

Crimean Tatars' struggle for human rights

Report



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Crimean Tatars' struggle for human rights

By the Council of Europe
Commissioner for Human Rights
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Introduction

1. According to her [mandate](#), the Commissioner promotes the effective observance of human rights; assists member states in the implementation of Council of Europe human rights instruments; identifies possible shortcomings in laws and practices concerning human rights; and provides advice and information regarding the protection of human rights across the region.
2. This report focuses on multiple patterns of violations of human rights committed against the Crimean Tatar people throughout their history, especially following the occupation and illegal annexation,¹ in 2014, of Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Qırım)² and the city of Sevastopol (Aqyar) (hereafter, "Crimea") by the Russian Federation. It seeks to amplify the voice of Crimean Tatar human rights defenders and victims and to increase public awareness of the plight of Crimean Tatars and their centuries-long struggle for identity, dignity, and human rights.
3. The report is based on the [country work](#) of the Commissioner and her predecessors, including several country visits to Ukraine, of which the [most recent one](#) took place in February-March 2023.³ It further draws on regular exchanges with representatives of Crimean Tatars, including several meetings with its main executive authority, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People ('the Mejis'), held in Kyiv in April 2021, May 2022 and in March 2023. Of crucial importance in the preparation of the report were meetings held on-line in 2021 and in 2023 with representatives of Ukrainian and Russian civil society organisations and human rights defenders, as well as with Crimean Tatars, including those based in Crimea, which provided the Commissioner with an opportunity to hear testimonies of victims and direct witnesses of human rights violations. The Commissioner is grateful to all of her interlocutors for sharing their experiences and views with her and wishes to thank the Ukrainian authorities for the assistance provided to her Office in the preparation of this report.
4. Section I of the report provides a brief historical overview which puts into context the persecution of the Crimean Tatar people over the past centuries. Section II describes various categories and patterns of violations of the human rights of Crimean Tatars which occurred

after the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, under the jurisdiction of Russian occupying authorities.⁴ Section III includes the Commissioner's observations on the effects of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 on the human rights situation of the Crimean Tatars, including the forced conscriptions and mobilisation in Crimea, and addresses the legacy of enforced disappearances and missing persons among the members of this community. The three sections are followed by the Commissioner's conclusions and recommendations.⁵

I. Brief history of Crimean Tatars' persecution, deportation, and return to Crimea

5. The history of Crimean Tatars on the peninsula has been marked by waves of persecution and displacement from their homeland. In the 18th century, and after the conquest of the peninsula by the Russian Empire, Russian settlers deprived Crimean Tatars of their lands and imposed systems similar to serfdom. Tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars left for the Ottoman Empire during this period.⁶ In the 19th century, Crimean Tatars were among the peoples targeted with persecution and reprisals, including arbitrary arrests and summary executions, resulting in several waves of mass emigration by Crimean Tatars from Crimea throughout the 19th and into the 20th century.⁷
6. Some of the most egregious abuses, however, were inflicted during the time of the Soviet Union. According to some historical accounts, between 1917 and 1933, approximately 150 000 Crimean Tatars had either been killed or forced to leave Crimea.⁸ The persecution culminated in an order for the entire people to be deported from their homeland.⁹ In May 1944, almost 200 000 Crimean Tatars were forcibly transported in closed cattle trains, without food or water and in unsanitary conditions, to various areas of the Soviet Union (Siberia, Central Asia, and the Ural Mountains), as a reprisal for their supposed betrayal or alleged collaboration of some Crimean Tatars with the Nazi regime during the Second World War. Since most Crimean Tatar men were still on military duty, the vast majority (more than 86%) of the deportees were older persons, war veterans, women, and children.¹⁰ Almost 8 000 died during the process of deportation (*Sürgünlik*) alone,¹¹ while survivors lived in extremely harsh conditions in places of resettlement. Crimean Tatar mosques were deliberately destroyed, and Crimean Tatar toponyms were replaced. Estimates for the overall number of the Crimean Tatar population who perished in the first three years of deportation and re-settlement, often owing to malnutrition, hardship and diseases, range between 27% and 46%, according to different sources.¹² Although the Soviet authorities eventually (in 1967) rehabilitated Crimean Tatars from accusations of collaboration with the Nazi regime, they denied them the right to return to Crimea. While

some Crimean Tatars made individual attempts at returning, they were not allowed to register there, and were often re-deported.

7. The Soviet perestroika era in the late 1980s finally brought about change, with the Soviet authorities allowing the exiled Crimean Tatar people to return to Crimea. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, during the early 1990s, in particular, Crimean Tatars began to return to their homeland in large numbers. However, the Crimean Tatars' return and reintegration in Crimea in late 1980s and 1990s was beset with many difficulties. A [recommendation](#) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2000 signalled 'complex and multi-faceted' problems confronting returnees, related to issues such as securing Ukrainian citizenship or accessing employment, housing, social protection, and cultural revival.¹³ Xenophobia and discrimination faced by Crimean Tatar returnees, problems of an economic nature, like attribution/restitution of land or high unemployment, or access to education in own language, were also among the issues raised in a [report](#) published by the previous Commissioner in 2007.¹⁴ Although 98% of the returnees were eventually able to obtain Ukrainian citizenship, the report noted that not enough was being done to facilitate the returnees' social re-integration. Resolutions adopted in [2011](#) and in [2013](#) by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe acknowledged 'some improvements' but noted that Crimean Tatars 'continue[d] to face inequalities due to the continued lack of a legislative framework pertaining to the restitution and compensation for the loss of farmland suffered as result of the deportations' and often lived in 'sub-standard conditions on unauthorised settlements with limited access to public services, utilities and infrastructure'.¹⁵ A [letter](#) by the previous Commissioner, addressed in January 2012 to the Prime Minister of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, signalled a range of similar issues.
8. In spite of these persistent problems, Crimean Tatar returnees painstakingly pursued their efforts to reconstitute their community in their homeland. According to Ukraine's [2001 census](#), there were 248 200 Crimean Tatars in Ukraine, of which 243 400 lived in Crimea. According to the Ukrainian authorities, their overall number in Ukraine stood at approximately 282 000 by the beginning of 2014.¹⁶
9. The Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014, however, and as the following sections show, undercut these efforts and resulted in a massive deterioration of the human rights situation of Crimean Tatars. It has been reported that already in the first weeks following the illegal annexation of the peninsula, some 5 000 persons,

predominantly Crimean Tatars and mainly women and children, left the peninsula for mainland Ukraine.¹⁷ The following sections describe striking patterns of violations of civil and political rights and freedoms, social and cultural rights, as well as harassment, discrimination, and stigmatisation of many members of the Crimean Tatar people in Crimea.

10. Finally, as further described below, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022 has thrown occupied Crimea into further disarray, worsening the already deplorable situation of the Crimean Tatar people in the peninsula. Since then, the war has had disastrous effects on the enjoyment of virtually all human rights by people in all of Ukraine, including inhabitants of Crimea.

