



# **RUSSIA/UKRAINE: 10 YEARS OF OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA**

**RUSSIA IS SEEKING TO EFFECT DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHANGE WHILE SUPPRESSING UKRAINIAN AND  
CRIMEAN TATAR IDENTITIES**

RESEARCH  
BRIEFING

AMNESTY  
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*Russian military personnel without identifying insignia controlling the Crimean parliament building on 1 March 2014, Simferopol, Ukraine  
© (Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images)*

During ten years of occupation, Russia has attempted to reshape the demography of Crimea. It has also suppressed Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identities through restrictions on education, religion, media, representative institutions, judicial system, and cultural celebrations. Russia must end immediately all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in all Ukrainian territories it occupies.

**“In Russia, complete loyalty is obligatory. We are the only people who are not demonstrating it to the authorities. They don’t want us to love them, they want us to fear them”.**

Crimean Tatar activist Ilmi Umerov, in an interview with Amnesty International, 28 September 2016

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has attempted to change the ethnic makeup of Crimea while suppressing non-Russian identities on the peninsula, including through restricting education in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages, attacking religious minorities, stifling media and culture, as well as undermining representative institutions and abusing the criminal justice system.

The percentage of the Crimean population identifying as Ukrainian or Crimean Tatar has significantly decreased. Residents of Crimea are obliged to accept Russian passports or face the deprivation of their human rights, denial of access to essential services and even risk being deported. Meanwhile, there is evidence that Russia has transferred its own population into Crimea in violation of international law.

Russia has targeted the youth of Crimea, suffusing school curricula with propaganda that justifies its war of aggression and undermines Crimean Tatars’ legacy as an Indigenous People. Meanwhile, the de facto authorities have all but eradicated tuition in the Ukrainian language.

As of 2024, following a long campaign of persecution at the hands of the de facto authorities, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine effectively no longer functions in Crimea, shuttering one of the last vestiges of Ukrainian identity on the peninsula. Other religious minorities, such as Muslims and Jehovah’s Witnesses, face discrimination and harassment, with the latter subject to criminal prosecution and imprisonment merely for practicing their faith.

The plurality and independence that characterized Crimea’s media landscape prior to 2014 is a thing of the past. The authorities have silenced any dissenting voices in print, on the airwaves and blocking them online, including those in Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian, often replacing them with Russian language media that toe the official line. Residents of Crimea are cut off from Ukrainian media and the de facto authorities use draconian measures to intimidate and silence independent journalists.

Crimea has enjoyed a degree of autonomy as part of Ukraine, in recognition of its unique history and demographic makeup. Yet the banning of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, the Crimean Tatar representative body, in 2016 was emblematic of the oppression of the idea of collective representation and cultural autonomy that characterizes Russia’s occupation. The independence of the judiciary has been fundamentally compromised, as have been the rights to freedom of speech, association and assembly.

Cultural celebrations are tightly controlled, with prior authorization required for any public assembly, or even the laying of a wreath at a statue of Ukraine’s national poet. Ukrainian books have been removed from libraries, and any public display of loyalty to Ukraine may be severely punished.

In ten years of occupation, Russia has done everything in its power to delegitimize Ukraine’s sovereignty over Crimea. These policies appear to be a blueprint for Russia’s designs on other areas of Ukraine it occupies.

# METHODOLOGY

This publication synthesizes ten years of Amnesty International's work on Crimea, including information from research trips carried out in Crimea when access was still possible, information provided to Amnesty International by key informants, and previous interviews with human rights defenders, activists, lawyers, the relatives of prisoners of conscience and other key informants. It also analyses the publications of key international human rights bodies and experts such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights. The work of Crimean and Ukrainian human rights organizations such as Crimean Human Rights Group and the Regional Center for Human Rights have also made important contributions to this publication.

# BACKGROUND

On 18 March 2014, Russia illegally annexed Crimea following the military occupation and political takeover of the peninsula. In the weeks prior to the annexation, Crimea had seen confrontations between supporters of the new Ukrainian government and pro-Russian activists, including a demonstration by two opposing crowds that left two people dead and over 30 injured.<sup>1</sup> On 27 February, Russian military forces operating without insignia took over key administrative buildings including the Crimean parliament, which elected a new leader the same day. The de facto authorities then, in violation of the Constitution of Ukraine, called a "referendum" on Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation on 16 March. The results of the "referendum" were recorded as giving an overwhelming majority in favour of accession, and on 18 March Russia formally completed its annexation of the peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

On 27 March, the United Nations General Assembly adopted overwhelmingly a resolution stating "the referendum... having no validity, cannot form the basis for any alteration of the status" of Crimea.<sup>3</sup> A second resolution, adopted on 19 December 2016, refers to Crimea as being under the "temporary occupation" of the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup>

The relevant legal frameworks for assessing Russia's actions in Crimea are both international human rights law (IHRL), and international humanitarian law (IHL), sometimes known as the law of armed conflict. Russia immediately violated its obligations under IHL by fully imposing its own legal system on Crimea.<sup>5</sup> Over the last ten years, Russia has continuously and flagrantly violated IHL, and some of its actions may amount to war crimes.

