



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
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Statement on “Remembrance of the victims of political repressions of the communist totalitarian regime”

As delivered by Ms. Yevheniia Filipenko,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1186th meeting of the Permanent Council,
17 May 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

These days Ukraine commemorates two tragic chapters of its history: the anniversary of the 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatar people from their native Crimean soil and the anniversary of mass political repressions during the Great Terror of 1937–1938. Both crimes against humanity have been perpetrated by the totalitarian Stalinist regime.

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

In May 1944, in the matter of two days, nearly 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 affected other ethnic groups residing in the Crimean peninsula, including Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks.

The conditions of the transfer were fatal for estimated over 7 thousand Crimean Tatars; almost 30 thousand Crimean Tatars died within one year because of starvation and disease. The deportees were placed under the special punitive settlement regime, which had deprived them, for decades, of their rights, and particularly of their freedom of movement.

Even though the unfounded charges against Crimean Tatars have been revoked in the 60s, they were not allowed to return to Crimea from exile until mid-80s. After renewal of 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.

Since Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and attempted annexation of the Crimean peninsula the Crimean Tatar indigenous people and their representative

body, the Mejlis, have epitomized strong opposition to foreign occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, which made them the prime target of political persecution by the Russian occupation authorities, resembling the patterns of the Soviet totalitarian regime. Nearly 20.000 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 of 2017 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.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to fulfill the order of the International Court of Justice and remind Russia of its responsibility for all violations of human rights in Crimea as an occupying authority under international law.

We express appreciation to the delegations of OSCE participating States which remembered today the victims of the forced deportation. This sends a powerful message of support for the unbending will of the Crimean Tatar people to preserve their identity and live without fear and oppression on their native soil.

Mr. Chairperson,

These days we also commemorate the victims of mass repressions, planned and perpetrated by the ruthless communist totalitarian regime during the period, known as the Great Terror of 1937–38.

All nations of the former Soviet Union were affected by these atrocities. Millions of people – often the most educated and skillful – were summarily executed, put into labor camps or deported to distant territories with a harsh climate.

The repressions targeted political, national, and social categories of the population as Stalin endeavored to be rid of a purported “Fifth Column” within the borders of the Soviet Union. The mass arrests of largely innocent people were accompanied by widespread torture as the security agencies forced self-incrimination of their victims.

The victims of the “Great Terror” are hard to put in numbers, since the archives of the Soviet secret police containing the records of those crimes remain largely classified.

It is estimated that within two years over 1.5 million were convicted and nearly 700.000 were shot dead. Moreover, 200.000 people were deported, 800.000 were sent to the GULAG. In Ukraine, nearly 200.000 people fell victim to Stalin’s terror in 1937–38, including over 123.000 (62 per cent) who were killed. In analyzing these horrible statistics, it should be kept in mind that every figure signifies not just one individual but an entire family.

In Kyiv, those tragic events are annually observed in the Bykivnia Forest, which has become the mass grave for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Jews, representatives of other ethnic groups, who were killed often in retaliation for their desire to think like free individuals.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we commemorate the victims of the Soviet terror campaigns, we condemn the growing tendencies, currently observed in the Russian Federation and imposed 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.

We recall our commitments stated by the 1990 Copenhagen Document, especially unequivocally condemning totalitarianism, which is characterized by massive violation of human rights and freedoms, and call for redoubled efforts to uphold respect for the OSCE principles in the human dimension.

The lessons from these tragic events are of special relevance today, when we need to unite our efforts and resources to address threats and challenges to our common security and stability and to defend our common principles.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.