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CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT





RUSSIAN OCCUPATION POLICY IN CRIMEA IN 2016: SOCIETY “COLONIZATION”

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF 2016 TENDENCIES

Following the establishment of control over the territory, in 2014-2015 Russia started to introduce its governance and legislation, as well as establishing control over all state and public institutions in Crimea. In 2016 the focus of occupation policy shifted to establishing control over the society in Crimea. The Russian Federation tries to colonize the society, to make it a part of Russian society and to destroy all connections with the mainland of Ukraine. **Due to this fact in 2016 systematic policy of marginalization of anyone who disagree with occupation and division of the society into “law-abiding” citizens and “extremists” was introduced.** The instruments of this policy are criminal and administrative law, pro-government media pressure and state officials’ rhetoric.

On April 26, 2016 the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people was recognized as an extremist organization and was banned by “the Supreme Court” of Crimea. On September 29, 2016 this judgment was left in force by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. The ban of Mejlis means criminalization of all Crimean Tatars, especially those, who are politically active, and recognizing them as extremists. The Mejlis is not only 33 members of this body; it is a whole people’s self-governing system. The Mejlis is also 2500 members of the local Mejlises, 350 members of the Kurultai and all Crimean Tatar people, who elects the Kurultai and participates in the events organized by the local Mejlises. **The ban of Mejlis provides a legal background for arrest of any people’s representative.** In 2016, the criminal cases on separatism were initiated against Ilmi Umerov, the deputy chairman of the Mejlis, and Suleiman Kadyrov, the member of the Feodosia city Mejlis. This year 10 Mejlis members were subjected to administrative liability for the participation in the Mejlis meeting after it was banned.

Another object of marginalization is the religious Crimean Tatars as well as persons of other ethnic origin practicing Islam. Mass detentions, searches and arrests were held in the religious communities within the so-called “Hizb ut-Tahrir” case. Within this case, almost any Muslim could be accused of terrorism. Mass arrests, searches and propaganda create impression that Muslims are dangerous to society. In 2016, 15 persons were detained as suspects within the case in Yalta, Bakhchisarai, Simferopol. Six of them were subjected to forced psychiatric examination. Four persons detained in 2015 in Sevastopol on this case (Ruslan Zeitullaev Rustem Vaitov, Yurii (Nuri) Primov and Ferat Saifullaev), were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. The investigation of these cases was conducted with serious violations of procedural guarantees, reliable evidence of the defendants’ membership in the organization were not provided to the court. Human Rights Center “Memorial” recognized them as political prisoners. It is also important to note that the Mejlis representatives (Ilmi Umerov) and the persons accused within the “Hizb ut-Tahrir” case were subjected to forced psychiatric examination, which without control and fair trial guarantees might have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of defendants.

The third target for the marginalization is Ukraine as a state and any person supporting the territorial integrity. **The Russian propaganda disseminates the message that Ukraine is a terrorist state, and consequently anyone supporting it is a dangerous terrorist.** Within this policy de facto authorities initiated the “sabotage” case. In August 2016 without any explanation Russia has blocked the checkpoints at the administrative border, three days later the Federal Security Service declared the prevention of the terrorist acts, organized by Ukraine and the group of “saboteurs” in Crimea. State officials claimed the act of aggression by Ukraine and that nine persons had been detained, two persons were killed. During the next weeks the personalities for four detained were revealed, no information about other persons detained or killed were provided. In



October–November 2016 five more persons have been detained within this case. As within “Hizb ut-Tahrir” case the reliable evidence of the guilt of accused was not provided. Some accused publicly declared about tortures police used to get confession. In this way using the actual for many states “war against terror”, Russia labels secular and religious Crimean Tatars and persons with pro-Ukrainian views as “terrorists” and “extremists”.

Two other tendencies within the occupation policy of Russia is militarization of the peninsula and strengthening the occupation state system. In 2016 Russia continued modernization of the military bases, increasing the number of military personnel and military vehicles, manoeuvres of military vehicles and trainings in the peninsula. The situation at the administrative border in August 2016 has been very illustrative. Ukrainian military reported the numerous provocations these days, including concentration the additional military along the administrative border, usage of small arms and maneuvers in zero-kilometer zone, surveillance drones and illumination of the Ukrainian positions. Despite the appeared stability, the military escalation is still possible. In Crimea Russia creates the atmosphere of insecurity and threat.

The occupation state system was, first of all, strengthened by the parliamentary elections in September 2016, following which the representatives of Crimea are now present in the Duma. Crimea Federal district was liquidated and Crimea was included into Southern Federal district, and thus integrated into the federal administrative system. As before the appointments of state officials from the mainland of Russia, rearrangements and relocations of state officials took place. The recent tendency within this area is suppression of any criticism by the supporters of the occupation regime. 2016 witnessed dispersal of several pro-Russian demonstrations and arrests of pro-Russian activists and officials, protesting against corruption and economic problems. **Russia demonstrates that any criticism is allowable in Crimea.**



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

JANUARY 2016

In January 2016 persecutions of the Crimean Tatars and pro-Ukrainian activists continued, one Crimean Tatar disappeared.

1.

On January 20, 2016, Kyiv “district court” of Simferopol **granted the FSB investigator’s request regarding the detention of the people’s deputy of Ukraine, Mustafa Djemilev**. “Investigator” and “prosecutor” justified their request by the fact that Mustafa Djemilev “is hiding from an investigation and court proceedings and can exert pressure on the witnesses.

On January 25, 2016, in Alupka, 21 years old Crimean Tatar Mujedin Alvapov, was arrested in the relation of the allegations of the cars’ arson in Yalta. According to the deputy chairman of Mejlis Nariman Djelal, Alvapov’s family was active in civic engagements and constantly took part in various civil and political activities. There is a probability that the arrest of Alvapov aimed to exert pressure on the family.

