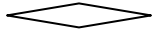


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Violations of Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association by the Russian Illegal Authorities in Crimea during 2018

Nataliya Pakhomova, The representative of the NGO «Association of correctional pedagogues» (Ukraine)

Statement for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018:

Working session 11. Fundamental freedoms I (continued), including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the protection of human rights, and freedom of movement, 17 September 2018

Dear representatives of OSCE participating states,

Human rights, enshrined in the international covenants of the United Nations and the European Convention on Human Rights, are constantly and systematically violated in the Crimea. After the occupation of Crimea, Russia regularly violates the right to freedom of peaceful assembly - one of the fundamental political rights, without effective implementation of which it is impossible to develop democracy and civil society institutions.

Since March 2014, the right to peacefully gather or hold rallies in the Crimea has become impossible to realize. The occupation authorities adopted additional laws that created additional obstacles to the implementation of the right to peaceful assembly.

Long-term comprehensive prohibitions on holding public assemblies were established, including one perpetual, established by the city authorities of Simferopol in 2016. Public events initiated by groups or persons who are not connected with the authorities of the Russian Federation in the Crimea or believe that the Crimea remains an integral part of Ukraine were systematically banned and the conduct of their activities was hampered. On September 23, 2014, the so-called "Crimean Prosecutor" issued a statement stating that "all actions aimed at non-recognition of the Crimea's joining the Russian Federation will be prosecuted according to the law". Consequently, any meeting demanding the return of the Crimea to Ukraine or expressing devotion to Ukraine is essentially outlawed.

At first repressions concerned mainly pro-Ukrainian Crimeans and Crimean Tatars, but today they relate to virtually all categories of Crimean residents who, irrespective of their political position, suffer from the inability to freely assemble and declare their disagreement with the actions of the occupation authorities.

In 2017, in Crimea, occupied by Russia, the police detained for a short time 49 Crimean Tatars who initiated peaceful single pickets in protest against the arrests and images of Crimean Tatars as terrorists.

Conducting spontaneous assemblies is also punished. August 8, 2017, an elderly Crimean Tatar was arrested, holding a single picket in support of the persecuted Crimean Tatars in front of the Supreme Court of the Crimea. He was accused of conducting an

unauthorized public meeting and resisting police officers. The court sentenced him to an administrative fine of 10 thousand rubles. (175 US dollars) and arrest for 10 days.

On December 18-19, the occupation courts in the Crimea were fined by more than 70 Crimean Tatar activists for single pickets on October 14. Everyone was charged with Part 5 of Art. 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of Russia ("Violation of ... the procedure for holding ... picketing"). In 2017, illegally fined 104 people, mostly Crimean Tatars, for more than 5 million rubles.

For the first half of 2018 there were 5 violations of the right to peaceful assembly. On April 19, 2018 in Bakhchisaray two separate pickets took place in defense of the Khan's palace, which, under the guise of restoration, was destroyed by the invaders. During the first single picket, a Russian policeman approached the participant and held a "conversation" after which the action was stopped. After this, another man came out with a poster demanding that he stop destroying the "history of the Crimean Tatars". His actions were stopped by the power structures.

May 17, 2018 in the Simferopol region, the Russian invaders interrupted the action "Light a spark in your heart" to the Day of Memory of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar people. Twenty people were detained.

Requests for peaceful public gatherings are often dismissed on formal grounds, for example, due to the very high temperature of the air, which can adversely affect the health of the rally participants. In some cases, refusals to hold public events were issued on the basis of unverified allegations that "extremist" or "separatist" ideas will be disseminated at these events.

Thus, the possibility to gather peacefully for public actions is considerably limited in the Crimea. The daily practice included: refusals to the organizers to agree on peaceful assemblies, which in fact is their prohibition; threats against the organizers and participants; dispersal of peaceful assemblies; attraction of organizers and participants of meetings to criminal or administrative responsibility. The occupation authority introduced an exhaustive list of places where Crimeans are supposed to hold peaceful meetings. In practice, all attempts to express protest are suppressed by the occupation authorities.

The occupation authorities continue to use methods that are inherent in it - threats, arrests, torture, abductions, murders - in order to gain a foothold in the occupied parts of Ukrainian territory, in particular, in the Crimea.

Distinguished colleagues,

Until the source of repression is removed, we will continue to observe violations of human rights in the occupied Crimea. Therefore, we call on the international community to investigate all cases of human rights violations in the Crimea, continue monitoring the situation and immediately respond to violations.

We call on the country of the invader to stop the Russian Federation from persecuting Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the Crimea for their views.