



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People from Crimea by the Soviet Regime

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 21, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to respond to my colleague from the Russian Federation who asserted we used a photograph depicting the deportation of Jews from Poland during World War II to illustrate the tragedy of the Soviets' own deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944. He is right. We picked the wrong photograph to illustrate our point. That was done in error.

It was not a mistake to point out the dreadful conditions that the Crimean Tatars were put under in 1944 to 1947. It was not a mistake to point out that 200,000 people -- men, women, and children -- were deported. It's not a mistake to point out that the Russian Federation is today attempting to glorify the behavior of Joseph Stalin; even Krushchev didn't do that.

This is a time when the Russian Federation and the people of Russia could move forward to a brighter future. We're not making a mistake about that. We're not making a mistake about what's going on in Crimea today. Beautiful pictures and lovely costumes in the Russians' powerpoint today cannot change the fact that the people of Crimea are under oppression. Why else would there have to be a military and police occupation of Crimea? We're not making a mistake about that.

We're not making a mistake about the fact that there have been disappearances, specific names that we have named, including, for example, Ervin Ibragimov. His

disappearance happened because he was stopped by Russian police and now has disappeared. We're not wrong when we talk about people being committed to psychiatric institutions, something that harkens back to Soviet-style misbehavior. That has happened in the past, and it is once again happening in Crimea.

We made a mistake about a photograph, but we are not wrong, and have not made a mistake, about what is going on in Crimea today. That is something Russia can and should correct by withdrawing from Crimea as well as from eastern Ukraine immediately and stopping this kind of aggressive behavior -- the same kind of behavior that we saw during the 1944 period when the Crimean Tatars were so abused.

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