



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on Remembrance of Victims of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People from Crimea by the Soviet Regime

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1228th meeting of the Permanent Council,
16 May 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

On 18 May 2019 Ukraine commemorates one of the tragic chapters of its history - the 75th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people from their native Crimean soil by the totalitarian Stalin's regime.

In May 1944, in the matter of two days, about 200 thousand Crimean Tatars were forcibly deported from Crimea to Siberia, the Urals and Central Asia as a form of collective punishment for alleged collaboration with the Nazi.

Together with the Crimean Tatars a great number of Ukrainians, Russians, Karaites and Romas have been subject to deportation because of their belonging to the mixed marriages with Crimean Tatars. The forced deportation further affected other ethnic groups residing in the Crimea, including Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks.

The conditions of the transfer were fatal for estimated over 7 thousand Crimean Tatars; almost half of deportees died within three years because of starvation and diseases. They were placed under the special punitive settlement regime, which had deprived them, for decades, of their rights, and particularly of their freedom of movement.

The very name of the indigenous people - Crimean Tatars - was effectively banned in order to destroy their cultural and social heritage and historical presence in the Crimea.

Even though the unfounded charges against Crimean Tatars have been revoked in the 60s, they were not allowed to return to Crimea from exile until 1989.

Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, the Government of Ukraine undertook consistent efforts to provide Crimean Tatars with necessary resources

for their resettlement and integration into the Ukrainian society, cherishing their history, culture and traditions.

The Parliament of Ukraine recognized the deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea in 1944 as the genocide of the Crimean Tatar people and set 18 May as a day of remembrance of its victims.

Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people on 23 April 2019 called upon the parliaments and governments of the UN Member States to recognize the 1944 forced deportation by the Soviet regime of the Crimean Tatars and their forced detention in regions of deportation as the act of genocide of the Crimean Tatar people.

We took note of the statement of the Saeima (parliament) of Latvia of 9 May 2019 with the condemnation of “the purposeful pursuit of genocide by the Soviet authorities against many peoples and ethnic groups living in the Soviet Union and its occupied territories, including the Crimean Tatars as an ethnic group”.

Distinguished colleagues,

Following Russia’s illegal occupation and attempted annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in 2014, the Crimean Tatars are now facing again political repressions and persecutions comparable to the tragedy of the Stalinist deportation.

One of the first victims was Rishat Ametov, who on 3 March 2014 went out into the main square of Simferopol to protest against Russian invasion of the peninsula. He was kidnapped in broad daylight and his body with signs of torture was found on the outskirts of Simferopol ten days later.

More than 20 thousand Crimean Tatars have been forced to flee their homeland, while those who remain have been harassed, intimidated and persecuted, as documented in numerous reports by international organizations.

Despite the Order of the International Court of Justice in April 2017 in view of Russia’s violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination obliging Russia to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, this democratically elected, self-governing body of Crimean Tatar people remains banned by the Russian authorities.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we commemorate the victims of the Soviet terror campaigns, we condemn the growing tendencies in Russia, in the Russian-occupied Crimea and parts of Donbas to justify Stalin-era mass repressions, to diminish their scale and gravity, to glorify Stalinism, to use history to justify Russia’s expansionism abroad and repression at home.

Unlike the occupied territories, commemorative events are being held throughout the rest of Ukraine, including with the engagement of the leaders of the state and government. Crimean Tatars are integral part of the Ukrainian people and Ukraine cherishes its history, culture and traditions. In commemorating this solemn

anniversary, we should remember those who lost their lives or who suffered under repression, whether in 1944 or since 2014.

We recall our commitments stated by the 1990 Copenhagen Document, especially unequivocally condemning totalitarianism with its massive violation of human rights and freedoms, and call for redoubled efforts to uphold respect for the OSCE commitments in the human dimension, including in the situation of foreign occupation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.