II. Human rights of Crimean Tatars under the jurisdiction of Russian occupying authorities

1. Russian ban of the Mejlis and the persecution of Crimean Tatar leadership

11. In 2016, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation [declared](#) the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People – the highest executive body and key traditional structure of the Crimean Tatar people – as an ‘extremist organisation’ and banned its activities in Crimea in retaliation for opposing Russia’s occupation and illegal annexation of the peninsula. The ban remains in place to date, notwithstanding the binding interim order issued in 2017 by the International Court of Justice, which enjoined the Russian Federation to ‘refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis’.¹⁸ Attempts were also made by Russian occupying authorities in Crimea to put in place an alternative Crimean Tatar governance structure,¹⁹ and to sow division within the Crimean Tatars’ religious community, especially by targeting mosques and religious schools with police raids or searches, or by imposing unfair administrative penalties on them.²⁰ It has been reported that some mosques associated with Crimean Tatars were denied permission to re-register under new rules imposed on religious organisations by Russian occupying authorities.²¹ Crimean Tatar leaders were persecuted and targeted by spurious criminal charges. As an example, in September 2017 Akhtem Chiyyoz and Ilmi Umerov, two deputy chairmen of the Mejlis, were [convicted](#) by a Russian court in Crimea and sentenced, respectively, to eight and two years in prison for having organised an anti-Russian demonstration in February 2014; they were later expelled from the peninsula.²² In June 2021, the chairman of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, banned from entering Crimea since 2014, was convicted by a Russian court in Crimea, in absentia, of ‘organising a mass riot’ in relation to a rally in which he participated prior to Crimea’s illegal annexation.²³
12. The persecution of the Crimean Tatar leadership, aimed at discrediting the legitimate representation of the Crimean Tatar people and

hindering the exercise of their civil and political rights, continued after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In March 2022, a member of Crimean Tatars' highest representative body, the *Qurultai*, Zair Semedlyayev, was arrested and detained for several days. In April 2022, the Commissioner [reacted](#) to the criminal conviction by a Russian court in Crimea, in absentia, of Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev on spurious charges. Mr Dzhemilev had previously – in 2014 – been banned from entering the territory of Crimea until 2034.²⁴ In September 2022, the Commissioner [condemned](#) the criminal conviction on spurious charges of the first deputy chairman of the Mejlis, Nariman Dzhelyal, and two other Crimean Tatars, Asan and Akhtem Akhtemov. Nariman Dzhelyal and his co-defendants were allegedly held in detention incommunicado for almost 24 hours and denied access to a defence lawyer, while two of them have also complained that they were tortured to extract a confession.²⁵ Mr Dzhelyal was also subjected to involuntary psychiatric evaluation and treatment for one month prior to standing trial, which was perceived by his legal counsel and the Ukrainian authorities as retaliation for his public criticism of the Russian authorities. The three co-defendants were sentenced, respectively, to penalties of imprisonment of 17, 15 and 13 years. The Commissioner called for their exoneration and release. In March 2023, Mustafa Mustafayev, another member of the *Qurultai*, and his son were [arrested](#) and detained in Crimea, drawing a [reaction](#) by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

2. Misuse of Russian anti-extremism and counterterrorism law

13. The misuse of Russian anti-extremism and counterterrorism criminal legal framework to charge, prosecute and convict Crimean Tatars in Crimea represents another prevalent pattern, as it affects a large number of activists and ordinary Crimean Tatars in the peninsula. In addition to the general issue of extending Russian jurisdiction over Crimea, and Russian laws having been applied retroactively at times,²⁶ the Commissioner's attention was drawn to a number of human rights issues related to the criminal prosecution of Crimean Tatars and other Muslims on spurious charges, in violation of fair trial guarantees and without effective remedies. This includes, for instance, being prosecuted in connection with their alleged affiliation with organisations deemed by Russian occupying authorities as 'extremist' or 'terrorist', such as Hizb ut-Tahrir,²⁷ an organisation which is banned in Russia but remains legal under Ukrainian law.

14. While the Commissioner does not endorse the doctrine espoused by Hizb ut-Tahrir, she considers the use of Russian anti-extremism and counterterrorism laws against persons that the Russian authorities deem affiliated with that organisation, and their accompanying harsh treatment, unacceptable and problematic from a human rights point of view. The Commissioner takes note of a consensus among the leading Russian NGOs that the decision taken by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in 2003 to declare Hizb ut-Tahrir as a 'terrorist organisation' was unlawful and unjustified as it did not assess any evidence, nor did it provide justification for such a conclusion.²⁸ As found by the European Court of Human Rights in a 2013 judgment, that decision had been taken in the absence of the public or representatives of the organisation and had not been officially published, leaving the public unaware of the reasons for the ban.²⁹ The Commissioner was informed that persons concerned who attempted to challenge that decision were unfairly denied standing to do so. It also appears that the practice of the Russian courts, including in Crimea, is to impose penalties of at least 10 years of imprisonment for the simple alleged affiliation with an organisation labelled as 'terrorist', failing regularly to assess whether the person concerned has actually been engaged in any form of violent activity.
15. The Commissioner also received information that many criminal cases concerning Crimean Tatars have been decided either on the basis of testimonies of so-called anonymous witnesses – sources supportive of the indictment whose identity is concealed from the defence³⁰ – or evidence prepared by experts who cooperate with Russian law enforcement bodies,³¹ or incriminating 'extremist literature' and other prohibited items reportedly planted during raids,³² in violation of the principle of equality of arms and other fair trial guarantees. In many cases, allegations of ill-treatment to extract confessions or accusatory testimonies also remain unaddressed by Russian courts in Crimea. In her [statement](#) of November 2021, the Commissioner condemned the lack of fair trial guarantees in criminal proceedings and the severe sentences imposed in this manner, in recent years, on Crimean Tatar activists, including Osman Arifmemetov, Edem Bekirov, Aider Dzhapparov, Timur Ibragimov, Rustem Ismailov, Suleyman Kadyrov, Emir-Usein Kuku, Server Mustafayev, Enver Omerov, Riza Omerov, Erfan Osmanov, Seyran Saliev, Ruslan Suleymanov, and dozens of others. The Commissioner further notes that during hearings, Crimean Tatars were often held in special tempered glass cages, in a manner indicating that they may be dangerous criminals. She points out that defendants should normally not be kept in cages during trials as this measure clearly violates the presumption of innocence.³³

16. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 brought with it generally more repressive and discriminatory attitudes of Russian occupying authorities in Crimea towards Crimean Tatars. Waves of mass arrests, searches and raids of private homes, businesses, and meeting places in Crimea, which disproportionately affected Crimean Tatars in the past,³⁴ have continued, often accompanied by accusations of 'extremism' or 'terrorism' in the wake of attacks carried out by unidentified persons on military targets in Crimea.
17. In this manner, since February 2022, many Crimean Tatars have been targeted by spurious criminal charges and sentenced to harsh prison terms. Activists and ordinary Crimean Tatars, such as Remzi Bekirov, Riza Izetov, Raim Aivazov, Shaban Umerov, Akim Bekirov, Seitveli Seitabdiyev, Rustem Seitkhalilov, Eskender Suleymanov, Asan Yanikov, Timur Yalkabov, Lenur Seydametov, Emil Ziyadinov, Oleh (Ali) Fedorov, Ernest Ibragimov, Ismet Ibragimov, Azamat Eyupov, and Yashar Shykhmetov, were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 13 to 19 years. In January 2023, a military court in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don convicted of alleged participation in a 'terrorist' organisation the last five of [25 Crimean Tatar activists](#) in connection with their activity within Crimean Solidarity, a civil society group connecting Crimean Tatar activists and providing support for the families of detainees.³⁵ The element of discrimination of Crimean Tatars was evident in the sheer number of criminal prosecutions and convictions. According to the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, a civil society organisation tracking violations of Crimean Tatars' human rights, as of February 2023 there were at least 98 Crimean Tatars prosecuted and detained for their alleged membership or affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir, of which 73 served prison sentences ranging between 10 and 20 years in Russian prisons and colonies.³⁶ Of the 243 persons imprisoned or criminally prosecuted since the beginning of Crimea's illegal annexation by Russia in 2014, 173 were representatives of the Crimean Tatar people.³⁷
18. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Crimean Tatars have also been detained in other parts of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops, and later transferred to detention facilities in Crimea. Separate zones were reportedly created in 2022 in Crimean detention centres, notably in Simferopol (Aqmescit), to detain ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars accused by Russia of involvement with 'prohibited organisations'. This was notably the case for persons allegedly affiliated with the 'Noman Çelebicihan Crimean Tatar Volunteer Battalion' – a Ukrainian paramilitary unit named after the early 20th century Crimean Tatar statesman who was executed by the Bolsheviks – which the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation recognised as a 'terrorist

organisation' in June 2022. Between early March and early June 2022, Russian forces arrested and transferred to Crimea eight Crimean Tatar residents of Kherson, namely, Nasrullah Seydaliyev, Rustem Gugurik, Arsen Ibragimov, Artur Mametshaiev, Rustem Osmanov, Ruslan Abdurrahmanov, Aider Umerov, and Mamed Dovgopolog, on suspicion of involvement in the unit.³⁸ Charged with sabotage, between August and October 2022 several of them, including Osmanov, Abdurrahmanov, Memetshayev and Gugurik, were sentenced to penalties ranging between five and eight and a half years' imprisonment. The Commissioner was informed that, although dozens of Crimean Tatar names are included on the Ukrainian government's list for negotiations over releases of prisoners of war,³⁹ the Russian authorities reportedly continue to refuse to agree to the release of Crimean Tatar prisoners.

19. The Commissioner was informed by her interlocutors that arbitrary arrests, unfair criminal convictions, and lengthy prison sentences imposed on many Crimean Tatars have an additional negative impact on their family life by depriving their families of an important source of livelihood. About 220 Crimean Tatar children are currently being raised in families where one parent has been placed in arbitrary detention or imprisoned following an allegedly unfair criminal conviction.

3. The situation of Crimean Tatars in detention

20. In violation of international humanitarian law,⁴⁰ Crimean Tatars put in pre-trial detention or sentenced to prison terms in Crimea are routinely transferred to high-security prisons or strict-regime penal colonies in Russia. Unfairly and abusively charged with or convicted of 'extremist' or 'terrorist' activity, many are forced to carry the highly stigmatising label throughout the criminal justice system and within the penitentiary environment, resulting in increased mental anguish and degrading treatment. The Commissioner notes that, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), many Crimean Tatar detainees of such penitentiary institutions have been subjected to discriminatory practices of being placed in 'special security regimes' applied indefinitely and with no possibility of appeal. They are also more likely to be placed in lengthy solitary confinement or denied phone calls and personal visits.⁴¹
21. The Commissioner has previously [drawn attention](#) to the particular hardships suffered by Crimean Tatar detainees, including those of advanced age or poor health, held in such detention centres in Russia.

According to OHCHR, prisoners transferred from Crimea to the Russian Federation complained of various types of inadequate conditions of detention and instances of ill-treatment, including 'poor hygiene and sanitary standards, extremely low quality of food, the unjustified seizure of personal items, including religious books such as the Qur'an, and severe prison overcrowding'.⁴² The Commissioner was informed that adequate medical assistance was withheld from some Crimean Tatar detainees as an element of pressure or as punishment. For many Crimean Tatars who have languished in Russian penitentiary centres for many years, their long-term detention without adequate medical care or access to medication has resulted in aggravated health problems, including those connected with serious chronic diseases.

22. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine only worsened the already-deplorable conditions of Crimean Tatar detainees. The Commissioner was provided with a list of 23 Crimean Tatars currently held in detention in Russia despite being affected by serious health problems and disabilities. This includes 62-year-old Servet Gaziev, who suffered a stroke in pre-trial detention prior to receiving a criminal sentence of 13 years of imprisonment; and 60-year-old Inver Bekirov, who also suffered a stroke while in detention. In February 2023, a Russian military court of appeal upheld a lower court's decision that a member of Crimean Solidarity, Amet (Ahmet) Suleymanov, who suffers from a serious heart disease, should serve his criminal sentence of 12 years' imprisonment in a penal colony instead of the house arrest which had been imposed on him in March 2020. In February 2023, the UN Committee Against Torture issued an interim measure requesting Russia to abstain from enforcing Mr Suleymanov's prison sentence, to conduct his medical examination, and to ensure that he receives cardiological treatment. However, the Commissioner was informed that on 5 April 2023 the Russian occupying authorities placed Mr Suleymanov in detention with a view to transferring him to a penal colony in Russia, in breach of the above-mentioned interim measure.
23. The Commissioner was particularly saddened to learn of the death, on 10 February 2023, of Crimean Tatar activist and member of Crimean Solidarity Dzhemil Gafarov in a detention centre in Novocherkassk, in Russia. Mr Gafarov, who had been convicted on spurious charges and sentenced to 13 years in prison, died after spending more than four years in detention without access to adequate medical care, despite being affected by chronic heart and kidney disease and a heart attack suffered in October 2022. The Commissioner notes that a UN report published in July 2022 found that at least 25 Crimean Tatar men were being held in Novocherkassk at the time and that the detainees held in that facility

were forced to sleep in shifts owing to extreme overcrowding.⁴³ She considers that the circumstances of Dzhemil Gafarov's death in Russian detention call for an independent and effective investigation.

4. Reprisals against Crimean Tatar lawyers

24. Since 2014, lawyers involved in cases related to Crimean Tatars have regularly reported being subjected to pressure and harassment, short-term detention, and threats of disbarment.⁴⁴ Examples include that of Edem Semedlyaev who, while providing legal counsel in November 2021, was convicted of 'disobeying the orders of a police officer', searched for 'extremist' religious symbols, and sentenced to 12 days of so-called administrative arrest – a type of short-term detention penalty under Russian law – and a fine,⁴⁵ drawing [public condemnation](#) by the Commissioner. In another example of retroactive application of Russian law, Crimean Tatar lawyer Emil Kurbedinov was convicted and sentenced to 5 days' so-called administrative arrest for posting on social media, at a time pre-dating Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, symbols regarded by Russian occupying authorities as 'extremist'.⁴⁶ Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents operating in Simferopol (Aqmescit) reportedly pressured another lawyer to disclose confidential details of one of his cases protected by the lawyer-client privilege.⁴⁷ Crimean Tatar defence lawyers signalled to the Commissioner significant impediments in accessing their clients, many of whom are detained in faraway locations in Russia.
25. If the work of Crimean Tatar lawyers and other lawyers providing legal counsel to Crimean Tatars had often met with obstruction prior to 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine resulted in an aggravation of their already delicate situation. In May 2022, four Crimean Tatar lawyers – Edem Semedlyaev, Nazim Sheikhmambetov, Ayder Azamatov and Emine Avamileva – were arrested and placed in so-called administrative arrest for periods between five and eight days, and fined, in connection with their legitimate activity.⁴⁸ Further, in mid-2022, the law licences of Crimean Tatar lawyers Nazim Sheikhmambetov, Rustem Kiamilev and Liliya Gemedzhi were revoked. This effective disbarment further restricts access to legal assistance for Crimean Tatars living in Crimea.

5. Restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly

26. Since 2014, the Russian occupying authorities have been enforcing Russian legal framework governing public assemblies and freedom

of expression in the territory of Crimea, showing little tolerance for demonstrations or any form of criticism, dissent, or opposition towards Russia's illegal annexation of the peninsula. Leaders, activists, and ordinary Crimean Tatars have been among those most affected by the implementation of repressive Russian legal provisions, which have been repeatedly found to be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights by the European Court of Human Rights,⁴⁹ and also criticised by the Commissioner and her predecessor.⁵⁰ According to the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, since 2014, 234 individuals were prosecuted in occupied Crimea for the alleged violation of public order during mass gatherings, and 205 of them were Crimean Tatars. Authorisation to hold Crimean Tatar assemblies has been frequently denied and Russian occupying authorities have handed activists advance warnings, threatening them with administrative or criminal prosecution for holding such events.⁵¹ This has often applied to rallies organised to mark key Crimean Tatar commemorations, such as the anniversary of the 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatar people on 18 May,⁵² or the Crimean Tatar Flag Day held on 26 June.⁵³

27. The Russian occupying authorities in Crimea have consistently dispersed not only spontaneous rallies of Crimean Tatars, which were usually triggered by reprisals against members of the community, but also solitary pickets – a form of protest which, under Russian law, does not require prior notification – and ordinary gatherings in public spaces. Participants were often arrested, sometimes with the use of excessive force or violence, and hefty fines were imposed.⁵⁴ For example, in October 2017, solitary pickets conducted by approximately one hundred Crimean Tatars across the peninsula to peacefully protest against reprisals resulted in their arrests and sanctions in the overwhelming majority of cases.⁵⁵ In July 2019, a peaceful demonstration by several dozen Crimean Tatars, gathered near the seat of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in Moscow to protest against the criminal conviction of four fellow Crimean Tatars on terrorism-related charges, was dispersed, and at least 44 persons were arrested,⁵⁶ prompting the Commissioner to [express](#) her concern and to call on the Russian authorities to review the legal framework on public gatherings and protect minorities instead of harassing them. In May 2021, a court in Crimea fined three Crimean Tatar women for participation in an unauthorised public gathering, although they had staged solitary pickets separately at different times and in different locations.⁵⁷
28. In recent years, the Russian occupying authorities' restrictions on Crimean Tatars' freedom of peaceful assembly have risen to

unprecedented levels. Restrictions on public assembly on grounds of COVID-19 emergency laws have been applied unduly,⁵⁸ including in Crimea,⁵⁹ leading to convictions for the holding of peaceful assemblies. In the period between September and November 2021, 116 people participating in Crimean Tatar assemblies were charged with violating health regulations, and 22 of them were placed under so-called administrative arrest or briefly arrested and later released without any charge.⁶⁰ The victims and their lawyers believed that the true reason for their arrests was to suppress dissenting views.⁶¹ In October 2021, 21 Crimean Tatars, including civil society activists, lawyers and journalists, were [arrested](#) for the simple fact of having gathered in front of a court building in Simferopol (Aqmescit) to express solidarity with friends and relatives being put on trial.⁶² In another example, in January 2023, 34 Crimean Tatars were arrested for gathering in front of a local court building where several others were being tried on spurious charges; 28 of them were placed in so-called administrative arrest for up to 15 days.

29. The Commissioner was informed that with the advent of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the already very restrictive attitude of Russian occupying authorities in Crimea towards policing Crimean Tatar assemblies has veered towards even tighter control. Sanctions such as short-term arrests and fines have been meted out against Crimean Tatars, often on the spot and without any prior warning. More generally, the exercise of Crimean Tatars' freedom of peaceful assembly is reportedly negatively impacted by an atmosphere of surveillance and harassment. The Commissioner was informed that eavesdropping and covert surveillance have been used increasingly against Crimean Tatars. Russian occupying authorities scrutinise every aspect of Crimean Tatar communal life, such as, for example, songs performed at weddings or festive banners displayed in Crimean Tatar settlements, for hidden meanings. Crimean Tatar human rights defenders and activists reported to the Commissioner that they have either seen or suspected their movements having been monitored by informants, who often surreptitiously attend Crimean Tatar meetings or gatherings.

6. Restrictions on Crimean Tatar media freedom

30. Within a few years, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea drastically reduced media space in the peninsula. A mandatory re-registration process imposed on media outlets in Crimea in 2014-15, conducted under Russian law and overseen by the Russian media regulator, the Roskomnadzor, led to a 90% reduction in the number of media outlets in Crimea,⁶³ decimating Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar-language outlets.

Crimean Tatar media outlets, such as television channel ATR and its affiliates, a radio station and a children's TV channel, as well as the Crimean Tatar news agency QHA (Qırım Haber Agentligi), were [forced](#) to stop broadcasting in Crimea and refused broadcasting licences for subjective reasons.⁶⁴ In December 2020, a Russian court in Crimea sentenced the owner of ATR TV, Lenur Islyamov, to 19 years in prison in absentia on spurious criminal charges including alleged sabotage.⁶⁵ Several radio channels have been jammed and/or had their signals replaced by those of Russian channels, particularly in northern Crimea.⁶⁶ A number of websites, including those belonging to the Mejlis, have been blocked by internet providers in Crimea, sometimes without a court order.⁶⁷ Independent Crimean Tatar TV and radio channels were replaced by channels which interlocutors described as being under the strict control of the Russian occupying authorities.⁶⁸ While a small number of independent Crimean Tatar papers, like Avdet and Qırım, continued to be published with a limited circulation, they did so with considerable circumspection in an increasingly restrictive environment characterised by repeated warnings by the Roskomnadzor or the FSB.⁶⁹ In one example, in 2021, the editor-in-chief of Qırım was fined for 'disseminating information about a banned organisation' after making a simple reference to the Crimean Tatar Mejlis in one of its publications.⁷⁰