Russia is a state party to numerous international human rights treaties that are relevant to its conduct in Crimea, and which it has consistently violated over ten years of occupation. For example, both the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, « Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea », EUR 50/1129/2015, 18 March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/1129/2015/en/>, p.5

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, "Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea", EUR 50/1129/2015, 18 March 2015, (previously cited), p.5

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262, Territorial integrity of Ukraine, adopted on 27 March 2014, <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F68%2F262&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/205, Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, adopted on 19 December 2016, <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F71%2F205&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

<sup>5</sup> Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 1949, Article 64



of the Child include the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education and not to violate this right by indoctrinating pupils with propaganda.<sup>6</sup> Since the illegal annexation, international and regional human rights mechanisms have been refused entry to the peninsula by the Russian authorities. Among the first of these mechanisms to be denied access were the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.<sup>7</sup> The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine mandated by the General Assembly to assess the human rights situation in the entire territory of Ukraine including Crimea has never been allowed access to the peninsula by the occupying authorities.

Russia's systematic suppression of non-Russian identities in Crimea has been backed up by the threat and use of violence, intimidation, enforced disappearance, killing, arbitrary detention and prosecution, unlawful trial by Russian military courts, illegal transfer of detainees and prisoners to Russia, and harassment of any dissenting voices, as well as persecuting lawyers who represented them. Over the last ten years, Amnesty International has highlighted the cases of many individuals who have been punished for exercising their human rights. These cases include leaders of the Crimean Tatar community, civil and human rights activists, bloggers and journalists, such as Akhtem Chygoz, Emir-Usein Kuku, Server Mustafaev, Nariman Dzhelyal, Irina Danilovich, Mykola Semena and numerous others. Amnesty International calls for the immediate release of all those detained and convicted under unfounded, politically motivated charges, and full and transparent investigations into all cases of killings and enforced disappearances that have occurred in Crimea since the illegal annexation.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

**“Forcibly shifting the demographic composition of an occupied territory is a war crime under the 1949 Geneva Conventions... Therefore information about how many people they have brought in is carefully guarded”.**

Mustafa Dzemilev, Ukrainian Member of Parliament and former Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, in an interview with Ukrinform in 2018<sup>8</sup>

A census conducted by Ukraine in 2001 found that of the total of 2,401,209 and of the 125 ethnicities residing on the peninsula, ethnic Russians made up the largest group at 60%, followed by Ukrainians (24%) and Crimean Tatars (12%).<sup>9</sup> Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014,

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<sup>6</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 13; Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28-29

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the international blind spot in Crimea”, 17 March 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/5886/2017/en/> p. 1

<sup>8</sup> RFE/RL, “Shifting loyalty: Moscow accused of reshaping annexed Crimea's demographics”, 31 May 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-accused-of-reshaping-annexed-crimea-demographics-ukraine/29262130.html>

<sup>9</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)”, 25 September 2017, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/Crimea2014\\_2017\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/Crimea2014_2017_EN.pdf) para. 46 ff.

Russian authorities carried out a census in September of that year, which has not been recognized by the government of Ukraine. It recorded an overall decrease in the population, but found an increase in the proportion of the Russian population to 65%, and a significant decrease of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar populations, which fell to 15% and 10%, respectively.

While many Ukrainians did leave the peninsula following Russia's occupation, Ukraine's State Emergency Service estimated their number at approximately 20,000 in 2017. Much higher estimates by Ukrainian NGOs put the upper limits of the figure at between 50,000 – 60,000 people.<sup>10</sup> Even these higher estimates would not fully explain the Russian authorities' stated figures concerning the reduction in the ethnic Ukrainian population of Crimea. The disparity in the figures may be explained by the Russian authorities' deliberate underestimation of the size of the ethnic Ukrainian population in Crimea, a considerable number of ethnic Ukrainians now choosing or feeling compelled to identify as Russian, or a combination of both.

In 2014, Russia's illegal annexation policy mandated that all permanent residents of Crimea were Russian citizens unless they formally opted out within a month of the annexation, and the Russian authorities issued them with Russian passports en masse. Those who opted out of Russian citizenship became subject to legal restrictions applicable to all foreign nationals in Russia, requiring a legal permission to stay. Following the 2022 full-scale invasion, Russia introduced a decree that offered "fast track" citizenship for residents of Crimea and of other Ukrainian territories it occupied. The introduction of a simplified application process for obtaining Russian citizenship in Crimea in 2022 resulted in 57,377 individuals obtaining citizenship there, an increase of 492% compared with 2021.<sup>11</sup> The decree has been described as a "large-scale naturalization" programme that is intended to legitimize the illegal annexation and deprive Ukraine of jurisdiction.<sup>12</sup>

Those without Russian citizenship in Crimea are deprived of numerous economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Ukrainian citizens considered as "foreigners" by the de facto authorities may "legally" remain in Crimea for only 90 days in a 180 day period, and may be subject to "transfer orders", whereby they are forcibly transferred to Ukrainian government controlled territory. According to the United Nations, 341 of such orders were issued in 2022 alone. The unlawful deportation or forcible transfer of protected persons under the Geneva Conventions is a war crime.<sup>14</sup>

As has been set out above it is difficult to ascertain the true number of ethnic Ukrainians currently residing in Crimea, due to an unavoidable reliance on dubious statistics emanating from Russia, as well as its forced naturalization programme. There is ample evidence, however, that a significant number of Russian citizens have moved from Russia to Crimea since 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, the United Nations documented an "influx" of Russian citizens, primarily pensioners, public servants and servicemen with their families, into Crimea.<sup>15</sup> The transfer of the civilian population of an occupying power into territory that it occupies is prohibited under international law.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), paras. 49, 51-2

<sup>11</sup> Secretary General of the United Nations, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", UN Doc. A/HRC/53/64, 26 May 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5364-situation-human-rights-temporarily-occupied-autonomous-republic> para. 38

<sup>12</sup> *Opinio Juris*, "The Russian citizenship law in Ukraine and international law", 6 October 2022, <https://opiniojuris.org/2022/10/06/the-russian-citizenship-law-in-ukraine-and-international-law/>

<sup>13</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 62

<sup>14</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949, Article 147, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>

<sup>15</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 52

<sup>16</sup> ICRC Database, Customary IHL, Rule 130, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule130>

## EDUCATION, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE

**“The legislative and other practices of the Russian Federation with regard to school education in the Ukrainian language in Crimea... was intended to lead to a structural change in the educational system... [and] constitutes a pattern of racial discrimination”.**

International Court of Justice judgement in *Ukraine v Russian Federation* (2024)<sup>17</sup>

Russia’s attempts to legitimize its occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea through forced demographic change have been accompanied by policies that aim to suppress non-Russian identities throughout the peninsula. Nowhere is this more evident than in its policies concerning education.

