

# UN Secretary-General Report on Situation in the Crimea

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In September the Report of the UN Secretary-General A/76/260 "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine" was published. Report describes the violations of rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security, rights to justice and fair trial rights, rights of detainees and right to education in native language, also as the violation of the freedoms of opinion and expression, of peaceful assembly and association, of thought, conscience and religion.

This UN Secretary-General' document, that will be presented at the UN General Assembly session, points on the events of house searches and raids, on the forced "conscription" and population transfers in the Crimean peninsula under the Russian control. Report described more than 30 "proceedings" against more than 50 religious structures on the Crimea, including the Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic and Mormon organizations. Secretary-General stressed in the Report that no school in Sevastopol has teaching in the Ukrainian language or teaching the Ukrainian language as a subject, and that "one-time travel policy" has created barriers for Crimean school graduates to pursue higher education in the mainland of Ukraine.

UN Secretary-General called upon Russia in the report to uphold its obligations in the Crimea under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In particular, the Russian "authorities" were required to comply fully with the absolute prohibition of torture and to ensure the independent, impartial and effective investigation of all allegations of torture or ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests and detentions in

Crimea. They have the further obligation to ensure that the fair trial rights of persons deprived of liberty are fully respected, including by allowing adequate opportunities, time and facilities to communicate and consult with a lawyer, without delay, interception or censorship, and in full confidentiality. Lawyers should be able to perform their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference.

UN Secretary-General also urged the Russian Federation to ensure that the right to freedoms of expression and opinion, peaceful assembly, association, thought, conscience and religion can be exercised by all individuals and groups in the Crimea, without discrimination on any grounds or unjustified interference. In particular, as UN pointed, the Russian “authorities” should end the “policy of prior authorization” for peaceful assemblies and refrain from issuing warnings or voicing threats to potential participants in those assemblies.

UN Secretary-General also called upon the Russian “authorities” to enable a safe environment for independent and pluralistic media outlets and civil society organizations, and to refrain from any retaliation or suppression of critical and alternative views. Report stressed separately that journalists should be protected from retaliation for their published material, including the publication of official documents of the UN. Religious groups should enjoy access to their places of worship and should be able to gather freely for prayer and other religious practices. UN also urged Russia to lift restrictions imposed on the Crimean Tatars to conserve its representative institutions, including the ban on the Mejlis. The Russian “authorities” also need to ensure the availability of education and instruction in the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages that, to the extent possible, satisfies the demand for such education, report pointed.

UN Secretary-General also stressed on Russia’s duty to end the “conscription” of Ukrainian nationals residing in Crimea into

the Russian armed forces, as well as the “criminal prosecution” of protected persons for military draft evasion. It is also critical to refrain from organizing or encouraging transfers of parts of the population of the occupying Power to Crimea, to end transfers of protected persons, including detainees, outside the occupied territory, and to ensure that all protected persons previously transferred be allowed to return to Crimea, Report pointed.

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