe challenge to human rights and the rule of law in the European sphere since the end of the Cold War. Not only the human rights of the people of Crimea are at stake; the integrity of European human rights institutions, and their ability to adhere to their own principles and work for the rights and security of all, are being sorely tested.

Indeed, if fundamental human rights can be subverted in the part of the world where citizens are theoretically protected by the thick layers of international agreements and law that exist in Ukraine, it is a signal to the world at large that human rights protections mean nothing in the face of aggression.

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The text of this paper is under the sole responsibility of the author. Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l and the International Center for Policy Studies endorse the recommendation to suspend Russian membership based on its actions in Crimea, which are at variance with Chapter I of the Statute of the Council. Those who support this recommendation are requested to inform HRWF Int'l (international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net) for followup activities.

Selection of the best analyses of the crisis in Crimea

HRWF (14.03.2014) - HRWF is presenting you its selection of interesting analyses of the crisis in Ukraine, and in particular on the Crimean issue.

Crimean crisis increases importance of links among Tatars

Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 11 Issue: 48
March 13, 2014

Moscow had hoped that the Kazan Tatars would promote the Russian Federation's agenda in Crimea both by appealing to the Crimean Tatars for calm and by dispelling the

latter's fears about Russia's intentions. But as in so much of what is now defined as the Crimean crisis, the Kremlin's policy has backfired. With each passing day, influence is flowing in the opposite direction, with the Crimean Tatars increasingly inspiring the Kazan Tatars and thereby transforming what had been a foreign policy problem for the Russian state into a potentially destabilizing domestic one. Indeed, Tatars have traditionally been looked to by other non-Russian groups living under Moscow's control as a bellwether of the future.

See full article at
http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42087&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=f483022a2c1227083f1a320aa97ea18f#.UyIvtrmPJlY

Kremlin refuses to tolerate any dissent over its Ukrainian policy

Jamestown Foundation - March 13, 2014
By: Pavel Felgenhauer

Moscow is preparing to legalize the annexation of Crimea as soon as possible. A special constitutional amendment is being rushed through parliament. To enact a "constitutional law," all regional legislatures of the Russian Federation must state their opinion, but since all of them are controlled by the ruling United Russia party, this may only take a day or two (http://www.interfax.ru/print.asp?sec=1448&id=363460).
Despite continuing Western diplomatic pressure, Vladimir Putin unequivocally supports the swift integration of Crimea into Russia. On March 6, the local Crimean legislature-the Supreme Council-voted to join Russia and hold a snap referendum on March 16, to confirm this decision. On March 11, the same legislature declared independence from Ukraine to "join Russia as an independent republic." The pro-Moscow speaker of the Crimean Council, Vladimir Konstantinov, explained the independence declaration was a technicality "to help legitimize the accession to Russia"
(http://www.interfax.ru/print.asp?sec=1446&id=363856).

See full article at
http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42086&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=3b514638edec0d28efb5617c6739dd66#.UyIxQbmPJlY

Ukraine: CVU and OPORA statement on illegitimacy of so-called referendum in AR Crimea

Opora (12.03.2014) - On March 6, 2014, Verkhovna Rada of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council adopted a resolution on so-called referendum on the status of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.
Committee of Voters of Ukraine and Civil Network OPORA state the following

- Members of Verkhovna Rada of ARC and Sevastopol City Council do not have relevant powers;
- There is no law on organization and holding of local referendums in Ukraine;
- Terms of conducting and provisions on organization of so-called referendum do not meet general international standards.

Therefore CVU and OPORA, the largest Ukrainian organizations with long-term experience of professional monitoring of elections and referendums in Ukraine,do not recognize the legitimacy of the voting scheduled for March 16 and will not participate in official observation of these processes.

Also CVU and OPORA appeal to all Ukrainian, foreign and international organizations, which plan to observe the pseudo-referendum, to refuse from participating in political actions which are beyond Ukrainian and international legal framework. Work in Crimea

on March 16 will be perceived as an attempt to legitimize illegal process, which can't be supported by organizations with experience, history and principles.

CVU and OPORA emphasize that trust and reputation are priorities in activities of any observation organization. Participation in monitoring of illegal referendum may be considered as politically motivated and biased.

The organizations claim that such an instrument of democracy as elections and referendums should be used only within the law and international standards.

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Committee of Voters of Ukraine

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Interim measure granted in inter-State case brought by Ukraine against Russia

Registry of the European Court (13.03.2014) - On 13 March 2014 the Government of Ukraine lodged an inter-State application under Article 33 (Inter-State cases) of the European Convention on Human Rights against the Russian Federation.

They also submitted a request under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court for an interim measure indicating to the Russian Government, among other things, that it should refrain from measures which might threaten the life and health of the civilian population on the territory of Ukraine.

Considering that the current situation gives rise to a continuing risk of serious violations of the European Convention, the President of the Third Section has decided to apply Rule 39 of the Rules of Court. With a view to preventing such violations and pursuant to Rule 39, the President calls upon both Contracting Parties concerned to refrain from taking any measures, in particular military actions, which might entail breaches of the Convention rights of the civilian population, including putting their life and health at risk, and to comply with their engagements under the Convention, notably in respect of Articles 2 (right to life) and 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment).

Both States were also asked to inform the Court as soon as possible of the measures taken to ensure that the Convention is fully complied with.

Under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court the Court may indicate to the parties of any interim measure which it considers should be adopted in the interests of the parties or of the proper conduct of the proceedings before it. The inter-State application has been registered under no. 20958/14, Ukraine v. Russia.