Immediately after the annexation, Russia imposed its own school curriculum in Crimea.<sup>18</sup> As well as introducing compulsory military education and “patriotic” classes, since 2022 students, staff and parents are often obliged to attend “informational sessions” which justify and promote the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Differences of opinion are not tolerated and anyone disagreeing including teachers, students and parents are at risk of reprisals.<sup>19</sup>

As well as altering the substantive content of the curriculum, Russia has deliberately and systematically restricted access to education in the Ukrainian language. In 2014, when the Ukrainian curriculum was last applied in Crimea, approximately 9.3% of children were educated in Ukrainian.<sup>20</sup> By the 2022/2023 academic year, this figure had fallen to 0.1%.<sup>21</sup> The Crimean Human Rights Group

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<sup>17</sup> International Court of Justice, Application of The International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and Of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (*Ukraine v. Russian Federation*), 31 January 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/166/166-20240131-jud-01-00-en.pdf>, para. 369

<sup>18</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para 195

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights concerns in Crimea: June 2023 update”, submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 31 August 2023, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386692?posInSet=1&queryId=9ee4fc89-9757-4ba3-a17f-afa30105fffd>

<sup>20</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Report on the situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine 13 September 2017 to 30 June 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/39/1, 21 September 2018 [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/CrimeaThematicReport10Sept2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/CrimeaThematicReport10Sept2018_EN.pdf), para. 68

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Secretary General, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine : report of the Secretary-General” , UN Doc, A/78/340, 1 September 2023 [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4023206?fbclid=IwAR0dumNT6Ssgm\\_e11ovoTDmJIOfvRWFbmaA8hX3IOB7ZCVtXHOJAgbSveDo&ln=en](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4023206?fbclid=IwAR0dumNT6Ssgm_e11ovoTDmJIOfvRWFbmaA8hX3IOB7ZCVtXHOJAgbSveDo&ln=en), para. 31



reported in 2017 that only one school was offering education in the Ukrainian language,<sup>22</sup> which, according to the same NGO, was no longer providing tuition in Ukrainian in 2019 despite de facto authorities' claims to the contrary.<sup>23</sup>

The availability of Crimean Tatar language education has been less affected. However, the Council of Europe (CoE) reported in 2022 that schools in Crimea attempt to “imbue schoolchildren with a sense of Russian patriotism and identity, at the expense of their Crimean Tatar affiliation”. According to the CoE, the new curriculum paints Crimea as historically Russian, thereby undermining the Crimean Tatar legacy as an Indigenous People on the peninsula, and also reanimates old Soviet tropes accusing Crimean Tatars of collaborating with the Nazis during the Second World War.<sup>24</sup>

In 2017, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Russia “must ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language” in Crimea.<sup>25</sup> Yet this has not happened but instead availability has actually worsened to the point of almost non-existence. Indeed, in its 2024 judgement the ICJ held that Russia’s attempts to restrict Ukrainian language education amounted to a violation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.<sup>26</sup> The systematic dismantling of Ukrainian language education in Crimea combined with the deliberate and cynical attempt to suppress Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identities are clear and flagrant violations of Russia’s obligations under international law.

## RELIGION

**“Since March 2014, the Russian occupying authorities have been obstructing the operation of these parishes in every possible way, by using the method of exerting pressure on property owners, by brute force or with the help of puppet-courts, which have been removing the possibility of performing services or other activities”.**

Statement of Metropolitan Kliment given to Voice of Crimea news agency in August 2021<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Crimean Human Rights Group, “The situation with access to education in native language in Crimea”, 21 April 2017, <https://crimeahrg.org/ru/situatsiya-s-dostupom-k-obrazovaniyu-na-rodnom-yazyike-v-kryimu/>

<sup>23</sup> Crimean Human Rights Group, “Not a Single School Left in Crimea Providing Education in Ukrainian”, 26 March 2019, <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2019/03/26/novyna/pravo/krymu-ne-zalyshylosya-zhodnoyi-shkoly-ukrayinskoyu-movoyu-navchannya>.

<sup>24</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “Crimean Tatars’ struggle for human rights”, 18 April 2023, <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-crimean-tatars-by-dunja-mijatovic-commissioner-for-human-rig/1680aaeb4b> paras. 34-5

<sup>25</sup> International Court of Justice, “Application of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Ukraine v Russian Federation)”, request for the indication of provisional measures, 19 April 2017, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/166/166-20170419-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>, para. 102

<sup>26</sup> International Court of Justice, *Ukraine v. Russian Federation*, 31 January 2024, (previously cited), para. 369

<sup>27</sup> Orthodox Times, “Crimea: We are banned from performing religious services in Crimea”, 9 August 2021, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/metropolitan-of-simferopol-and-crimea-we-are-banned-from-performing-religious-services-in-crimea/>



The history of the Orthodox church in Ukraine is inextricably linked to politics. The establishment of modern-day national Ukrainian Orthodox ecclesiastical bodies followed the break-up of the Russian Empire (the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in 1917) and the Soviet Union (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, UOCKP, in 1992). Their establishment is intrinsically tied to a sense of independent Ukrainian statehood. In 2018, these two churches merged and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was instituted, and recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, triggering a schism with the Moscow Patriarchate which insisted on its exclusive ecclesiastical jurisdiction as the Orthodox church over Ukraine.