On January 15, 2016, during the hearings of the “February 26 ” case, Russian armed forced detained a Crimean journalist Zair Akadirov. The journalist was taken to the “district” police, the record was filed, and he was released. In addition, on January 26, the detention term for the suspects of the case, Ahtem Cheygoz, Mustafa Degermendgy, and Ali Asanov was prolonged until March 8, 2016.

In Djankoy, Crimean “law enforcers” came with an inspection to the Crimean Tatars’ children center “Elif”. As noted by the center’s manager, Lutfiye Zudiyeva, during the “inspection” the child’s literature was confiscated, armed forces were interested in the questions connected to religion. Enforced disappearances of the Crimean Tatars continue. **On January 7, in Simferopol, Ernest Ablyazimov of 1971 year of birth disappeared**. According to his relatives, Ablyazimov left his house in the evening of January 4, 2016, and until now there is no information about his whereabouts. The last time he was seen at the bus station of Simferopol on January 4.

On January 4, the Russian armed forces in Crimea several times summoned for questioning the activist of the Ukrainian cultural center (UCC) in Crimea, the director of the Feodosia branch of the Library of the Ukrainian league, Iryna Danilovich. The questions she was asked concerned her activities within the framework of the Center in Crimea. The armed forces were interested in the list of the participants of the cultural center, and also in the plans of the organization for 2016.

On January 20, The Russian Prosecutor’s Office in Crimea completed investigation of the case of **Andrey Kolomiyets**, 1993 year of birth. He is accused in the assassination attempt of the “Berkut” members during Maidan events in Kyiv in 2014 and storing drugs in large amounts. He is detained now. The criminal case is transferred to Kyiv “district court” of Simferopol for the review. This is an example of the Russian repressive justice, when a citizen of another state who committed an action in relation of another non-citizen of the Russian Federation on the territory of a foreign country. In fact, this case is one of the precedents where Russian legislation is used in accordance with the extra-territorial principle.

At the “court” of Razdolnenkskyi district of Crimea the **criminal case against a Ukrainian citizen, Vladimir Baluha**, is being conducted. The inhabitant of the village Serebryanka was charged with a car theft, but during the search no signs of a car were detected. Eventually, the criminal case was filed in accordance with the Article 319 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “insult of the authorities”. Interest of the occupying forces in Vladimir Baluha started in spring 2015. FSB officials came to his house and their attention was drawn by the Ukrainian flag hanging in his place from 2013. That’s when he was suspected in the theft of the tractor’s spare parts, but criminal case has not been initiated.



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On January 20, The Russian Prosecutor’s Office in Crimea completed investigation of the case of Andrey Kolomiyets, 1993 year of birth



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

FEBRUARY 2016

February 2016 witnessed intensification of repressions by the Russian law enforcement agencies against the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar peoples and Crimean Muslims, as well as the continuing militarization of the peninsula.

The so-called 'prosecutor's office' of Crimea appealed to the so-called 'Supreme Court' of Crimea on **recognition of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar peoples as an extremist organization and ban** its activities on the peninsula. Mejlis is a Crimean Tatar representative body, represented by a board of 33 members at the central level, and more than 2,000 members of 250 local Mejlises. Moreover, as a self-governing body Mejlis is not registered as a public organization or a political party, and its membership is not formalized. The perspective ban of Mejlis in Crimea will, firstly, completely **destroy the indigenous self-government** of the Crimean Tatars, and secondly, will provide legal grounds for **massive persecution** - almost every Crimean Tatar took part in events organized by the Mejlis, or is in contact with its representatives. This trial will lead to increased threats, searches and detentions, as well as mass prosecution of the Crimean residents. A total ban of Mejlis would enable the occupying power to suppress any activity of the Crimean Tatars, and to divide the community.

The **series of mass raids** on the Crimean Tatars on suspicion in involvement in the activities of "Hizb ut-Tahrir" took place. On February 11, 2016, at least **12 persons** were detained, out of them 4 persons remained under arrest on charges of facilitating terrorism. The activities of Islamic organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir", legal in most countries of the world, are implied to be 'terrorism'. Before the occupation of Crimea, "Hizb ut-Tahrir" had not more than a thousand supporters in Crimea, what is less than 0.3% of the general Crimean Tatar population in Crimea. In the Russian Federation, "Hizb ut-Tahrir is prohibited as a terrorist organization, and the security forces uses the narrative of 'war against terrorism' as a method of "legal" pressure on the Crimean Muslims. The searches took place not only at the alleged members of the organization and activists, but also among ordinary Muslim believers.

The **militarization** of the peninsula takes place. De facto authorities have renewed exploitation of the military airport in Kherstones cape in Sevastopol, not functioning before. It is planned to deploy there the helicopters and drones and to construct the military base. In Dzhankoy a battalion of air troops will be additionally located in 2017-2018 years. In 2020 it is planned to convert the battalion into a regiment. In addition, in February 2016, the sudden inspection of combat readiness of troops of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation and military exercises were conducted. Due to these military maneuvers intense movement of military vehicles was observed in Sevastopol and other cities of Crimea as well as along the administrative border with the mainland Ukraine. **Mass mobilization of reservists** was held to participate in the military exercises. At this point, the militarization of the peninsula destroys the established economic connections, local businesses gradually move on to provide services to military units and military troops, which inevitably leads to degradation of economic life and deterioration of living standards of the local population.



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CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

MARCH 2016

In March 2016 the main trends observed are the following: further restrictions on the activities of the Mejlis and establishment of “new bodies” of the Crimean Tatar self-government; newly-initiated criminal cases against the activists; problems with the implementation of the Federal Crimea development program, and a ban on the Ukrainian automobile license plates.

1.