31. Independent journalists reporting on issues relating to Crimean Tatars have been threatened, physically attacked, detained, and investigated for involvement in 'extremist' activities.⁷¹ Several have been denied entry to Crimea and banned from entering the territory of Russia.⁷² This was, for instance, the case of Ukrainian journalist Taras Ibrahimov, known for his coverage of cases of Crimean Tatars, who in 2020 was banned from Russia and Crimea for 34 years.⁷³
32. Crimea's increasingly restrictive media environment led the Crimean Tatars to rely on citizen journalists and bloggers for accessing and imparting information on human rights violations committed against members of their community. These persons are often ordinary Crimean Tatars who document, record, and share on social media footage evidence of human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrests, police raids and searches of Crimean Tatar homes, or the conduct of criminal trials. However, again, this kind of activity has attracted spurious criminal charges, including related to alleged 'extremism' or 'terrorism', with the most active members of Crimean Solidarity being especially targeted.
33. The Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (['Safety of Journalists Platform'](#)) recorded a

number of alerts relating to the treatment of journalists and media outlets from Crimea, many of which involve Crimean Tatar citizen journalists and bloggers.⁷⁴ One example is that of Nariman Memedeminov, convicted in 2019 of 'membership in a terrorist organisation' and 'making calls for extremist activity' for sharing three video clips on YouTube (two of which pre-dated the 2014 illegal annexation), and sentenced to two and a half years in prison.⁷⁵ In March 2019, Crimean Tatar citizen journalists Osman Arifmemetov, Remzi Bekirov, and Rustem Sheikhaliev were arrested, beaten, prosecuted and convicted for allegedly supporting Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁷⁶ In 2020 and 2021, Crimean Tatar citizen journalists Seyran Saliev and Amet (Ahmet) Suleymanov were sentenced to, respectively, 16 and 12 years' imprisonment for supposed involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁷⁷ In December 2022, another Crimean Tatar citizen journalist Ernes Ametov was sentenced by a Russian military court to 11 years' imprisonment in a penal colony for alleged terrorism.⁷⁸ Other Crimean Tatar citizen journalists, like Dlyaver Ibrahimov, Yusup Useynov, or Kulamet Ibrahimov, were repeatedly arrested and placed in so-called administrative arrest in a special detention centre in Yevpatoria (Kozlev) for periods of 12 to 13 days. In March 2022, Crimean Tatar Abdureshit Dzhepparov was detained in this manner for 15 days in connection with a video posted on social media. In addition, new repressive Russian criminal law provisions, passed by the Russian parliament in March 2022, have been used as a basis for tightening censorship through the criminal prosecution of many Crimean Tatar activists and citizen journalists.⁷⁹ One detained Crimean Tatar activist, Rolan Osmanov, reported being offered lenient treatment if he agreed to filming a video in support of the Russian army.⁸⁰

7. Right to education and the preservation of Crimean Tatar cultural heritage

34. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea has resulted in changes to the educational system in the peninsula, with schools using the Russian state curriculum.⁸¹ Educational programmes reportedly focus on the history of Russia and on presenting Crimea as a historically Russian region, belying the Crimean Tatars' rich legacy as the peninsula's indigenous people. Overall, there appear to be attempts to imbue schoolchildren with a sense of Russian patriotism and identity, at the expense of their Crimean Tatar affiliation. Importantly, this involves what has been referred to as the militarisation of schools and children in Crimea, with children as young as three years old reported to have participated in military-themed courses or games.⁸²

35. Some elements of the Russian school curricula have been stigmatising towards Crimean Tatars. The Soviet-era exaggerated accusations of collaboration of some Crimean Tatars with the Nazi regime during the Second World War are occasionally brought to the fore, including in school curricula, which risks stirring up hostility towards Crimean Tatar people. For example, in 2019, a new textbook on the history of Crimea, which contained allegations of Crimean Tatars' collaboration with the Nazi regime, was introduced in Crimean schools. Although the book was later withdrawn following criticism,⁸³ there were reports of it being used in Crimean schools again in 2020.⁸⁴ More generally, curricula demeaning Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identity, and promoting falsified historical narratives, permeate Crimea's education system.
36. It should also be noted that, while some Crimean Tatar schools continue to operate in the peninsula, students in such schools or classes reportedly often do not actually have access to instruction in their native Crimean Tatar language, but only the opportunity to learn it as a regular subject or as part of extracurricular activities.⁸⁵ There have further been reports as to insufficient availability, quantity, and quality of education in the Crimean Tatar language.⁸⁶
37. The Russian illegal annexation of Crimea has also had a tremendous impact on Crimean Tatar cultural heritage. A 2021 UNESCO report found that Russia 'erase[d] traces of the cultural presence of the Crimean Tatars on the peninsula' and that its actions 'weaken[ed] the fundamental role of the indigenous Muslim people in the history of Crimea', providing 'ideological and historical justification for its occupation of the peninsula for its citizens'.⁸⁷

III. Forced mobilisation, mass departures, and the legacy of enforced disappearances and missing persons

1. Forced conscriptions, mobilisation, and mass departures of Crimean Tatars

38. Fifteen military conscription campaigns have been run in Crimea since the illegal annexation in 2014. These measures, illegal under international humanitarian law,⁸⁸ have reportedly disproportionately targeted Crimean Tatars, forcing many of them to evade the draft and seek refuge outside the peninsula.
39. Since September 2022, partial mobilisation into Russian armed forces has been carried out in Crimea in connection with Russia's war in Ukraine. The Commissioner was informed that mobilisation units visited locations densely populated by Crimean Tatars, such as certain areas of Bakhchysaray (Bağçasaray), the city of Saky (Saq), the Stroganovka (Mamak) suburb of Simferopol (Aqmescit), or the village of Zuya, handing out at least 1 500 draft notices to Crimean Tatars.⁸⁹
40. The forced mobilisation was accompanied by an intense Russian propaganda campaign aimed at setting new lines of division within the community and between Crimean Tatar people on the one hand, and the Ukrainian state on the other. The Commissioner was informed that it has also been accompanied by harassment and threats against many Crimean Tatars, including university professors or businesspeople, with Russian occupying authorities making public video statements of some Crimean Tatars forced to profess support for the Russian military campaign, or forcing individuals to provide funds for the purchase of military equipment. Crimean Tatar activists who refuse to support the Russian aggression are being publicly discredited.
41. The deep physical and psychological harm inflicted on the Crimean Tatar people in Crimea by Russia's mass mobilisation cannot be overstated. Almost from one day to another, Crimean Tatars were faced with the prospect of being compelled to take up arms against their

fellow countrypeople. The mobilisation has thus led to a mass exodus of Crimean Tatar men of all ages, especially those of active military age, trying to evade the draft, as well as entire families. Most of those fleeing the mobilisation have found refuge in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan while others have travelled to mainland Ukraine or to other European destinations, especially Turkey. The Commissioner was informed by representatives of the Mejlis that since the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Crimea has lost more than 10 000 of its overall Crimean Tatar population in this way.

42. For many Crimean Tatars, the road to safety from the sudden mobilisation was fraught with many obstacles. Expired identity documents, or internal Ukrainian documents not valid for international travel, often made their bearers particularly vulnerable to being stranded at borders. This has reportedly been the case at some of the European Union's external borders, where Crimean Tatars carrying outdated travel documents and/or Russian-issued documents have, in certain cases, been denied entry and turned away.
43. By mid-October 2022 the Russian mobilisation drive in Crimea reportedly lost much of its momentum, prompting some Crimean Tatars, including those who were unable to secure valid identity documents or adequate legal status in new destinations, to attempt risky returns to the peninsula. The Commissioner was informed that those who travelled back to Crimea have faced serious repression on return and that Russian occupying authorities actively searched Crimean Tatar settlements equipped with lists of suspected draft evaders.