In Crimea, the UOCKP (post 2018, the OCU) was always a minority religion, with most residents adhering to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOCMP). In 2014, the Kyiv Patriarchate consisted of 46 congregations in Crimea, while the Moscow Patriarchate had 535.<sup>28</sup> Following the illegal annexation, the UOCKP refused to re-register as a religious organization under Russian law, and faced a campaign of harassment and intimidation. In 2014 armed men ransacked UOCKP churches in Perevalne (Perevalnoe), Sevastopol, Krasnoperekopsk and Kerch,<sup>29</sup> and parishes of the UOCKP were put under pressure to switch allegiance to the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>30</sup> Over the first year of the Russian occupation, the UOCKP lost 38 of its parishes, including due to the intimidation and harassment of their clergy, many of whom declined to take Russian passports and were forced to leave Crimea.<sup>31</sup> In 2016, the de facto authorities in Crimea ruled that the UOCKP had to leave its cathedral in Simferopol, and pay a fine of 500,000 roubles for failing to register.<sup>32</sup> In 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued interim measures calling on Russia not to proceed with the eviction.<sup>33</sup> However Russia ignored the interim measures and, on 11 May 2023, bailiffs acting for the de facto State Property Fund of Crimea forcibly entered the building and made a register of its contents, which were then removed and the building's entrance sealed.<sup>34</sup> Following the eviction Archbishop Kliment, the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's Crimean diocese, said that the diocese "has effectively ceased to exist".<sup>35</sup>

While the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has been the primary victim of Russia's actions, other religious minorities have also suffered since the illegal annexation. They include Crimea's Muslims, an overwhelming majority of them Crimean Tatars. According to the authoritative freedom of religion watchdog Forum18, the number of registered religious organizations in Crimea fell by 35% between

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<sup>28</sup> Open Democracy, "In occupied Crimea, Ukraine's church is facing extinction", 11 November 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-orthodox-church-crimea-extinction/>

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International, "Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea", EUR 50/1129/2015, 18 March 2015, (previously cited), p.22

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, "Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea", (previously cited), p.19

<sup>31</sup> Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, "Russia seeks to crush Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Crimea for helping resist Russification", 10 October 2018, <https://khpg.org/en/1539177968>.

<sup>32</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Struggling to believe: Ukrainian Orthodox Church under pressure in Crimea", 18 April 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia-struggling-to-believe-ukrainian-orthodox-church-in-crimea-struggles-to-survive/29175307.html>

<sup>33</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: continuing Russian attempts to crush religious communities", 14 December 2023, [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2878](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2878). The Committee has not yet considered the application in full.

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, "Human rights concerns in Crimea: June 2023 update", submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 31 August 2023, (previously cited)

<sup>35</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: continuing Russian attempts to crush religious communities", 14 December 2023, (previously cited)

2014 and 2022.<sup>36</sup> In 2016, Russia's parliament adopted legislative amendments that made praying, preaching or disseminating religious materials outside specifically designated places or without an official permission a punishable offence.<sup>37</sup> Under this legislation, which was unlawfully implemented by the occupying Russian authorities in Crimea, places of worship such as the mosque in Zavetnoe (Zavetnoe) have been closed down,<sup>38</sup> others have been raided, and as of 2023 dozens of individuals had faced administrative proceedings, including over 50 persons heavily fined as a result, for "illegal" missionary activity.<sup>39</sup>

Jehovah's Witnesses have been particularly affected by Russia's restrictions on the right to freedom of religion and belief. In April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court designated Jehovah's Witnesses "extremist" and thus them banned in Russia and Russian-occupied Crimea, and on 1 June 2017, all 22 of their congregations in Crimea were de-registered, affecting an estimated 8,000 believers.<sup>40</sup> Individuals who continued practicing their peaceful beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses were prosecuted merely for doing so. Sergei Filatov was the first Jehovah's Witness in Crimea to be convicted and imprisoned for purported extremism.<sup>41</sup> According to Forum 18, at least 12 Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses have been sentenced to six years of prison or more for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief, and a further two were convicted and received suspended sentences.<sup>42</sup>

Russian law enforcement agencies have on repeated occasions disrupted Friday prayers in Crimean mosques, conducting arbitrary passport checks of all those present. On numerous occasions, they targeted Crimean Tatars, the overwhelming majority of whom are Muslim, via arbitrary, intentionally destructive house searches looking for religious literature. Over 100 Crimean Tatars have been prosecuted on unfounded terrorism-related charges,<sup>43</sup> many of them have been convicted following trial by military courts in Russia and given prison sentences of up to 24 years, which they are serving in Russia, in contravention of international humanitarian law.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: religious freedom survey, September 2022", 22 September 2022, [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2774](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2774)

<sup>37</sup> Russian Federation, Federal Law No. 125-FZ "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations", Art. 24.1(2), 24.2; Code of Administrative Offences, Art. 5.26(4).