“ On March 22, searches were conducted at houses of the Kurultai delegates - Uchkun Devletshaeva, Remzi Muratova and Shevket Usmanov

On March 21, 2016 a session of the **Russian Federation Security Council** was conducted in Crimea with the participation of its head - Nikolai Patrushev. During the session he paid special attention to the threat from foreign preachers. The next day, on March 22, **searches were conducted** at houses of the Kurultai delegates - Uchkun Devletshaeva, who is also the head of the Krasnogvardeisk regional Mejlis, Remzi Muratova and Shevket Usmanov. The searches and interrogations of other persons took place. The legal proceedings on the recognition of the **Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar peoples** as an extremist organization continues, another court sitting was held. In the compact settlement of the Crimean Tatars the Russian administration started to establish TOSGs - **territorial organs of self-government**. As of March 5, five bodies were established, another four are to be set up. Due to the pressure on the Mejlis, many grass-root activists are forced to join them. Deputy head of the Simferopol occupational administration Teyfuk Gararov directly confirmed that TOSGs are designed to replace

2.

“ So-called ‘prosecutor of Crimea’ mentioned new criminal cases on extremism - 50 Berkut employees were recognized as victims

Alexander Kostenko’s lawyer Dmitriy Sotnik published information about **three prisoners**, transported to the Russian Federation from Crimea in 2014. The only facts known about them is that the sentences were handed down for the crimes committed before the annexation of Crimea, and the convicts were sent to serve the sentence in Russia. Communication with them is almost absent, they refused of the Russian Federation citizenship and the consul is not allowed to meet them. The situation is complicated by the fact that on March 25, the Russian Federation Ombudsman Ella Pamfilova left the office, and even a weak contact with the Ukrainian Ombudsman was terminated. So-called ‘prosecutor of Crimea’ Natalia Poklonskaya mentioned **new criminal** cases on extremism - **50 Berkut employees were recognized as victims**. A trial over Maidan activist Andrei Kolomiets started. On March, 10 the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine sent a request to the Ministry of Justice of Russian Federation to return to Ukraine Oleg Sentsov, Alexander Kolchenko, Yuri Afanasiev and Gennady Soloshenko to serve their sentences as citizens of Ukraine. Subsequently, the Russian authorities have officially confirmed their Ukrainian citizenship, making that possible.

3.

“ The economic situation in the peninsula is worsening due to problems with the implementation of the Federal Targeted program

The economic situation in the peninsula is worsening due to problems with the implementation of the Federal Targeted program (FTP) for the development of Crimea. On March 23, the so-called “prime minister” of Crimea Sergey Aksenov declared to take responsibility for the implementation of the Federal Targeted program only if the local government would distribute the funding. Currently the program is controlled by the local authorities and the Ministry of Economic Development of Russian Federation. As response, Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev accused de facto authorities of Crimea in disrupting the development plans and failing to use the appropriate development tools.

4.

“ The residents of the peninsula were shocked by requirement to change Ukrainian sample vehicle license plates to ones the “Crimean” sample

The residents of the peninsula were shocked by **requirement to change Ukrainian sample vehicle license plates** to ones the “Crimean” sample. Under the Russian Federation legislation, residents of Crimea can use license plates of the Ukrainian sample until April 1, 2016 and before April 1, they had to be replaced by ones of Russian Federation sample. This caused huge queues of cars in the points re-registration. However, vehicles with license plates of Russian Federation sample, issued in Crimea, cannot be moved to the mainland of Ukraine. This has forced many car owners to put their cars for sale on the mainland of Ukraine, in particular, in Kherson



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

APRIL 2016

In April 2016, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar peoples has been banned by de facto authorities in Crimea and in the Russian Federation. Searches at independent journalists' premises and pressure on them have become another tendency this month. In April 2016, two more Crimean Tatars were detained in relation to Hizb-ut Tahrir case, massive inspections and detentions continue to take place.

Mejlis has been declared "an extremist organization" by the court decision and all **further activities of the organization have been banned**. The ban also covered the prohibition of the network of regional mejlises recognized as branches of the national Mejlis (even though this is not the case as local mejlises are composed of the members of the regional communities of the Crimean Tatars and are elected locally). After the introduction of the ban, few thousand members of the national Mejlis, 2.5 thousand members of regional mejlises, and everyone who provided any support or contacted mejlises in any way- i.e. practically all Crimean Tatars- are under the threat of criminal prosecution.

April was marked with intensified repressions against independent media, which is almost absent in Crimea. For example, **criminal case with accusations in extremism was opened against Nikolay Semena**, a famous Crimean journalist. The cause of the criminal charges, as the so-called 'Prosecutor's Office' reports, was the publication of an article in the project **Crimea.Reality** containing "calls for the violation of the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation". In addition, within this case, Russian forces conducted **searches** of five addresses in Simferopol, one address in Yalta, and one address in Sevastopol. Besides Nikolay Semena, the searches were conducted at other journalists', including Ruslana Lyumanova and Leniara Abibulayeva. The so-called 'Prosecutor's Office' initiated investigation of the Internet-project **Crimea.Reality**, which resulted in the decision of the so-called 'Prosecutor General' **to block the access to the project website** because of its "extremist materials". This situation has led to the suspension of work of the last independent journalists, which will significantly undermine the access to information on the peninsula.

The repressions against the Crimean Muslims continue. Thus, in the relation to the charges on the membership of the Muslim organization "Hizb-ut-Tahrir", on April 18, the Russian forces conducted a search and **detained two Crimean Tatars, Alimov Refat and Jepparov Arsen** in the village Krasnokamenka. According to the so-called 'Prosecutor's Office', the detainees are suspected in participation in the activities of the terrorist organization. Kyiv district court of Simferopol decided to arrest the detainees until June 18. Until the annexation, Muslim movement "Hizb-ut-Tahrir" functioned on the territory of Crimea absolutely legally, but afterwards all its supporters were declared members of the terrorist organization.