2. Accountability for enforced disappearances

44. Among the 50 cases of enforced disappearances which occurred in Crimea since the illegal annexation of the peninsula by Russia in 2014 and have been documented by OHCHR by late June 2022, 13 concerned Crimean Tatars.⁹⁰ Crimean Tatar victims included persons linked to the Mejlis or other Crimean Tatar institutions but also ordinary Crimean Tatars without any verified political affiliation.⁹¹ Examples of those disappeared include Reshat Ametov, disappeared in 2014 and later found dead with markings of violence and torture on his body;⁹² Timur Shaimardanov and Seiran Zinedinov, who disappeared in May 2014 and remain missing;⁹³ Islyam Dzhepparov and Dzhevdet Islyamov, disappeared in September 2014;⁹⁴ Edem Asanov, disappeared in October 2014 and later found hanged in an abandoned building in Yevpatoria (Kerch); Eskender Apselyamov, disappeared in

October 2014 and never found again;⁹⁵ Erwin Ibrahimov, member of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars, who disappeared in 2016 and remains missing; or Renat Paralamov, who disappeared in 2017 and who was kept in incommunicado detention, subjected to ill-treatment, and forced to make self-incriminating statements prior to his eventual release.⁹⁶ The majority of enforced disappearances took place in 2014 and alleged perpetrators included agents of the Russian FSB and other Russian occupying authorities.⁹⁷

45. Examples referred to in the preceding paragraph reveal a general pattern of grave violations of human rights. Victims of enforced disappearances in Crimea have reportedly been subjected to torture or ill-treatment, including alleged use of electroshocks, threats of sexual violence, suffocation, and beatings.⁹⁸ In some cases, they were kept in incommunicado detention for unrecorded periods of time. Some were subsequently formally arrested and, in several cases, criminally convicted. According to OHCHR and to the Commissioner's knowledge, none of the victims or their relatives have been provided with any form of redress.⁹⁹ Generally, there has been a lack of progress in investigations and a comprehensive failure to bring perpetrators to justice.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, Russian occupying authorities have refused to register complaints, while in others the investigation proceedings were later suspended.¹⁰¹ As of June 2022, OHCHR had recorded 11 persons as still missing.¹⁰²
46. According to the information received by the Commissioner, Crimean Tatars were disproportionately affected by enforced disappearances which occurred in parts of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops in 2022 (see also above, in para. 18). According to OHCHR, the risk of enforced disappearance was especially high for men and particularly Crimean Tatars, most exposed to checks by Russian officials during travel from Ukraine's mainland to Crimea. As an example, Crimean Tatar language teacher Appaz Kurtamet from the village of Novooleksiivka in Ukraine's Kherson region disappeared while crossing into Crimea and remained missing until October 2022, when it transpired that he had been detained incommunicado in a pre-trial detention centre in Simferopol (*Aqmescit*).

Conclusions and recommendations

47. The illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 has, once again in the history of Crimean Tatar people, set in motion a tragic cascade of events and measures characterised by the common motif of grave and repeated violations of the human rights of the long-suffering indigeneous people of the peninsula. Numerous [patterns](#) of serious violations of human rights, persecution, discrimination, and stigmatisation targeting a significant part of the Crimean Tatar people in Crimea, especially those opposing the illegal annexation or expressing dissent, emerge clearly through consistent testimonies shared with the Commissioner over the years by many Crimean Tatars, human rights organisations, and many other reputable sources. The overwhelming scale and gravity of the human rights violations that have affected individual Crimean Tatars in the past years have additionally been reinforced by an 'entrenched culture of impunity'¹⁰³ for serious human rights violations on the part of the Russian occupying authorities in the peninsula.
48. Many of the acts and measures described above likely reflect a deliberate strategy on the part of the Russian occupying authorities.¹⁰⁴ It is important to mention that the above-mentioned measures overall contribute to an environment which stigmatises Crimean Tatars and sows ethnic division, both against and within the community. In particular, the prevalent conflation of arrests of Crimean Tatar activists with 'extremist' or 'terrorist' activity by pro-Russian propaganda paves the way for the stigmatisation of a significant part of the Crimean Tatar people, antagonising the general population of Crimea against them and creating an anti-Muslim climate.¹⁰⁵
49. The Commissioner reiterates her call for the persecution of Crimean Tatars to stop. In particular, she condemns the Russian-imposed ban on the Mejlis. The Mejlis is a key traditional and social representative body of the Crimean Tatar people and it should be able to function without any hindrance. She further calls for an immediate end to all arbitrary arrests, harassment, and searches of homes of Crimean Tatar human rights defenders, activists, leaders, and journalists, as well as ordinary members of the group. Recalling that international humanitarian law forbids an occupying power from applying its penal laws on occupied territory,¹⁰⁶ the Commissioner calls for an end to all criminal prosecutions based on misuse of Russian anti-extremism and counterterrorism laws,

or other similarly spurious charges, imposed on many Crimean Tatar activists in Crimea. All Crimean Tatars who have been convicted or detained in connection with such abusive criminal prosecutions should be released immediately and exonerated. Crimean Tatar victims of human rights violations should receive adequate redress and support.

50. Meanwhile, the Commissioner also calls for the humane treatment of all those held in detention in Crimea and of Crimean detainees held in detention centres in Russia. She recalls that they are entitled, under international law, to food and hygiene which will be sufficient to keep them in good health and to receive the medical attention required by their state of health.¹⁰⁷ International human rights monitoring mechanisms and humanitarian organisations should be afforded safe and unhindered access to all detainees, including Crimean Tatars. Transfers of detainees from Crimea to detention centres in Russia – a practice which is at variance with international humanitarian law – should cease immediately and all persons transferred in this way should be allowed to return to Crimea.
51. All Crimean Tatars should be able to fully make use of their freedom of assembly without fear of reprisals or criminal prosecution. Crimean Tatars, including journalists and media workers, should also enjoy secure conditions enabling them to exercise their freedom of expression without fear and intimidation. All Crimean Tatars should be able to practice their religion in public or private and to receive education in the Crimean Tatar language.
52. The Commissioner further considers that Crimean Tatar lawyers and lawyers representing Crimean Tatars should be allowed to exercise their activities free from any intimidation, harassment, or hindrance. They should be given unfettered access to their Crimean Tatar clients, including to detainees who have been transferred to Russia or to Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.
53. The forced conscription and mobilisation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea into Russian armed forces should end. The Commissioner recalls that the enlistment of protected persons, such as Crimean Tatars and other civilian residents of Crimea, in the occupying power's armed forces, violates international humanitarian law. Prohibited by Article 51 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power is also a grave breach of Article 148 of that Convention.
54. The most recent waves of departures of Crimean Tatars from Crimea, forced by mobilisation and intensifying persecution, are disturbingly

reminiscent of the indigenous people's cyclical history of displacement and fleeing their homeland. The Commissioner considers that Crimean Tatars who try to evade illegal enlistment in the Russian armed services should be afforded adequate humanitarian and legal care and assistance in all countries where they may seek refuge. Council of Europe member states should review the legal provisions and practice regulating entry so that Crimean Tatars fleeing forced enlistment may be able to reach safety even in the absence of valid identity or travel documents, or in cases where they may be compelled by circumstances to use Russian-issued documents.

