



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1314 Vienna, 20 May 2021

EU Statement on the human rights situation in the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

More than seven years have passed since Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – a clear violation of international law and OSCE principles and commitments. We regret that since the illegal annexation, the human rights situation has deteriorated significantly. The decision by the European Court of Human Rights on 14 January in the case of “Ukraine against Russia concerning a pattern of human rights violations in Crimea” is a landmark decision in holding Russia accountable for its illegal actions in the peninsula.

We regret that there have been an increasing number of human rights abuses, including torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and the refusal of medical care to persons apprehended and detained in Crimea. Many are subsequently illegally deported to the Russian Federation. We repeat that the SMM, in line with its mandate which covers all of Ukraine, and international human rights actors should have full, free and unhindered access to the peninsula.

We are deeply concerned that freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as freedom of peaceful assembly, are severely restricted. Journalists, human rights defenders and activists are especially targeted. Because of harassment from the de-facto authorities, a considerable number of residents have been forced to leave Crimea for fear of further persecution.

Since the illegal annexation of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars, who have suffered from repression and deportation in the past, are unacceptably persecuted, pressured and have their human rights gravely violated, including through the shutting down of Crimean Tatar media outlets, and the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, and the persecution of its leaders and members of their community. We reiterate that all Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and all ethnic and religious communities in the peninsula must be able to maintain and develop their culture, education, identity and cultural heritage traditions, which are currently threatened by Russia's illegal annexation. Destructive actions against the peninsula's cultural heritage, such as archaeological treasures, artworks, museums or historical sites, which continue unabated, must stop.

We are also concerned about the enforcement of the new illegal legislation imposed by the de-facto authorities that only Russian citizens are allowed to own land in assigned "border areas" of the peninsula. This is yet another breach of Ukrainian sovereignty. Such policy means that unless the landowner holds a Russian passport, they are, in effect, either deprived of their property rights or forced to acquire Russian citizenship.

It is also regrettable that many residents in Crimea face difficulties in the enjoyment of their social and economic rights. Russian citizenship, illegally and even forcefully imposed on all Crimean residents, continues to be used by the de-facto authorities as a pre-condition for accessing health care, public services and exercising the right to work. According to reports of Crimean Human Rights Group, at least 25 000 people in Crimea have been subjected to unlawful conscription. The practice is yet another flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of Emir-Usein Kuku and his five co-defendants, Oleh Prykhodko, Enver Omerov, Riza Omerov and Ayder Dzhapparov. We also urge Russia to immediately release the freelance correspondent Vladislav Yesipenko as well as members of civic journalism initiative "Crimean Solidarity": Osman Arifmemetov, Marlen Asanov, Remzi Bekirov, Timur Ibragimov, Server Mustafayev, Seyran Saliev, Amet Suleymanov, Ruslan Suleymanov, Rustem Sheikhaliev and all others who have been detained and sentenced in breach of international law.

The EU welcomes the diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and will consider concrete Ukrainian ideas in this regard, in line with the EU non-recognition policy.

European Council President Charles Michel and High Representative Josep Borrell will participate in the first Summit of the “International Crimean Platform” to be held in Kyiv in August.

The European Union remains fully committed to the sovereignty, and territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including Crimea. We therefore condemn Russia’s illegal annexation, which we will not recognise. Crimea is part of Ukraine.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.