



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE  
FOUNDATION

**33<sup>rd</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council**  
**Geneva (Switzerland)**  
**27 September 2016**

**Item 10 - Interactive dialogue on the regular periodic update on Ukraine**  
**Human Rights House Foundation statement**

*Check against delivery (delivered by Florian Irminger)*

Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

**The Human Rights House Foundation welcomes the reports of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.** The Mission has continuously put human rights at the centre of attention, verified information, and shed light on the situation in its reporting, **which reflect the severe human rights violations in Ukraine**, committed by all sides<sup>1</sup>.

We are appalled by the escalating hostilities during the reporting period and the continued disregard for civilian protection by Government forces and armed groups.

As reported by the OHCHR, **the constant and growing inflow of ammunition, weaponry and fighters from the Russian Federation continues to fuel the conflict and it facilitates human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, as reported by the Working Group on the use of mercenaries in its report on its visit to Ukraine. Civilians living in conflict-affected areas continue to be deprived of much needed protection, access to basic services, and humanitarian aid, and this is aggravated by restrictions on freedom of movement. They are subject to arbitrary rule and various human rights abuses including violations of their basic rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression.**

As stated by the Working Group on the use of mercenaries in its report on its visit to Ukraine, “the continued presence of foreign fighters with large numbers of heavy weapons and ammunition, facilitated by the ease of passage through the borders between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, continues to pose threats to any peaceful resolution to the conflict.” Human Rights House Foundation calls upon all parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international human rights law and to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries<sup>2</sup>.

Mr Chairperson,

**Increasingly worrying is the gradual deterioration of the human rights situation in Crimea, caused by the “russianisation” of the peninsula (that is, further administrative integration into the Russian Federation’s southern federal district) in violation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.**

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<sup>1</sup> See also the latest report of the Ukrainian Human Rights Monitoring Mission (UHRMMU), covering the period from 15 May to 15 August 2016, which is available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/Ukraine15thReport.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See also the Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination on its mission to Ukraine” which is available at: <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/17972.094938159.html>.

**The *de facto* authorities in Crimea significantly curtailed the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, association, conscience and religion. They used anti-extremism and anti-terrorism laws to criminalise non-violent behaviour, stifle dissent, and exploited judicial and law enforcement systems as instruments to clamp down on opposition voices. On the other hand, paramilitary groups that have committed human rights abuses, such as the Crimean self-defence force, have not been held accountable.**

**As a part of this “russianisation” campaign, Russian and the *de facto* authorities have coerced residents of Crimea into receiving Russian passports, by making it significantly more difficult to formally remain Ukrainian than to change their citizenship to Russian.**

Furthermore, repression against those who consider themselves Ukrainian or hold other national or ethnic identities has led many to flee Crimea. **The fact that parliamentary elections of the Russian Federation were held in Crimea on 18 September 2016 is part of this same process.**

**These activities have especially affected the Crimean Tatar community, reminiscent of the group’s persecution in the Soviet Union. Indeed, as part of its efforts to assume total control of the peninsula, “from the first days of the occupation, the Russian Federation organised a large-scale campaign of physical harassment and criminal prosecution of potentially disloyal groups and anyone who opposed the annexation of Crimea.”<sup>3</sup>**

**We call upon the international community to further scrutinise the human rights situation in Crimea. All measures should be taken to ensure that the *de facto* authorities in Crimea are made aware of the international community’s attention to their actions, in order to hold them accountable, and hold their supporters accountable.**

**Mr Chairperson,**

**We are in this regard concerned that the Security Council has decreased its attention on the situation in Ukraine, including from the High Commissioner and his representatives. We therefore call upon the Security Council, through this Council, to continue to monitor and brief its members on the human rights situation in Ukraine, including Crimea.**

As stated by the High Commissioner: “The escalation of hostilities along the contact line over the summer was a sharp reminder that the situation in eastern Ukraine deserves much more attention. Additional efforts are needed to find a lasting solution to this crisis and put an end the suffering of the civilian population. Human rights and justice are what people need, not further deaths and more intense hatred and destruction.”<sup>4</sup>

**Thank you.**

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<sup>3</sup> Andrii Klymenko, Atlantic Council of the United States and Freedom House, page 10.

<sup>4</sup> See also the press release of the United Nations High Commissioner of 15 September 2016 which is available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20496&LangID=E>.