<sup>38</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: religious freedom survey, September 2022", 22 September 2022, [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2774](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2774)

<sup>39</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: continuing Russian attempts to crush religious communities", 14 December 2023, [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2878](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2878)

<sup>40</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 144

<sup>41</sup> Amnesty International, "Crimea: Jehovah's Witness sentenced to six years in a penal colony", 5 March 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/crimea-jehovahs-witness-sentenced-to-six-years-in-a-penal-colony/>

<sup>42</sup> Forum18, "Crimea: continuing Russian attempts to crush religious communities", 14 December 2023, (previously cited)

<sup>43</sup> CrimeaSOS, "107 people became victims of persecution for 'involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir'", 16 January / 2024, <https://krymsos.com/en/krymsos-107-osib-staly-zhertvamy-peresliduvan-za-prychetnist-do-hizb-ut-tahrir/>.

<sup>44</sup> See Amnesty International, "Russian Federation: terrorising the dissent: abuse of terrorism-related charges in Russia", 19 February 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7705/2024/en/>, p.5

# MEDIA

## “We have self-censorship in our heads”.

Lilya Budhzarova, Deputy Director for Information Policy at ATR TV, in an interview with Amnesty International, February 2015

Prior to the Russian occupation, media in Crimea enjoyed considerable freedom and notable pluralism.<sup>45</sup> Following the annexation, and in contravention of international law,<sup>46</sup> Yuliya Martynova, the de facto Deputy Minister for Internal Politics, Information and Mass Communication, announced that all media outlets in Crimea should re-register in accordance with Russian legislation, by the deadline of 1 January 2015, and warned them that any “provocative” acts thereafter would result in sanctions.<sup>47</sup> The unlawful mandatory re-registration was strictly enforced but also marked by arbitrary refusals targeting independent media, and by 2022, according to a report by the Council of Europe, the number of media outlets in Crimea had declined by 90%.<sup>48</sup>

As early as March 2014, Ukrainian language television and radio channels were jammed, taken off air and replaced by Russian media. The only remaining independent Ukrainian language newspaper, *Krymska Svitlytsia*, was banned and closed.<sup>49</sup> Crimean Tatar-language outlets were particularly affected by the new restrictive media environment. The popular television channel ATR attempted to reregister multiple times, yet its application was rejected arbitrarily. On 26 January 2015, some 30 armed masked men from the riot police unit, as well as ten officials from the Russian Investigative Committee and the Federal Security Service, searched ATR’s offices for several hours. They disrupted normal broadcasting, and took away computer servers.<sup>50</sup> Editors of the ATR TV channel told Amnesty International that they had received unofficial warnings over the phone from influential persons they were unwilling to name for fear of reprisals, in response to some of its coverage of events affecting the Crimean Tatar community.<sup>51</sup> ATR was eventually forced to relocate to mainland Ukraine, and lost its ability to broadcast into Crimea.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights concerns in Crimea”, submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 22 January 2016, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245703>

<sup>46</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 64

<sup>47</sup> Amnesty International, « Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea”, (previously cited), p. 11

<sup>48</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “Crimean Tatars’ struggle for human rights”, 18 April 2023, (previously cited), para. 30

<sup>49</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 155

<sup>50</sup> Amnesty International, « Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea”, (previously cited), p. 12

<sup>51</sup> Amnesty International, « Ukraine : one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea”, (previously cited), p. 11

<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Crimea in the dark: the silencing of dissent”, 15 December 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/5330/2016/en/>, p.1



Independent journalists have also faced harassment and persecution by the de facto authorities in Crimea.<sup>53</sup> Prior to the unrecognized “referendum” on Crimea’s status in 2014, paramilitaries from the so-called Crimean “self-defence” engaged in a campaign of violence targeting pro-Ukrainian activists which resulted in the disappearance of, amongst others, several journalists.<sup>54</sup> In 2015, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported that media freedom in Crimea was at an “all-time low”, as journalists from at least 13 media outlets had been threatened, attacked, interrogated or kidnapped.<sup>55</sup> The de facto courts have also been used to stymie media freedom. For example, in September 2017, Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena was given a two and a half year suspended prison sentence for “threatening territorial integrity of the Russian Federation” on account of his public opposition to the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea.<sup>56</sup> In December 2020, the owner of ATR TV, Lenur Islyamov, was sentenced to 19 years in prison in absentia on spurious charges.<sup>57</sup> The de facto authorities also widely targeted independent journalists with extrajudicial restrictions. For instance, on 18 January 2020 Russian border guards denied journalist Taras Ibrahimov entry to Crimea from mainland Ukraine and issued him with a written warning not to attempt re-entry until 2054 or face criminal prosecution under Russian law.

The crackdown on independent media resulted in what Freedom House called an “information ghetto”, whereby residents of Crimea are severely deprived of information from the rest of Ukraine.<sup>58</sup> Restrictions on media freedom have become significantly more stringent in Russia – and in areas of Ukraine under its control - since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The banning of popular social media services such as Facebook and Instagram renders information from the rest of Ukraine even harder to come by, while legal measures introduced following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine have criminalized dissemination of “knowingly false” information about the Russian Armed Forces, which in practice means any critical information, however factually accurate, if it contravenes official Russian sources. The penalties for this “crime” include heavy fines that range from RUB 700,000 to RUB 5,000,000 (US\$ 5,220 to US\$ 37,283) and imprisonment from three to 15 years.<sup>59</sup> Russia’s efforts to control the media environment in Crimea have resulted in the near total isolation of the peninsula from the rest of Ukraine, while crushing any dissenting voices on the peninsula itself.

