



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

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**Geneva (Switzerland)
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Item 3

Interactive dialogue with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Statement endorsed by the Human Rights House Kyiv¹, the Human Rights House Chernihiv² and the Human Rights House Voronezh³

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Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF), and its partners in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, would like to warmly thank the Special Rapporteur on minority issues for her report on her mission in Ukraine.

As clearly stated in the Special Rapporteur's report the whole of Ukraine has a history of harmonious inter-ethnic and interfaith relations and developed as a country with two common languages, Russian and Ukrainian, and other languages, including Crimean Tatar.

Since the EuroMaidan, officials of the Russian Federation have repeatedly tried to allege that the Maidan protests have anti-Russian aims and that the authorities elected on 25 May and 26 October 2014 are pursuing policies against minorities. We strongly denounce such propaganda aiming at dividing Ukraine and at creating fear and hatred within its population. As reported by the Special Rapporteur, she "was not provided with evidence that anti-Russian sentiment was widespread."

Mr Chairperson,

As reported by the Crimean Field Mission,⁴ since February 2014, cultural, linguistic and educational rights of ethnic minorities and Tatar people in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are systematically violated by the self-proclaimed Crimean authorities and the political leadership of the Russian Federation. Cases of systemic discrimination on grounds of language and ethnicity have been registered. The most vulnerable ethnic minorities in the occupied and annexed Crimea are Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

¹ On behalf of the following NGOs: Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law-Enforcement, Centre for Civil Liberties, Human Rights Information Centre, and Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union.

² On behalf of the following NGOs: Chernihiv Public Committee of Human Rights Protection, Center of Humnistic Tehnologies "AHALAR", Center of Public Education "ALMENDA", Human Rights Center "Postup", Local Non-governmental Youth organizations M'ART, Transcarpathian Public Center, and Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union.

³ On behalf of the following NGOs: Charitable Foundation, Civic Initiatives Development Centre, Confederation of Free Labor, For Ecological and Social Justice, Free University, Golos, Interregional Trade Union of Literary Men, Lawyers for labor rights, Memorial, Ms. Olga Gnezdilova, Soldiers Mothers of Russia, Voronezh Journalist Club, Roronezh – Chernozemie, and Youth Human Rights Movement.

⁴ A fact-finding mission conducted jointly by Ukrainian and Russian NGOs in Crimea.

The level of xenophobia and intolerance against members of the Ukrainian community has indeed dramatically increased.

Since the occupation and annexation of Crimea, the tuition for 177,984 students in 576 Crimean schools is mainly conducted in Russian language – the number of classes in Ukrainian indeed decreased by 6 times. As a result, the total number of children receiving education in Ukrainian is 1’990, which makes up 1.2% of the total number of students (184,869 children, of whom 4,895 are taught in Crimean Tatar, and 1,990 children - in Ukrainian). Prior to the annexation, 8.2% of secondary school students were taught in Ukrainian.

Politically justified systemic persecution of the Crimean Tatars continues. Violations of their linguistic, cultural and religious rights, their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, of expression and personal security are continuously observed. Representatives of the Crimean Tatar people have repeatedly been victims of grave human rights violations by the so-called Crimean self-defence.

Furthermore, a policy of systemic restrictions against Crimean Tatar media is pursued. The Crimean television RTR is now persecuted and accused of extremism. Similarly, all Ukrainian broadcasting and media has been closed down in Crimea.

Mr Chairperson,

As stated by the Special Rapporteur, “developments in early 2014 have created an environment of uncertainty and distrust that may create fractures along national, ethnic and linguistic lines and which threaten peaceful coexistence if not quickly resolved.” We denounce in this context the role of propaganda, which made people believe that EuroMaidan related events were anti-Russian and tried to make the world believe that Russian speaking people needed protection in Ukraine.

We call upon the authorities of Ukraine to fully take into consideration the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur and do their utmost to contribute to reduce tensions by inclusive governance.

We also call upon the authorities of the Russian Federation to stop the harassment, censorship, obstruction, and unlawful judicial persecution of journalists and media workers related to minorities in Crimea, who provide perspective on events in Crimea as alternative to the official position of the Russian Federation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.