



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

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Item 10

**Interactive dialogue with Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,
on the human rights situation in Ukraine**

Human Rights House Foundation statement

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Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

The Human Rights House Foundation welcomes the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine,¹ as well as the reports published by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission. The Mission has continuously put human rights at the centre of the attention, verified information and shed light on actions by those who hold weapons in the country.

Addressing the crisis in Ukraine, which is the result of the violent repression of peaceful protestors from end of November 2013 to February 2014 by the Ukrainian government, will need full accountability for human rights violations on all sides. The sense of impunity continues to grow in the country, as investigations into killings of EuroMaidan protestors are still awaited and those holding arms in Eastern Ukraine enjoy a sort of immunity sponsored by the Russian Federation for their crimes.

In this sense, we welcome the referral to the International Criminal Court by the Ukrainian authorities. On 17 April 2014, the Government of Ukraine indeed lodged a declaration under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC over crimes committed on its territory from 21 November 2013 to 22 February 2014.² We further call upon the Government of Ukraine to issue a declaration extending ICC jurisdiction from 21 November 2013 until the date of the entry into force of the Rome Statute for Ukraine and hope to hear a similar call by the High Commissioner.

¹ Report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine to the Human Rights Council, 19 September 2014 (UN Doc: A/HRC/27/75).

² International Criminal Criminal press release of 25 April 2014, available at http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/pr999.aspx.

ICC investigation would indeed be a mean to hold those responsible for human rights violations in Eastern Ukraine accountable. We welcome that the Mission and the High Commissioner in his latest report have been clear in documenting violence by armed troupes supported by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The Human Rights Council needs to address the responsibility of those supporting armed forces in Ukraine. The Russian NGO Soldiers' Mothers of Saint Petersburg recently denounced the deaths of Russian soldiers in Ukraine, and the silence of the authorities in this regard. Ella Polyakova, Head of the Soldiers' Mothers and member of the Presidential Council for the Development of Russian Civil Society and Human Rights, told that these were contractors from Dagestan, paid 250'000 RUB (about 5'800 EUR), and who then travelled to Ukraine from Russia. In the same interview she also tells that hospitals are overflooded in Rostov and in the South, and that they have information on who the killed contractors are, who the injured soldiers are, and that they have asked the Investigative Committee to look into these cases. As a result, on 29 August 2014, Soldiers' Mothers of Saint Petersburg was forcefully included in the official registry as a "foreign agent" by Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, although the representatives of the organisation told that they have not received any foreign grants since May 2014.³

As documented by the High Commissioner in his report to the Human Rights Council, the *de facto* annexation of Crimea raises particular concern, especially in regard of the replacement of existing laws by Russian legislation and the situation of minorities, including Crimean Tatars. We are concerned by the high number of reported internally displaced people fleeing Crimea. We call upon all parties to support the humanitarian action carried out by Ukrainian civil society, including in their assistance to those who flee Eastern Ukraine, especially Crimea.

Finally, Mr Chairperson,

We further call upon Ukrainian authorities and the international community to acknowledge the work carried out by human rights NGOs in Ukraine since end of November. Ukrainian human rights defenders aimed at supporting peaceful demonstrators and documenting human rights violations during EuroMaidan, including the widespread use of torture and the killings by law enforcement agencies. Today, civil society is at the forefront to push for democratic reforms in Ukraine, whilst documenting high-scale human rights violations in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Leaders in all sectors of society should acknowledge publicly the important and legitimate role of those human rights defenders and Ukrainian authorities should in a more proactive manner reach out to them in order to ensure adequate reform processes and accountability for human rights violations, in line with Human Rights Council resolution 22/6 of 21 March 2013 on the protection of human rights defenders.

Thank you.

³ More information on this case available at <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/20398.html>.