

*Statement by*

*Mr. Andrii Klymenko, Editor-in-Chief, TheBlackSeaNews*

*Dear Ladies and Gentleman*

Please allow me start with the statement of the absence of any significant human rights violations in Crimea prior of the annexation noted by the specialized international bodies like Council of Europe or let say the US State Department. As well there were no reports or any statements on the issue done by the Russian Federation.

The existed problems in the field of the human rights were merely related to the underdeveloped transitional democratic or law-enforcement system in Ukraine. Some noted occasional situations of the conflicts on the grounds of political affiliation, ethnic or religious routs ironically were always created by the pro-Russian activists, Russian neo-Nazis etc.

Today, the citizens of Ukraine residing in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are actually deprived of a number of fundamental rights and the possibility of their protection, particularly by drawing attention of international human rights organizations to their problems.

Forcing citizens of Ukraine to join Russian citizenship is one of the tools for invasion of the occupied territory by Russia (the owners of the Ukrainian passports are deprived of the opportunity of education, medical services, immovable property registration, obtaining utilities, employment, etc.).

For some categories of the citizens of Ukraine, the renunciation of Ukrainian citizenship was delivered as an ultimatum (employees and personnel of certain commercial structures, such as Ukrtelecom, etc.).

The aggressor is implementing a large-scale program of forcing the residents of Crimea to loyalty. Potentially disloyal persons are considered to be:

- journalists, civil activists, members of NCA (national competent authority), whose organizations and the media were created prior to the occupation;
- Crimean Tatar people in general, members of the autonomous bodies of the Crimean Tatar people (Kurultai, Medzhylis, 230 regional Medzhylis offices), clerical leaders of the Muslims (mainly of Crimean Tatars);

- ethnic Ukrainians or persons of different ethnic origin with Ukrainian political identity, including religious leaders and members of religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, Catholics, Greek Catholics (both Ukrainians and immigrants from Poland, Belarus, the Baltic States).

The Crimean Tatars are put to systematic pressure as the most cohesive community that openly expressed its opposition to the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation.

The number of secret services employees per capita in Crimea is 3 times higher than the similar rate for the rest of Russia. Methods of their work are intimidation, total control of telephone calls, Internet communication, and “brainwashing” through the media, accusations, separation of certain groups of citizens on ethnic or religious grounds. Activists or citizens disloyal to Russia are called in for many-hours-long interrogations, "preventive interrogations", searches are carried out in their homes, raids are carried out in the areas of compact settlement of the Crimean Tatars, the troops block the certain localities or settlements, the authorities organize deportation from Crimea, exclusions, criminal prosecution based on fabricated evidence and false accusations, kidnapping, murders.

The State authorities of Russia have developed the whole arsenal of intimidation methods in the Republic of Ichkeria and other regions of the North Caucasus.

Despite the declared trilingualism in Crimea (Russian, Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar) invaders not only eradicate the Ukrainian language, but in general any mention of Ukraine. There are reported cases of public burning of books, schoolbooks, plates and inscriptions in the Ukrainian language in front of the students, the Ukrainian schools and classes are being closed down.

Russia makes active efforts to establish "information ghettos" on the Crimean peninsula, in which citizens of Ukraine will be deprived of the opportunity to receive information from Ukraine. These efforts include a complete cessation of Ukrainian TV and radio channels broadcasting, disconnection of the Ukrainian mobile operators and internet service providers.

Today all independent media maintaining pro-Ukrainian position ceased their existence and work in the Crimea (either disbanded or moved from the Crimea to other regions of Ukraine). This particularly has the impact on the online media, since the Ukrainian legislation did not require their registration, although they are equivalent to the print media under the laws of the Russian Federation.

As of today, the only propaganda media spread in Crimea has an openly pro-Russian orientation.

On 9 May 2014, the Russian Federation has introduced the amendment to the Criminal Code, which provides for a penalty of imprisonment from 3 to 5 years for journalists and ordinary citizens for disagreeing with the fact that Crimea belongs to Russia or for calls for its return to Ukraine (Public calls to commit actions aimed at violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation). Criminal procedures under the relevant article are initiated both against the citizens of Ukraine and the Ukrainian media that operate in the mainland Ukraine, and are likely to be used for the persecution at the international level.

The Russian authorities have eliminated the possibility of monitoring the compliance with human rights. Independent international human rights organizations in the occupied territories are not allowed to implement such monitoring. Instead, the Russian authorities are actively working to organize visits of international delegations and media to Crimea for propaganda purposes.

Actions of the occupying power related to implementation of property rights are marked by massive violations of rules and practices accepted in the civilized world. There is a massive expropriation of all the state property of Ukraine in the territory of Crimea, which is called the "nationalization" by the Russian propaganda. More than 400 companies have been expropriated, and the list is constantly growing. This list includes over 200 resorts, all the ports, including the airport, water and energy supply facilities, railways, wineries, grain elevators and agricultural enterprises.

The objects that belonged to Ukraine or to the trade unions and other public organizations, as well as to the higher education institutions and the Academy of Sciences etc., have also been expropriated.

As for the private enterprises, their formal expropriation was not carried out. However, there are schemes of raider takeovers and changes in a company management board that have been implemented. The "Crimean self-defense" units are used as a component of the forcible takeover in the course of such actions. An information component includes distribution of false information through the media on the bankruptcy or financial problems of such companies, on the large debts they have, and such justifications call for their "nationalization". Such schemes are currently applied selectively to those owners who support the idea of territorial integrity of Ukraine and oppose the occupation.

Because of the time limits I will gladly provide more comments or examples during the Q&A session.