April was marked with the massive inspections in the settlements of the Crimean Tatars. According to the law enforcement officers, inspections take place to "identify illegal migrants". In the village Pionerskoye of Simferopol district, Russian forces detained thirty-five customers in the cafe. All the detainee were Muslims and Crimean Tatars. The detainees have been taken to the Center of the resistance to extremism and were released few hours later after fingerprints and saliva samples on DNA had been taken. On April 6, five Crimean Tatars were detained in the bakery in the village Maryino, next to Simferopol. Few hours later, they were released. On April 7, similar raids took place on the markets of Simferopol, with the detention of people and fingerprinting. As illegal migration has never been an issue in Crimea, similar inspections prove to serve as a **collection of comprehensive information about the Crimean Tatars**, including fingerprinting and DNA.

1.

“ Mejlis has been declared “an extremist organization”

2.

“ The criminal case with accusations in extremism was opened against Nikolay Semena, a famous Crimean journalist

3.

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4.

“ Inspections prove to serve as a collection of comprehensive information about the Crimean Tatars, including fingerprinting and DNA



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

MAY 2016

May was marked with mass detentions and inspections of the Crimean Tatars, prosecution of the Crimean Muslims and the representatives of the Mejlis. All the ceremonies on the anniversary of the deportation of Crimean Tatars - 18 May were banned in the territory of Crimea. On May 25, Erwin Ibragimov - Member of Bakhchisaray regional Mejlis was abducted.

On May 6, 2016, more than **100 Muslims** were arrested following a prayer in the mosque in Simferopol region. Few hours later all the detainees were released but ordered to come later to the police station. On May 7, 2016, in Yalta **25 Crimean Tatars** have been detained for inspection and collecting fingerprints. On May 10 2016, **mass checks of retail outlets of Crimean Tatars** and the collection of fingerprints taken place in the market in Ai-Petri. On May 12, **series of searches and arrests took place** in Bakhchisaray. On May 26, in the settlement of Kamenka (Simferopol district) **Timur Osmanov, Hayser Khalilov and Arthur Haltaev** were searched. Afterwards that they were taken to the Center for counteraction to extremism and were released only at night. Searches on the same day also took place in Alupka and Hoshkeldi district of Simferopol. Official reason for these searches and detentions was the fight against illegal migration. In practice, the searches lead to a massive collection of personal data, fingerprints, saliva for DNA and other. It seems that the de facto authorities collect system database of the Crimean Tatars residing in Crimea.

On May 25, in Crimea a member of the executive board of the World Congress of the Crimean Tatars and a member of Bakhchisaray regional Mejlis **Erwin Ibragimov was abducted**. On the night of 24-25 May, people allegedly in the uniform of traffic police abducted Erwin Ibragimov. In the video, filmed with surveillance cameras located in the nearby store can be seen that Ibragimov tried to escape, but he was bundled into a car and drove away. To date, there is no information about him.

On May 12, a **criminal case on "extremism" was initiated against Ilmi Umerov** - deputy Chairman of the Mejlis. Umerov was accused that, in March 2016, in a live TV channel ATR, he publicly called "for a violation of the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation." On May 12, in Bakhchisaray **Zevri Abseitov, Remzi Memetov, Rustem Abiltarov and Enver Mamutov were arrested as suspects in the "Hizb ut-Tahrir" case**. Three of them are accused of involvement in "terrorist organization", another one in the organization of "terrorist activity". On May 13, Kyiv District Court of Simferopol left detained in custody for two months.

In May, former CEO of ATR channel **Lilya Budzhurova** received a warning "about the inadmissibility of violation of legislation on countering extremist activity". The occasion was the publication of an appeal to help the children of prisoners of Muslims of Crimea.

Militarization of Crimea continues: at the new landfill Chauda near Kerch the training of pilots of SU-24M and TU-22M3 long-range bombers began, the use of rocket and bomb weapons against sea and shore purposes has been also practiced. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Russian military in Crimea compose of about 24 thousand troops, 613 tanks and armored vehicles, 162 artillery systems, around 100 combat aircrafts, 56 helicopters, 16 coastal missile systems, 34 combat surface ships and four submarines. At the same time, the agency predicts that by 2020-2025 the number of Russian troops will be increased in 1.5-2 times.



1.

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3.

“ According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Russian military in Crimea compose of about 24 thousand troops



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

JUNE 2016

June was marked by continued pressure on the Crimean Tatars and the increased pressure on the Ukrainian organizations. The participant of the Revolution of Dignity Andrii Kolomiyets was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. Also, the first facts of repressions against pro-Russian activists not related to the conflict have been observed.

Arrest of the two accused in the case of Hizb-ut Tahrir **Refat Dzhepparov and Arsen Alimov** was extended until September 8, 2016. It was adjourned **the trial on the cases of other defendants - Ferat Sayfullaev , Nuri (Yuri) Primov, Rustem Vaitov and Ruslan Zeytullaev**. The charge is based on a breach of several points of the article "the organization of the activities of a terrorist organization and participation in the activities of the organization", which sanctions up to 20 years imprisonment. During the process, three witnesses of the prosecution retracted their testimony, acknowledging that different data in comparison with interrogations have been specified in the protocols.

The wife of the political prisoner, deputy chairman of the **Mejlis Akhtem Chygoz Elmira Ablyalimova** reported about the danger to her life, in particular in connection with the invasion of the unknown person into her house. Akhtem Chygoz is the main accused in the "February 26" case.

There is no progress in the case of the **abducted member of the Mejlis of Bakhchsarai Erwin Ibragimov**. In general, all cases related to the disappearance and murders of the Crimean Tatars are characterized by inaction of the investigating authorities.