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<sup>53</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights concerns in Crimea”, submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 22 January 2016, (previously cited)

<sup>54</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: harassment and violence against Crimean Tatars by state and non-state actors”, 23 May 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/023/2014/en/> p. 5; Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Clashes and abductions ahead of disputed Crimea vote”, 14 March 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2014/03/ukraine-clashes-and-abductions-ahead-disputed-crimea-vote/>.

<sup>55</sup> Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, “Media freedom situation in Crimea, Ukraine, at all-time low, OSCE Representative says”, 5 March 2015, <https://www.osce.org/fom/143861>

<sup>56</sup> Amnesty International, “Crimea: Prominent critic of Russian occupation sentenced to two years in penal colony”, 27 September 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/09/crimea-prominent-critic-of-russian-occupation-sentenced-to-two-years-in-penal-colony/>.

<sup>57</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “Crimean Tatars’ struggle for human rights”, 18 April 2023, (previously cited), para. 30

<sup>58</sup> Atlantic Council and Freedom House, “Human rights abuses in Russian-occupied Crimea”, March 2015, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/CrimeaReport\\_FINAL.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/CrimeaReport_FINAL.pdf), p. 8

<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International, “Russian Federation: end censorship on voices against the war”, 14 March 2022, EUR 46/5345/2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/5345/2022/en/>

## REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS

The illegal annexation of Crimea effectively turned many Ukrainian citizens into foreigners in their own country overnight. The deportation, persecution and the denial of rights to those without Russian passports are a clear effort to suppress any sense of a Ukrainian political identity on the peninsula. Russia has also taken a heavy-handed approach to the suppression of autonomy for Crimean Tatars inside Crimea.

On 26 April 2016, the so-called Supreme Court of Crimea ordered the closure of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People. This body, elected at a Crimean Tatar assembly (Kurultai), for years performed a representative role on behalf of the Crimean Tatar community and played a central role in the cultural and educational community life since it began re-establishing itself in the peninsula in the late 1980s.<sup>60</sup> In the weeks prior to that decision being taken, the Russian Ministry of Justice added the Mejlis to the official register of “extremist organizations.”<sup>61</sup> Criminal prosecution of its members and of other prominent members of the Crimean Tatar community followed. Prominent Crimean Tatar figures such as the Mejlis’s former and current leaders, Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov, had been exiled from Crimea since 2014, while those who remained there such as Akhtem Chiyyoz and Nariman Dzhelyal were convicted under false charges and imprisoned in 2015 and 2022 respectively. Moreover, on 24 May 2023 the de facto authorities “nationalized” the building belonging to the Mejlis, which the de facto Head of Crimea, Sergei Aksionov, reportedly described as “nationalization of the property of enemies of Russia.”<sup>62</sup>

## JUSTICE SYSTEM

Russia has also reigned in members of the legal profession and the justice system in Crimea through a combination of replacing key officials and intimidating, disbaring and prosecuting lawyers particularly those who are active human rights defenders, in addition to replacing Ukrainian law enforcement agencies with its own. In 2015, Freedom House documented the replacement of prosecutors in five regions of Crimea with prosecutors from Russian regions, as well as the installation of over 150 employees from various Russian regions to the offices of the Investigative Committee (a stand-alone government agency for investigation of serious crime) in Crimea.<sup>63</sup> The de facto authorities have persecuted lawyers, often aiming to prevent them from defending clients who have suffered serious human rights abuses. The lawyers who represented members of the Crimean Tatar community were particularly targeted. In 2018, Russian Ministry of Interior officers detained lawyer Emil Kurbedinov on his way home from his office in Simferopol.<sup>64</sup> He was given ten days of so-called administrative detention for a social media post dating back to 2013 (i.e., prior to the Russian

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<sup>60</sup> In 1944, the entire Crimean Tatar population was deported from Crimea to remote areas of the Soviet Union. Despite being “rehabilitated” by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in the 1960s, Crimean Tatars were not permitted to return to Crimea until the late 1980s, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

<sup>61</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Crimea in the dark: the silencing of dissent”, 15 December 2016, (previously cited), p.3

<sup>62</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights concerns in Crimea: June 2023 update”, submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 31 August 2023, (previously cited)

<sup>63</sup> Atlantic Council and Freedom House, “Human rights abuses in Russian-occupied Crimea”, March 2015, (previously cited), p. 6

<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, “Crimea: lawyer detained in latest campaign of harassment of human rights defenders”, 6 December 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2018/12/crimea-lawyer-detained-in-latest-campaign-of-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders/>

occupation) that was arbitrarily deemed as display of extremist symbols, and on release was threatened with disbarment from the Crimean Bar.<sup>65</sup> On 15 July 2022, lawyers Lilya Gemedzhi, Rustem Kyamilev and Nazim Sheikhmambetov were disbarred in retaliation for their human rights work, defending Crimean Tatar activists against politically motivated charges in occupied Crimea.<sup>66</sup>

On 13 October 2023, lawyer Aleksei Ladin, a member of Tyumen Bar Association, in the Urals Federal District of Russia, who had represented as legal counsel Crimean Tatar activists, journalists and other residents of Crimea and Ukrainians transferred there from other Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine, was arrested by members of the counter-extremist police unit in Simferopol. Aleksei Ladin was accused of two administrative offences – “discreditation of the Russian Armed Forces” (Article 20.3.3(1) of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences introduced in 2022 after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine) and “propaganda or public demonstration of Nazi or extremist symbols” (Article 20.3(1)). The Tyumen Bar Association instigated disciplinary proceedings against Aleksei Ladin, on request from the Russian authorities who have sought his disbarment in retaliation for his work in Crimea.<sup>67</sup>

## CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Since the annexation of Crimea by Russia, many cultural events have been banned by the local de facto authorities, and public protest has been virtually extinguished, in violation of the rights to free expression, peaceful assembly and to cultural identity. This has affected everything from street protests to traditional commemorative and cultural events held by Crimean Tatars, and gatherings to celebrate Ukrainian culture.<sup>68</sup>

18 May 2014 marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deportation of the entire Crimean Tatar population to remote parts of the USSR. Two days before, the then-de facto Prime Minister of Crimea Sergei Aksionov announced that all public assemblies in Crimea were to be disallowed until 6 June, in order to prevent possible “provocations” and any “disruption of the summer holiday season”.<sup>69</sup> The ban was a cynical attempt to prevent the commemoration of 18 May by the Crimean Tatar population, who in the end were allowed to perform a collective prayer in just one, remote location, and in the presence of a large law enforcement force. In 2016, no assemblies were authorized, as the de facto Mayor of Simferopol issued a blanket ban on all mass public, cultural, entertainment and other events, except those organized by the authorities.<sup>70</sup>

Local de facto authorities’ prior permission (as required by Russian laws) to hold this and other Crimean Tatar commemorations, such as Flag Day on 26 June, have also been repeatedly denied since 2014. The authorities continue to issue spurious justifications for these refusals, such as claiming that extremely high temperatures could negatively affect the health of participants, while

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<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Human rights lawyer incarcerated in Crimea: Emil Kurbedinov”, Urgent Action, 30 January 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/5595/2017/en/>.

<sup>66</sup> Amnesty International, “Russia: Crimean human rights lawyers disbarred: Lilya Ghemedzhi, Rustem Kyamilev and Nazim Sheikhmambetov”, 22 August 2022, EUR 46/5967/2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/5967/2022/en/>

<sup>67</sup> See [EUR4673602023ENGLISH.pdf \(amnesty.org\)](#)

<sup>68</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Crimea in the dark: the silencing of dissent”, 15 December 2016, (previously cited), p. 1

<sup>69</sup> Amnesty International, “Ukraine: one year on: violations of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Crimea”, (previously cited), p. 16

<sup>70</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights concerns in Crimea”, submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 22 January 2016, (previously cited), p. 2



allowing other events to take place on the same day.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the authorities have threatened those intending to organize or participate in such commemorations with criminal prosecution and administrative detention.<sup>72</sup>

The clampdown on cultural celebrations imposed by the de facto authorities also affects the cultural life of other groups on the peninsula. A 2016 resolution from the de facto Government of Crimea cut the number of locations where public events could occur by almost half,<sup>73</sup> and events such as Pride marches have been banned.<sup>74</sup> As well as the Crimean Tatar community, the de facto authorities have paid particular attention to public displays of Ukrainian culture, politics and nationality. The public display of Ukrainian state and cultural symbols was restricted prior to 2022, while institutions promoting Ukrainian culture and traditions have been shut down.<sup>75</sup> On 9 March 2015, the de facto authorities refused permission to hold an event involving the laying of flowers at the monument of Ukraine's national poet, Taras Shevchenko, as well as the celebration of the 201st anniversary of his birthday.<sup>76</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported that books by contemporary Ukrainian authors have even been removed from the Franko Library located in Simferopol.<sup>77</sup>

The full-scale invasion in February 2022 has dramatically worsened the situation. People in Crimea are subjected to work dismissal, fines, increasingly frequent intrusive and deliberately destructive house searches, so-called administrative detention and arbitrary arrest and prosecution for any expression of support for Ukraine or for mere suspicion of disloyalty to the occupying Russian authorities.<sup>78</sup> The Council of Europe reported that Crimean Tatars, have alleged the presence of state surveillance and scrutiny of cultural events as small as weddings.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 150

<sup>72</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, "Crimean Tatars' struggle for human rights", 18 April 2023, (previously cited), para. 26

<sup>73</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 147

<sup>74</sup> Regional Center for Human Rights, "Discrimination against members of the LGBT+ community in the occupied Crimea on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity", 17 November 2023, <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/en/analytically-en/discrimination-against-members-of-the-lgbt-community-in-the-occupied-crimea/>

<sup>75</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), paras. 183-185

<sup>76</sup> Regional Center for Human Rights, "Persecution of other persons discriminated against based on national or cultural identity on the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula", 20 November 2023, <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/en/analytically-en/persecution-of-other-persons-discriminated-against-based-on-national-or-cultural-identity/> p. 3

<sup>77</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), 25 September 2017, (previously cited), para. 185

<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International, "Human rights concerns in Crimea: June 2023 update", submission to UNESCO Executive Board, 31 August 2023, (previously cited)

<sup>79</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, "Crimean Tatars' struggle for human rights", 18 April 2023, (previously cited), para. 27

# CONCLUSION

Russia has had ten years to implement its policies designed to alter the ethnic makeup of and suppress non-Russian identities in Crimea. Through population transfer and coercive policies targeting minorities, it has sought to dilute and remove Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identity from the peninsula. Changes to the curriculum and the almost total eradication of Ukrainian language tuition are designed to ensure that younger generations will lack the knowledge and awareness to challenge the Russian narrative surrounding Crimea's history, present and future. This is reinforced by the silencing of all independent media, the suppression of religious minorities and their practices, and the interdiction of cultural celebrations.