55. Relatives of many Crimean Tatars who went missing in the peninsula have been waiting, for many years now, to discover the truth about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. The fate and whereabouts of all Crimean Tatars and other persons who have disappeared since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 should be clarified in prompt, effective and adequate investigations, in compliance with the principles established in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. All those responsible for cases of enforced disappearances of Crimean Tatars must be brought to justice, and relatives of the missing persons and their associations should be provided with the necessary support.
56. The Commissioner welcomes the step taken by the Ukrainian authorities in recent years, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's legislative framework and the adoption of other measures taken to protect the rights of Crimean Tatars. To name but a few examples, in March 2014, Ukraine's parliament (Verkhovna Rada) adopted a [statement](#) on guarantees of rights of the Crimean Tatar people within the Ukrainian state. In November 2015, it [recognised](#) the 1944 deportation of Crimean Tatars as 'genocide' and established 18th May as the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People. In May 2014, the 'Crimean House' – 'Krymskyi Dim' – was established to help Crimean Tatars and other displaced persons in Kyiv to maintain their identity, language and culture.¹⁰⁸ In July 2021, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a [Law on Indigenous Peoples](#), providing a legal framework for the protection of the rights of the three peoples indigenous to the Crimean Peninsula, including Crimean Tatars.¹⁰⁹ In August 2021, Ukraine established the 'Crimean Platform' ('[Qırım Plaforması](#)'), a diplomatic initiative and forum dedicated, among other things, to the protection of the human rights of Crimean Tatars. It also adopted a 'Strategy for the Development of the Crimean Tatar Language for 2022-2032' and announced the creation of a 'National Corpus of the Crimean Tatar Language' – an online repository of educational, scientific, and other

materials in the Crimean Tatar language.¹¹⁰ The Commissioner welcomes the active involvement of Crimean Tatar representative bodies, including the Mejlis, in the development of the above measures. She notes that legislative work on a bill which would regulate in detail the legal status and rights of the Crimean Tatar people is currently being carried out by the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. She encourages the Ukrainian authorities to pursue these efforts. She further encourages the Ukrainian authorities to ensure that Crimean Tatar TV and radio outlets are provided with adequate and sustainable financial support to continue broadcasting for the benefit of the Crimean Tatar people.

* * *

57. The Crimean Tatars have suffered enough. Generation after generation, they have been exposed, individually and collectively, to a never-ending string of violations of their basic human rights and freedoms. Brutally uprooted and unfairly cast out of their ancestral homeland many times in the course of their long and troubled history, many of them were born, and many perished, in displacement in faraway lands. However, Crimean Tatar people remain an integral part of the broader European community and history.
58. The Commissioner is inspired by the singularly strong solidarity and resilience that has been the hallmark of the Crimean Tatar people over the centuries. Together, they have endured formidable challenges to their identity and existence as an ethnic group and as a nation. She wholeheartedly supports their pursuit of redress for the wrongs that have been and continue to be inflicted on them.
59. The Commissioner expresses hope that the Crimean Tatar people will, as soon as possible, be able to reclaim its rightful place in the social fabric of Crimea's multicultural society following decades of experience of forced exile. They should be provided with all necessary support to help them preserve and maintain their unique identity and to enable the long-overdue full realisation of their human rights.

Endnotes

- 1 This report does not deal with status-related issues. It cannot be interpreted as recognising either the Russian occupying authorities in Crimea, or any altered status of the territory in question. Nothing in this report should be seen as an infringement of the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
- 2 Out of consideration for the Crimean Tatar language – [listed](#) as ‘severely endangered’ by the UNESCO – and its cultural heritage, in so far as possible, toponyms and names of institutions referred to in this report include, in italics, also their Crimean Tatar language equivalents. For more information on Crimean Tatar language geographical names, see <https://iccrimea.org/place/placenames.html>.
- 3 [Report](#) by Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Nils Muiznieks, following his mission in Kyiv, Moscow and Crimea from 7 to 12 September 2014, CommDH(2014)19, 27 October 2014; ‘The persecution of Crimean Tatars must stop’, [statement](#) by Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, 25 November 2021; ‘Urgent action needed to reunite Ukrainian children transferred to Russia and Russian-occupied territories with their families’, [statement](#) by Commissioner Mijatović, 6 March 2023.
- 4 Following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation was expelled from the Council of Europe – see Resolution [CM/Res\(2022\)2](#) on the cessation of the membership of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 March 2022.
- 5 The list of human rights issues affecting Crimean Tatars, dealt with in the present report, should not be regarded as exhaustive. The Commissioner notes, in particular, that many human rights issues related to the consequences of the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation have been raised in numerous individual and inter-State applications lodged before the European Court of Human Rights. The Commissioner also notes that, although the report focuses on the specific situation of Crimean Tatars, many of the human rights issues raised here also affect other persons or groups of people. Some of them have been addressed by the Commissioner in her country work, including on the [Russian Federation](#).
- 6 An estimated 100 000 Crimean Tatars out of the population of 300 000, according to Williams, Brian Glyn, ‘The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin’s Conquest’, 2016, Oxford University Press, p. 10.
- 7 Williams, ‘The Crimean Tatars, cited above, pp. 17 and 21. See, also, ‘About

Crimean Tatars', [web article](#), Crimean Tatar Resource Centre.

- 8 Fisher, Alan, 'The Crimean Tatars', Hoover Institution Press, 1978, p. 145.
- 9 For a detailed analysis of the deportation and its direct consequences, see Campana, Aurélie, 'Sürgün: The Crimean Tatars' deportation and exile, Mass Violence & Resistance', [academic paper](#), 16 June 2008.
- 10 Wilson, Andrew, 'Needs Assessment for the Crimean Tatars and Other Formerly Deported Peoples of the Crimea', [academic paper](#), SSRN, 14 December 2012.
- 11 Williams, 'The Crimean Tatars, cited above, p. 101.
- 12 Wilson, 'Needs Assessment...', cited above.
- 13 Recommendation 1455 (2000) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- 14 [Report](#) by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, on his visit to Ukraine, 10-17 December 2006, Strasbourg, 26 September 2007, CommDH(2007)15.
- 15 [Resolution](#) CM/ResCMN(2011)8, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 30 March 2011; [Resolution](#) CM/ResCMN(2013)8, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 18 December 2013.
- 16 [Report](#) on the situation of Crimean Tatars (doc. 15305), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), 4 June 2021, in paragraph 7.
- 17 Ad hoc [report](#) on the situation of national minorities in Ukraine, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ACF(2014)001, adopted on 1 April 2014.
- 18 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), International Court of Justice (ICJ), [Order](#) of 19 April 2017, in paragraph 106.
- 19 'Human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine', [information document](#) by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, SG/Inf(2022)15, 4 May 2022, paragraph 30.
- 20 [Report](#) by Commissioner Nils Muižnieks, CommDH(2014)19, cited above, in paras 21-2. See also, 'Human rights situation...', [information document](#) cited above, in paras 45-6.
- 21 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023.
- 22 'Released Crimean Tatar leaders should be free to return home and speak out', Amnesty International, [web article](#), 27 October 2017. See also, 'Crimean Tatar Leader Sentenced to 8 Years in Prison after 'Sham Trial'', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), [news article](#), 11 September 2017.
- 23 'Human rights situation...', [information document](#) cited above, in paragraph 29.