Kyiv district "court" of Simferopol sentenced a participant of **the Revolution of dignity Andrii Kolomiyets to 10 years of imprisonment**. So-called "the prosecutor's office" accused Kolomiyets of attempted murder of two employees of the Crimean special forces "Berkut" in Kyiv, as well as storage and transportation of drugs on a large scale. Human rights activists reported the falsification of prosecution's evidence. As in other similar cases, a Russian court has accused foreign citizen for acts allegedly committed against other foreign nationals in the territory of another state. Thus, the Russian authorities have set a precedent for arrests and prosecution for any actions committed prior to the occupation.

Also the pressure on the Ukrainian organizations on the peninsula continues. Sevastopol "court" obliged the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate to pay a fine of half a million rubles and to free some of the temple premises. Also Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea Clement said that the pressure on him has been increased in recent years, and he began to receive death threats. It is possible that the pressure can go on the parish church.

There is a tendency in preventing any criticism of the de facto authorities, not even related to the armed conflict and occupation. So, On June 14, the chief editor of the newspaper "Argumenty Nedeli - Krym" **Oleksii Salov was arrested on a charge of fraud in 2012**. After the occupation he worked as an editor of the newspaper for two years, critic of the authorities in the newspaper did not relate to the occupation and was limited to economic issues and corruption. The newspaper staff connects the arrest with the journalist's professional activities. This is the first case of the arrest of a Russian journalist in Crimea by the occupation authorities.

In Alushta on June 4 Russian police dispersed a demonstration of local residents who protested against the installation of the amusement park on the waterfront. Despite the fact that the action was carried out in accordance with Russian law, **Alushta city council member Pavel Stepanchenko, who actively supported the occupation of Crimea, was detained**. This shows that the de facto "authorities" do not accept any criticism, even from pro-Russian Crimeans.

1. Arrest of the two accused in the case of Hizb-ut Tahrir Refat Dzhepparov and Arsen Alimov was extended until September 8, 2016

2. Kyiv district "court" of Simferopol sentenced a participant of the Revolution of dignity Andrii Kolomiyets to 10 years of imprisonment

3. There is a tendency in preventing any criticism of the de facto authorities, not even related to the armed conflict and occupation





CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

JULY 2016

In July there have been pivotal reshuffles of the Russian leadership in Crimea and the accession to the Southern Federal District. The trials of the Crimean Tatars continue to take place. 20-year-old Crimean citizen, Maxim Filatov, has been sentenced to six years of imprisonment.

On July 26, North Caucasus District Military Court sentenced 20-year-old Maxim Filatov, a Crimean resident, to six years of imprisonment. The charges against Maxim Filatov held that, allegedly, he set **on fire mosque "Chukurcha" in Simferopol in July 2014**, and in August he threw an explosive device into the building of the prosecutors. Maxim Filatov fully admitted his guilt, his mother and his lawyer refused any help from the Ukrainian consul and communication with the media, which might be a sign of the pressure from the investigators. **Two other Crimean residents, members of the battalion "Azov" Alexey Lysenko and Alexander Kernis**, have been also featured in the case as suspects in facilitating terrorist activities and "ordering" a terrorist attack at the prosecutor's office. They themselves connect these allegations with the attempts of the Russian authorities to prevent the return to Crimea of the people who participated in the fighting in the ATO zone.

The trials of the Crimeans, accused in the involvement in "Hizbut-Tahrir", declared a terrorist organization by the Russian Federation, continue. **The Kyiv District Court of Simferopol extended for three months the arrest of Enver Mamutova, Remzi Memetova, Zevri Abseitovu and Rustem Abiltarovu**, detained in Bakhchisarai in May this year. In July the Court rejected the appeal of the defendants' lawyers regarding their arrest, with judicial process featuring numerous violations on the part of judges. Besides, on July 20 judicial trial of the accused in the case of "February 26" resumed, the case was dealt in the private Court sittings.

Federal service on financial monitoring has included 22 Crimeans to the list of terrorists and extremists. The list includes political prisoners in the "case Sentsova" Oleg Sentsov, Alexander Kolchenko, Alexey Chernyi, and recently released Gennady Afanasiev. Among the other persons there are: blogger Yuri Ilchenko, Crimean journalist Anna Andrievska, head of the Civil Corps "Azov-Crimea" Stanislav Krasnov, and a number of other citizens of Ukraine.

The key event of the month was the changes in the local bodies vertical. On July 28, the "governor" of Sevastopol **Sergey Menyailo** who had a conflict with the city parliament **was dismissed** by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation. The former deputy minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Ovsyannikov was appointed at this position.

Also by the presidential decree **"Crimean Federal District" was merged with the Southern Federal District.** Formally, the "Republic of Crimea" has lost its special status - the system of federal districts is an institution for monitoring of the implementation of the federal policy. Deprivation of the status of a separate district of Crimea shows distrust to local officials. The changes would continue with the elections to the State Duma in the autumn of 2016. The list of candidates from the governing party "United Russia" includes Sergey Aksenov, "deputy prime ministers" Mikhail Sheremet and Ruslan Balbec, as well as the "prosecutor" Natalia Poklonskaya. Their predictable electoral victory could be a plausible reason for appointment of the "reliable" officials from Russia. It is important that the resignation was preceded by an information campaign in the Russian media, explaining the incompetence of local officials. However, Russian officials are lack understanding of the specifics of the region and the mentality of the population that could lead to degradation of the region. Also, the arrival of new people may provoke a conflict with the remaining leaders of the local elites. **In the next six months the situation in the peninsula will be determined by the process of the change of the local leadership.**

1.



Maxim Filatov, a Crimean citizen, to six years of imprisonment. Two other Crimean residents have been also featured in the case

2.