When examined together, these practices paint a picture of a forced homogenization of the peninsula that has been backed up by a concerted campaign of spurious criminal prosecutions and extrajudicial harassment and intimidation of perceived opponents. Against this background, it is particularly noticeable and deeply worrying that in the months leading to, and particularly since the full-scale invasion, Russia's leaders have consistently scorned the existence of the Ukrainian people or of the Ukrainian state.<sup>80</sup> Russia's policies in Crimea over ten years of occupation show that these are more than just words. Evidence is emerging of similar policies carried out in other areas of Ukraine currently occupied by Russia. For instance, Amnesty International has documented the egregious indoctrination and coercion carried out by Russian authorities in schools in the occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions and other occupied territories.<sup>81</sup>

Russia's denial of access to independent, international monitors has allowed these flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law to go under-reported or not reported at all. Ongoing impunity for such violations has allowed Russia to effect changes that threaten the existence of entire communities and ways of life in territories it controls.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION MUST:

- End the war in Ukraine, which is an act of aggression under international law;
- In Crimea and other Ukrainian territories under Russian occupation end immediately all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including:
  - such abusive practices towards the local population as intimidation and coercion of local population into acquisition of Russian passports;
  - collective or individual forcible transfers of population from Crimea and other occupied territories;
  - transfers of the Russian civilian population into Crimea and other occupied territories;

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80 See for instance, Administration of the Russian President, "Vladimir Putin's article: on the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians", 12 July 2021, , <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181> (may not be accessible outside Russia); Vedomosti, "Medvedev considers peace impossible, due to Ukraine's existence", 17 January 2024, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2024/01/17/1015427-medvedev-schel-mir-nevozmozhnim>.

81 Amnesty International, "Ukraine: Children's education is one more casualty of Russian aggression", EUR 50/7508/2023, 11 December 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/7508/2023/en/>

- the wholesale imposition of the Russian legislation in Crimea and other occupied territories;
- reprisals against civilians and other persons who are protected under the fourth Geneva Convention and their property;
- Investigate all reported instances of unlawful deprivation of liberty, arbitrary house searches, the use of criminal proceedings and other reprisals to harass and imprison civic activists, journalists, members of the Crimean Tatar community, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, members of other religious minorities and of other groups in Crimea, and any individuals peacefully opposed to the Russian occupation;
- Bring to justice in fair trials anyone suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, including any arbitrary deprivation of liberty, unlawful killing or enforced disappearance;
- Respect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, religion and belief, and cultural life, and remove all undue restrictions, including those introduced in accordance with Russian law, and any arbitrary prohibitions which affect the exercise of these rights by any individual and group in Crimea, including members of the Crimean Tatar community, without discrimination on the grounds of political or religious views, language, ethnicity, or any other grounds;
- End the practice of blocking access to online resources on arbitrary grounds and without judicial authorisation;
- Remove the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People from the list of "extremist organisations" and lift all the associated restrictions imposed on its activities, including by reinstating its property;
- End reprisals against lawyers defending members of the Crimean Tatar community and other clients who have suffered serious human rights abuses;
- Stop summons for questioning and other forms of harassment by members of the police and the security services of those peacefully opposed to Crimea's annexation;
- Withdraw any textbooks, other literature, teaching materials and curricula content that expose children to indoctrination or in any way violate their rights to appropriate and quality education, and/or seek to eradicate Ukrainian or Crimean Tatar culture, heritage and identity;
- Ensure that teachers, students and parents are not subject to any threats, harassment, intimidation and/or reprisals;
- Ensure that the children and their families are free to choose the language of their education, and that schooling in the Ukrainian as well as Crimean Tatar languages is freely available in Crimea;
- Ensure that all those responsible for any serious violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law that amount to crimes under international law be brought to justice in fair trial proceedings;
- Provide full and effective reparations, in accordance with international law and standards, to all those who have suffered violations of their human rights;
- Cooperate fully with international and regional human rights and international justice mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Council, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and amongst other allow access for all relevant monitoring mechanisms, including the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.



## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON THE UKRAINIAN AUTHORITIES TO:**

- Cooperate fully with all international and regional human rights and international justice mechanisms, and to the extent possibly explore available opportunities to facilitate their access to Crimea;
- Promptly ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, signed on 20 January 2000;
- Prioritize preservation of evidence of crimes under international law committed on its territory, to ensure comprehensive accountability and enable the ongoing International Criminal Court investigation and other national and international justice mechanisms to prosecute perpetrators of the most serious crimes under international law committed;
- Prioritize development of a programme of support to victims of human rights violations from Crimea and other Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories, and ensure that it is made as accessible to them as possible in present circumstances, including, amongst other things, a programme of legal, psychological, educational and other support, including by further developing online-based and other educational resources and ensuring that they are safely and reliably accessible online to children and families in Russian-occupied territories; ensure that families across Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine are informed about such resources or about the safest and most reliable ways of accessing them.

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:**

- Explore every available opportunity for effective monitoring of the human rights situation in Crimea and other Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, and use every available opportunity to address human rights issues in relevant bi- and multi-lateral forums;
- Take steps to ensure Russia's full cooperation with all international and regional monitoring mechanisms, including by granting full and unrestricted access to their representatives to Crimea and other Ukrainian territories under Russian control, and escalate efforts to ensure Russia's compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law;
- Take steps to ensure that all perpetrators are brought to justice through independent, impartial, and fair trials for all crimes under international law, and that victims of these crimes are able to fully realize their rights to truth, justice, and reparations;
- Allocate discrete and adequate levels of funding to support victims of violation of the socio-economic and cultural rights in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, including in Crimea; and in doing so consider and address particular needs of the minorities marginalized as a result of Russian policies in the territories it occupies, including ethnic minorities, among them the Crimean Tatars, religious minorities and others.

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