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It is a great privilege and honor to speak at this venue today.

I am deeply grateful to Helsinki Commission, its leadership and our esteemed moderator Orest Deychakivsky for hosting this very important round table. Even as a ten-year-old child growing up in Soviet Ukraine, I always knew of the Helsinki Commission. Back then I could not possibly know what exactly it did, but I knew it stood for something bigger that I could comprehend and imagine. I was right! -- it stands for democracy, human rights, rule of law and simply morally the right thing.

Most of you know the great importance of the topic I am going to speak with you about, but for those for whom it may seem a bit remote let me remind you the words of one of the greatest man William Allen White who said that “Wherever a free man is in chains we are threatened also, whoever is fighting for liberty is defending America”.

Another great man and our great President Franklin Roosevelt once said that “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end save victory.”

Ladies and Gentlemen I would like to thank you all for coming today to discuss our latest report “The Human Rights on Occupied Territory: Case of Crimea.” Thank you to the esteemed coauthors for their outstanding work and dedication to human rights, international law and order, global peace and security. I would like to extend my sincere and deepest gratitude to a very special woman, professor Mary Holland, who supervised the project. Thank you to David Glasgow, Assistant Director of the Public Interest Law Center for his guidance and support of this pro bono project. I would like to thank Matthew Mosner and Ethan Burger for their time and valuable comments to the early drafts.

Special thank you to all the editors designers, volunteers, experts who gave us their feedback on the second edition. And thank you to a wonderful team from VOLYA Institute for their superb work and dedication to the second edition of this report and making it a reality! Thank you to our Razom Partners for their support and understanding of the importance of the issues presented today.

A year ago at a different venue, in the United Nations, we gathered to discuss the legal dimensions of Russian actions in Ukraine, the occupation of Crimea and its illegal attempts to annex Ukrainian territory. To this day, the Russian Federation continues to occupy sovereign Ukrainian territory in Crimea and has violated international law by illegally seizing the Ukrainian peninsula. We still have to sort out all the implications and grave consequences of the illegal actions of the Russian

Federation in Ukraine and find a solution to restore Ukrainian sovereign territory for people of Ukraine and for us as the international community individually and together.

What is very clear, however, is that practice of human rights in occupied Crimea is dire and continues to deteriorate. Every day Ukrainian citizens in occupied Crimea face unprecedented oppression and limitations of their rights. Serious and consistent violations of the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of Crimeans have been well-documented by a variety of organizations including the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, international media outlets, reports from the undercover journalists within Crimea and various local organizations over the previous year. The illegitimate self-proclaimed Crimean and Russian authorities target those ethnic, religious, and national groups that oppose the occupation. Indigenous Crimean Tatars are frequently suspected of this sort of broadly defined “anti-Russian activity”.

To help address this situation, to build on those findings and create a pragmatic guide for people both within Crimea and outside of the peninsula to understand the legal framework of the situation and in attempt to sort out the legal chaos that has been created by the illegal actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, an international team of lawyers based at New York University School of law prepared this report as pro bono service.

The purpose of the report is to assist individuals in Crimea, Ukraine, as well as around the world, working in academia, governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and media to understand the nature of the human rights violations in the occupied territory, so that they are better equipped to defend and protect the internationally recognized expression of human rights.

The report or WHITE PAPER includes four parts and the Manual

We analyzed the human rights situation in occupied Crimea, placing it within the context of:

- applicable international standards, conventions and treaties;
- authorities and entities responsible for protecting and providing human rights;
- specific abuses of human rights by the self-proclaimed Crimean and Russian authorities;
- legal precedents that apply to the occupied territory, and its legal regime.

The authors examined the historical and legal context, defined the primary rights that are being violated, give recommendations on what steps people in Crimea can take and outline actions for organizations

In Part I we brought together several related threads to create the context for the current situation, covering:

- recent history, from Crimea's transfer in 1954 to the so called March 16, 2014 referendum to unify with the Russian Federation;
- the Russian Federation's use of force to occupy Crimea in 2014;
- post-World War II international agreements and treaties on states' sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In Part II we outlined and examined 21 distinct human rights that are provided for by international and domestic laws. We analyze each right individually with respect to international, Ukrainian and Russian law. The report focuses on:

- civil and political rights: right to life, freedom from torture or any other inhuman treatment, access to justice, right to nationality, right to privacy and family rights, liberty and security of a person, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, right to truth, right to participate in state governance, right to equality before the law and freedom from discrimination; limitations of these human rights and freedoms are prohibited unless prescribed by law;
- social, economic and cultural rights : right to own property, right to social security, right to an adequate standard of living, right to speak one's own language and maintain one's own cultural tradition, right to education, and right to health care.

In Part III we discussed and suggested remedies for individuals whose human rights have been violated, suppressed, encroached or otherwise denied. The general and specific remedies include the use of international, Ukrainian and Russian Federation legal instruments.

Finally Based on the analysis of the first three parts of this report, part IV recommends roles and actions for the Ukrainian, and the self-proclaimed Crimean and Russian authorities, as well as for the international community, non-governmental organizations and advocates on the ground. These recommendations are as practical as feasible.

We expect our recommendations to Ukraine, Self-Proclaimed Crimean and Russian authorities, international community and civil society and activists will prompt a solution, which will honor the Ukrainian people human rights desire and support for unitary, sovereign country, Ukraine's territorial integrity and democracy.

Among the key recommendations: we recommend that Ukraine continue to work closely with the UN and the international community to ensure Russia's troop withdrawal from Crimea and from the Eastern Ukrainian border.

We “invented” and proposed three-fold logic to our recommendations. We ask the addressees of our recommendations to work on these tasks according to their respective roles, responsibilities, goals, and objectives. The Ukrainian government is advised to implement the recommended measures; the international community is encouraged to assist and monitor; and civil society – to demand implementation of the measures, and subsequently monitor their implementation. The Self-proclaimed Crimean and Russian authorities should comply with international law.

- Creation of Special International Tribunal
- Creation of special database
- Creation of ad hoc markets
- Securement of free communication and access to true information
- Securement of ongoing monitoring of human rights situation

A crucial part of this report is a Human Rights Protection Guide (“the Manual”). The Manual is designed to help residents of Crimea take steps to improve their current situation directly.

The people in Crimea are economically deprived and legally undeserved, often knowing little about their rights and being unable to demand their application. Therefore, the aim of the Manual is to provide Crimeans of all ethnic and religious backgrounds with access to justice by explaining their fundamental rights. The Manual lists a number of fundamental rights that apply to Crimea, according to international human rights treaties, as well as pursuant to the articles of the Constitutions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Finally, the Manual includes a directory of Ukrainian and international human rights protection organizations and advocacy groups, so that Crimeans know where to report violations and seek advice or explanation.

To conclude I would like to remind a quote from John Prendergast a great human rights activist who said that “The biggest road block to action on genocide and other human rights crimes is ignorance. Most people just don't know that such things are happening, and often, if they have a vague idea they are happening, there is a feeling that there is nothing that can be done to stop these crimes.”

Franklin Roosevelt also said that “We must remember that any oppression, any injustice, any hatred, is a wedge designed to attack our civilization.” Russia’s actions are striking at the heart of international law and order that has helped to prevent war since the World War II, and if we allow ourselves to let it be, we run into much bigger risks. I encourage you today, to utilize your great expertise, this venue, power any and all means to find a meaningful solution to stop the wedge of oppression, injustice, hatred towards the people of Ukraine in occupied Crimea.