The Kyiv District Court of Simferopol extended for three months the arrest of Enver Mamutova, Remzi Memetova, Zevri Abseitovu and Rustem Abiltarovu, detained in Bakhchisarai in May this year

3.



By the presidential decree "Crimean Federal District" was merged with the Southern Federal District



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

AUGUST 2016

August was marked first of all by the escalation of violence at the administrative border between Crimea and the mainland Ukraine, provoked by Russia. Persecutions of the Crimean Tatars and activists continue in Crimea, as well as the growing trend of suppression of dissent pro-Russian Crimeans.

On August 7, the Russians blocked the functioning of all the checkpoints of the administrative border without any explanation. In the north of Crimea the internet was cut off, there was a concentration of Russian military vehicles along the administrative border and the Russian military maneuvers in the peninsula. On August 10 the FSB published a statement on the prevention of terrorist acts, prepared by Ukrainian subversive group, attempting to enter Crimea at night of August 6-7, and the detection of the Ukrainian network of agents. Senior officials of the Russian Federation have **declared an act of aggression by Ukraine**, and their right to response. It was stated that during a clash two members of the Russian security forces and two "saboteurs" were killed, nine people were arrested. Today there is public information only about three detained citizens of Ukraine - **Evgen Panov, Andrii Zahitii and Redvan Suleymanov**. They all had confessed, and the alleged tortures are reported, lawyers are not allowed to them. At the same time, the situation on the administrative border has been tense - **a series of provocations were reported from the Russian side**, including military maneuvers in the zero zone, shooting on boundary line and tossing stun grenades.

Persecutions and pressure on the Crimean Tatars and activists continue. On August 11, the Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis **Ilmi Umerov was directed to the forensic psychiatric examination** by the decision of the Crimean Russian-controlled court. Ilmi Umerov got sick during the trial, he was taken directly from the courtroom to cardiology department with a suspected heart attack. On August 18 he **was forcibly transferred from cardiology department to a psychiatric clinic**, his health deteriorated sharply, and his life is under threat due to absence of the necessary qualified medical treatment and unsatisfactory conditions.

The arrest involved in the case "February 26" **Mustafa Degermendzhi has been extended until October 8**. The trial on the same case against the Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis Akhtem Chygoz, accused of organizing the riots, continues. On August 6 the **searches** were conducted in Bakhchisarai in the home of **Refat Mazalov**, and on August 23 in the village of Lenino in the home of **Riza Muslimov**. **Criminal case on charges of inciting hatred** (Part 1. Art. 282) was initiated against the Ukrainian activist **Larisa Kytayska**. On August 12 she got the documents on the initiation of the case.

The trend of recent months is the **suppression of pro-Russian Crimeans protest activity**. On August 20, Russian police **dispersed the action "Deceived Crimea"**, **several activists were detained**. This action was first authorized by the municipal authorities of Simferopol, but the day before the rally, the organizers were informed that this place and time are assigned to another event, and the event should be postponed. Despite this, according to various estimates, from 80 to 200 people came to support the action in Simferopol. **Organizer of the rally were the pro-Russian social activist Ilya Bolshedvorov and "Ataman of the Crimean Cossacks" Sergei Akimov**. It was also planned to hold such a rally in Yalta, but the city authorities did not give the permission.



1.

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CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2016

Among the main events of September are the pressure on the members of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars and final ban of the activities of the representative body of the Crimean Tatars by Russian court, the first verdict in the case of Hizb ut-Tahrir and the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation.

On September, 7 Ilmi Umerov was released from a psychiatric hospital, where he was forcibly placed in August. Forensic psychiatric examination found him healthy, but a criminal investigation on charges of extremism against Umerov is continuing.

On September, 22 Mejlis members held a meeting at the home of Umerov, shortly after which the participants of the meeting were summoned for questioning by the Centre for Combating Extremism, and were brought to administrative responsibility under Art. 20.28 of the Code of Administrative Offences. On September 7 Ali Khamzin was fined, on September, 28 Ilmi Umerov, on September 30 abuse protocols were handed another 6 members of the Mejlis.

On September 29, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation upheld the decision of the Crimean court to recognize the Mejlis an extremist organization and to ban its activities.

In September, there was a wave of searches of the Crimean Tatars: on September 2, Russian security forces conducted a search in the home of journalist of Internet portal "Crimean Tatars" Elmaz Abduvelieva; on September 6 a search was conducted in Simferopol mosque, during which Russian security forces planted banned literature in the mosque, and on the basis of this they plan to initiate a criminal case on charges of possession of extremist materials; on September 14 searches were conducted in Pervomaisky district of Crimea in the village Grishino in the house of the local Chairman of the Mejlis Enver Alyadinov and his father; on September 28 relatives of Deputy Coordinator of Civil blockade of Crimea Izet Gdanov and Dilara Misiratova whose sons are fighting in the ATO, were searched. After the search, a woman was detained in the department for several hours.

On September 7 the military District Court in Rostov-on-Don has sentenced the Crimean Muslims accused of creating and participating in Islamic organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir". Fe-rat Sayfullaev, Rustem Vaitov and Yurii Primov, accused of involvement in a terrorist organization, were sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment in a penal colony, Ruslan Zeytullaev was sentenced to 7 years in prison. On September 28 the prosecutor's office appealed the court decision.

Investigations against eight other defendants in the case "Hizb ut-Tahrir" continue. The Court dismissed the appeal of Muslim Aliev and extended detention until December 8, 2016. The children of Emir Usein Kuku are under pressure; security officers came to school and intimidated the children.

In occupied Crimea elections to the State Duma were held. "Prosecutor" Natalia Poklonskaya and "Deputy Prime Ministers" Mikhail Sheremet, Ruslan Balbec, as well as Konstantin Baharev, Andrei Kozenko, Svetlana Savchenko and Pavel Shperov. According to the occupation authorities, voter turnout was 49%. International organizations did not recognize the elections in the occupied territory.