- 24 'The Suffering of Crimea's Tatars', New Lines, [press article](#), 12 May 2022.
- 25 'Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine', [report](#) of the United Nations Secretary-General, A/77/220, 25 July 2022; see also, 'Human rights situation...'; cited above, in paragraph 24.
- 26 [Resolution](#) 73/263 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 22 December 2018.
- 27 Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami ('Party of Islamic Liberation') is an international organisation that seeks to establish a caliphate based on Islamic law. For more information, see, for example, European Court of Human Rights, *Kasymakhunov and Saybatalov v. Russia*, no. 26261/05 and 26377/06, [judgment](#) of 14 March 2013, paragraphs 7 and 44-53. See, also, 'Crimea: Persecution of Crimean Tatars Intensifies', Human Rights Watch [report](#), 11 November 2017.
- 28 See, for example, the [webpage](#) of the human rights project "Support of Political Prisoners. Memorial" and the [news release](#) of the Centre for Information and Analysis SOVA.
- 29 *Kasymakhunov and Saybatalov*, European Court of Human Rights [judgment](#) cited above, in paragraph 9-10.
- 30 'Human rights situation...'; [information document](#) cited above, para. 25. See also, Aitkhodzina, Damelya, 'Harsh Sentences for Alleged Hizb-ut-Tahrir Followers in Russia', Human Rights Watch, [web article](#), 1 October 2020.
- 31 'Undetermined Facts, Secret Witnesses: Russia Hands Harsh Prison Terms to Crimean Tatars After 'Illegitimate' Trials', [news article](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 19 January 2023.
- 32 'Крымскотатарским активистам подбросили запрещенную литературу в ходе незаконных обысков', Crimean Tatar Resource Center, [web article](#), 11 March 2020.
- 33 '[General comment](#) no. 32, Article 14, Right to equality before courts and tribunals and to fair trial', UN Human Rights Committee, 2007, paragraph 30.
- 34 [Resolution](#) 75/192 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 28 December 2020, Preamble.
- 35 'Undetermined Facts, Secret Witnesses: Russia Hands Harsh Prison Terms to Crimean Tatars After 'Illegitimate' Trials', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), [news article](#), 19 January 2023.
- 36 'В оккупированном Крыму 101 человек преследуется по «делу Хизб ут-Тахрир» – KPL', Crimean Tatar Resource Center, [web article](#), 31 January 2023.
- 37 '14 citizens of Ukraine are persecuted for participation in the Noman Çelebicihan Crimean Tatar Volunteer Battalion', Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, [web article](#), 5 June 2022.
- 38 'Over 30 citizens of Ukraine are persecuted for participation in the Noman

Çelebicihan Crimean Tatar Volunteer Battalion', ZMINA, [web article](#), 10 March 2023.

- 39 'Abductions, Torture, 'Hybrid Deportation': Crimean Tatar Activist Describes Six Years Under Russian Rule', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), [news article](#), 17 March 2020.
- 40 [Article 76](#) of the Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.
- 41 'Situation of human rights...'; [report](#), cited above; see also, 'Human rights situation...'; cited above, which describes, in paragraph 20, the case of Teymur Abdullayev, held in solitary confinement in a penal colony in the Russian region of Bashkortostan for 55 days, with the measure having been applied to him on at least two occasions.
- 42 'Situation of human rights...'; [report](#), cited above.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 'Human rights situation...'; [information document](#), cited above, in paragraph 26. See also, [report](#) on the situation of Crimean Tatars, PACE, cited above, in paragraph 29.
- 45 'Human rights situation...'; [information document](#) cited above, in paragraph 26.
- 46 'Russian authorities increase pressure on Crimean human rights lawyer', Human Rights Watch, [web article](#), 14 January 2019.
- 47 'Lawyer for prominent Crimean Tatar activist forcibly detained', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), [news article](#), 25 January 2017.
- 48 '[Report](#) on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine (1 April – 25 June 2022)', Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), ODIHR.GAL/36/22/ Corr.1, 14 July 2022, p. 105. See also, 'Ukraine/Russia: Administrative harassment of four human rights lawyers in occupied Crimea', International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), [press release](#), 31 May 2022.
- 49 See, for example, Lashmankin and others v. Russia, European Court of Human Rights, [judgment](#) of 7 February 2017.
- 50 'Follow-up [Memorandum](#) of the Commissioner for Human Rights on Freedom of Assembly in the Russian Federation', CommDH(2017)25, 5 September 2017.
- 51 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023.
- 52 'Russia bans remembrance events on anniversary of Crimean Tatar deportation', Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG), [web article](#), 18 May 2016.
- 53 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023; see also, 'Russia calls celebrating Crimean Tatar flag day 'extremism' and threatens

prosecution; Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG), [web article](#), 25 May 2021. The Crimean Tatar Flag Day has been celebrated on 26 June since 2010. The Crimean Tatar national flag was approved at the 1917 Crimean Tatar Qurultai and re-established in 1991.

- 54 'Situation of human rights...'; [report](#), cited above, paragraph 29.
- 55 'Civic space and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine (1 November 2019 – 31 October 2021), OHCHR, [report](#), 8 December 2021, paragraph 75. See, also, 'Крымских татар оштрафовали за одиночные пикеты в разных городах. Суды решили, что это была одна акция', Meduza, [web article](#), 18 December 2017.
- 56 'В Москве задержали более 40 человек, пришедших в суд поддержать фигурантов дела «Хизб ут-Тахрир»', OVD-Info, [news article](#), 11 July 2019.
- 57 'Human rights situation...'; [information document](#) cited above, para. 55.
- 58 'Commissioner calls on Russian authorities to overhaul legislation and practice governing freedom of assembly and of expression', Commissioner for Human Rights, [statement](#), 23 June 2020.
- 59 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023.
- 60 'Situation of human rights...'; [report](#), cited above, in paragraph 29.
- 61 'Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine (1 August 2021 - 31 January 2022)', OHCHR, [report](#), 28 March 2022, paragraph 98.
- 62 'В Симферополе у здания суда задержали крымских татар', OVD-Info, [news article](#), 25 October 2021.
- 63 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023.
- 64 'Commissioner Muižnieks calls for unhindered broadcasting of ATR TV', [statement](#) by the Commissioner for Human Rights, 2 April 2015. See also, 'OSCE Representative Mijatović warns of further restrictions to media pluralism and access to information in Crimea, Ukraine', OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, [press release](#), 1 April 2015; 'Crimean Tatar media 'silenced by Russia'', BBC, [news article](#), 1 April 2015. Prior to her appointment as Commissioner for Human Rights, from 2010 to 2017 Dunja Mijatović served as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.
- 65 'Freedom in the World 2022: Crimea', Freedom House, [report](#), 2023.
- 66 'Human rights situation...'; [information document](#) cited above, paragraph 52; see, also, 'In most settlements of Northern Crimea Ukrainian FM frequencies seized by Russian broadcasters', Crimean Human Rights Group, [web article](#), 28 June 2019.
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