In the period September 5 — 10 command-staff exercises "Caucasus — 2016" with the participation of all the bodies of military control and all kinds of troops, including aviation, were conducted in Crimea. Dozens flights (up to 40) of civilian aircrafts from Simferopol Airport were delayed because of the exercises.

One more large military unit of the Russian army — the 47th division of territorial defense formed in Crimea. The division, based in Sevastopol, will include reservists, who will be called for meetings several times a year, not only from Crimea, but also from Russia. The main task of the unit indicated the fight against "terrorists and saboteurs", the defense of facilities and disaster management. In addition, the Russian authorities are planning to use 10 Crimean enterprises to perform defense-industrial orders.

1.

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CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

OCTOBER 2016



1.

“ In October there have been new searches and six criminal cases against Crimean Tatars have been initiated

In October there have been new searches and six criminal cases against Crimean Tatars have been initiated. On October 14 in the suburbs of Simferopol five Crimean Tatars - Emil Dzhemadinov, Rustem Ismailov, Teimur and Uzeyir Abdullayev and Aider Saledinov were arrested on accusation of organization and participation in “Hizb ut-Tahrir” unit. The organization is recognized terrorist one by the Russian authorities. ‘Kyiv District Court’ of Simferopol decided on two-months arrest during the investigation for pre-trial period. The searches were carried out with numerous violations of legal procedures and guarantees. Detentions within “Hizb ut-Tahrir” case are held in the same manner: 4-6 persons are detained in certain area -Sevastopol, Yalta, Bakhchysarai, Simferopol, and security forces claim disclosure of a “terrorist cell” in a particular region. Thus, further arrests are not excluded within same logic. The policy of persecution on religious grounds led not only to intimidation of the Crimean Tatars, but also to tensions and hatred within the community (for example, some neighbors are afraid to communicate with families of detainees), and possible radicalization of the Crimean Tatars. In October, they were also searches in Bakhchisarai, in the houses of Enver and Asan Serverovy, and Enver Abduveliev, there were no detentions.

On October 11 the criminal case was initiated against a Crimean tatar activist, human rights defender and a member of Feodosiya Medjlis – Suleiman Kadyrov. On October 5 there was a search in his house, and on October 11 he was interrogated by security services. The same day Mr. Kadyrov was informed about initiating criminal case against him on article 280.1 because of his comment on the video ‘New Batallion’ on Facebook. The action and the sanction is disproportionate – one comment on social networks is punished by criminal liability with maximum punishment of four years of imprisonment. Moreover, such case could become a precedent for criminal liability for any comment in social networks.

2.

“ ix members of the Mejlis - Shevket Kaybullaev, Sadykh Tabah, Enver Kurtiev, Bekir Mamutov, Emine Avamileva and Dilyaver Akiev – were found guilty in violating art

De facto authorities in Crimea more and more often use the system of administrative offenses for pressure. In October, **six members of the Mejlis** - Shevket Kaybullaev, Sadykh Tabah, Enver Kurtiev, Bekir Mamutov, Emine Avamileva and Dilyaver Akiev – were found guilty in violating art. 20.28 “Organization of activity of a public or religious association, which activities were suspended” of the Administrative Code and **sentenced to fines** by Bakhchisaray “district court”. The reason was a meeting of the members of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar peoples at home of Ilmi Umerov. In case of future violation of the same article, criminal liability is prescribed.

On October 27 Sudak “court” re-examined the case against four Crimean Tatars accused of participating in the rally on May 18. The “court” appointed fines of 20 thousand rubles to Ablyakim Ablyakimov and Enver Chavush.

3.

“ Russian authorities have refused in transfer of Oleg Sentsov and Aleksander Kolchenko to Ukraine because of their Russian citizenship

In October the accused within the sabotage case – Eugen Panov and Andrey Zahtiy – were transferred to ‘Lefortovo’ prison in Moscow. Their families were not informed in the required procedure, lawyers and consul do not have access to the prisoners. This amounts to violation of international humanitarian law. In October, Russian authorities **have refused in transfer of Oleg Sentsov and Aleksander Kolchenko to Ukraine because of their Russian citizenship.**

There have been changes in the ‘government’ of Crimea. Igor Mikhaychenko was appointed as a new ‘vice-minister’. Due to absence of any biographic data in open sources and statement of Aksionov that Mikhaychenko is one of ‘little green men’, he has worked in security forces before. The position of ‘vice-prime minister on ethnicities’ was not appointed, but its functions were transferred to Aksionov. Also, new ‘minister’ of agriculture and new ‘minister’ of sport were appointed.



CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

NOVEMBER 2016

In November 2016 the persecution of the Crimean Tatars and civil activists at the peninsula continued. 'Sabotage' case got its development after August 2016: six new suspects were detained this month. Occupation authorities tend to use more and more often the framework of the 'fight against terrorism' to mask persecutions based on ethnic and political grounds and repressions at the peninsula.

On November 10, 2016 Russian security forces claimed the detention of three Ukrainian 'saboteurs' in Sevastopol. The 'saboteurs' turned out to be journalists and analytics of the research center 'Nomos' Dmitriy Shtyblikov and Aleksey Bessarabov, and a military pensioner, 2d rank captain, an employee of Ministry of Emergency Situation of Russian Federation, Vladymir Dudka. Dmitriy Shtyblikov is also a former Ukrainian military, who left the army before the occupation. Russian authorities accused them in cooperation with Ukrainian intelligence, preparation of sabotage acts and collecting the information about Black Sea Navy Fleet of Russia. They all are arrested for two months as suspects within article 281 para 2. On November 21, 2016 the Russian security forces claimed the arrest of two more suspects in preparation of sabotage acts – Gleb Shablyi and Aleksey Stognyi. They are former military of Ukrainian Navy. On November 22, 2016 Leonid Parkhomenko, 57, 2d rank captain was arrested on the accusation in espionage. This wave of arrests is inter alia aimed at deterrence of former Ukrainian military personnel, military pensioners, and civil employees of military bases staying in Crimea. Their general number in Crimea is around 10 000.

The trial of Akhtem Chyigoz is being continued. There are three-four court settings in a week, the witnesses are being interrogated by the court. Mr. Chyigoz takes part only via video conference and does not present physically in the court. The sentence is expected by February 2017. On November 18 the trial of two other accused within '26 February' case started – Ali Asanov and Mustafa Degermendzhi. Six accused within Hizb-ut Tahrir case – Muslim Aliev, Vadim Siruk, Enver Bekrov, Emir-Usein Kuku, Refat Alimov and Arsen Dzhepparov – were sent to the involuntary psychiatric expertise.

The searches took place in Otradnoe, Bakhchysaray district in the house of Sherif Ganiev and in Sofievka, Simferopol district in the house of a local entrepreneur Jusuf. The grounds for searches are unknown. On November 7, 2016 **Nedim Khalilov, coordinator of the organization 'Resistance Movement of the Crimean Tatars' was deported from Crimea** due to alleged violation of migration legislation and refusal to take Russian citizenship.

Eight doctors – Crimean Tatars - were dismissed from the Central district hospital in Belogorsk, despite the absence of any violations from their side. The doctors claim that the real reason for their dismissal is their participation in the 18 May demonstration in commemoration of 1944 Deportation.

On November 3, 2016 the leftist anarchist activist Sergey Vasilchenko has been arrested for dissemination of the extremist materials. In September 2016 he was arrested on accusation in graffiti drawings calling for elections' boycott in Evpatoria. Vasilchenko was forced to confess his guilt by police, following confession he was released.



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2.

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CRIMEA SITUATION REPORT

DECEMBER 2016

Two positive issues regarding the situation on human rights marked December: the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on human rights violations in Crimea, and the joint visit of Ombudsmen of Ukraine and Russia to Crimea. Unfortunately, this has not led to practical improvements of the situation on human rights - in December the political trials on the so-called cases of "February 26", "Hizb ut-Tahrir", "Saboteurs" have continued to be carried out. Well-known pro-Ukrainian activist Vladimir Baluh was arrested for alleged possession of weapons found during the search. Also, the new Attorney General was appointed in Crimea.

On December 19 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution "Situation on human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" by 70 votes "for" and 26 votes "against" and 77 abstentions. Thus, for the first time at the international level the human rights abuses by Russia in Crimea have been recognized. Moreover, the Russian Federation was recognized as the occupying state and Crimea - as the temporarily occupied territory.

On December 26 Ukrainian Ombudsman Valeriya Lutkovskaya together with the Ombudsman of the Russian Federation Tatyana Moskalkova visited the detention center in Simferopol. They met with the three political prisoners involved in the case "February 26" - Mustafa Dergemendzhi, Ahtem Chiygoz and Ali Asanov. In addition, there were resumed the negotiations on the transfer to Ukraine of 17 prisoners who exported from Crimea to the Russian prisons.

On December 10 Crimean activist Vladimir Baluh was arrested in the village Serebryanka of Razdolnenskiy district. During the search in his house ammunition and some TNT blocks were allegedly found. Vladimir did not hide his pro-Ukrainian position: he has Ukrainian flag and a sign with the name "Street of Heroes Heavenly Hundred" on his house. In February 2016, he was recognized guilty of insulting a police officer and sentenced to 320 hours of community service. Also on December 16 the Federal Security Service arrested Igor Movenko at the workplace in Sevastopol. In September Movenko was beaten for having the Azov regiment symbolics.

Evgeniy Panov and Andrey Zahtey, who are accused under the "saboteurs" case, sent complaints about the tortures by the Federal Security Service officers to the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation. Russian President Vladimir Putin personally rejected these statements at a press conference on December 23 and called the prisoners the Secret Services officers. Teymur Abdullayev, Uzeir Abdullayev, Aider Saledinov and Rustem Ismailov also reported about the tortures applied to them.

Russia's Supreme Court rejected an appeal against the verdict in the case of "Hizb ut-Tahrir." The court upheld the verdict of Nuri Primov, Ferat Sayfullaev, Rustem Vaitov. The case of Ruslan Zeytullaev, who was sentenced to 7 years in prison, has been sent for review. Most likely, the sentence would be revised in the direction of tightening. The process of stationary psychiatric examination for other suspects in the case of Hizb ut-Tahrir has continued. In December, Remzi Memetov, Enver Mamutov, Emir Usein Kuku, Vadim Siruk were sent for the examination.

For the position of the new "Attorney General" of Crimea a former deputy prosecutor of Moscow Oleg Kamshilov was appointed. He has worked in the Russian Federation Prosecutor's Office since 1992, and obviously is an experienced employee. His appointment in Crimea may be connected with the need to strengthen the investigating authorities, because today's political affairs are conducted with very grave violations.

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Prepared by NGO "CrimeaSOS".

Mission of "CrimeaSOS" is deoccupation and reintegration of Crimea and durable solutions of social problems induced by an armed conflict. The activities of the organization aim at the monitoring, analysis and reporting of the situation in Crimea and issues of internal displacement in Ukraine, individual assistance to internally displaced persons, victims of human rights violations, and other persons affected by an armed conflict, development of local communities and Ukrainian civil society, and advocacy for systematic developments in the state policies on the issues related to the armed conflict.

This document contains a selection of overviews on the situation in Crimea in 2016.

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