



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

On Remembrance of the Victims of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People from Crimea by the Soviet Regime

as delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1268th meeting of the Permanent Council,
21 May 2020

Mr. Chairman,

On 18 May my country commemorated the anniversary of the 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatar People from their native Crimean soil by the Soviet regime. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has recognized this forcible deportation as genocide of the Crimean Tatar People.

In May 1944, in the matter of two days, more than 183 thousand Crimean Tatars were forcibly deported from Crimea to Siberia, the Urals and Central Asia as a form of collective punishment.

The policy of ethnocide against deported peoples was not limited to evictions outside their ethnic territories, but was accompanied by looting of their property, destruction of their historical memory, language and culture and the very name of the Crimean Tatar people was effectively banned. The deportation effected the entire ethnic Crimean Tatar population as well as Ukrainians, Russians, Karaites and Roma from mixed marriages, at that time about a fifth of the total population of the Crimean peninsula. The forced deportation further affected other ethnic groups residing in the Crimea, including Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks.

According to estimates, during the first years of deportation up to 46% Crimean Tatars perished in the so-called “special settlements” from hunger, diseases, abuse and hard labour.

Unlike most other deported peoples who got the possibility to return to their homeland in the late 1950s, the Crimean Tatars were deprived of this right. Only after independence of Ukraine, the real return of Crimean Tatars became possible.

The Government of Ukraine undertook consistent efforts to provide Crimean Tatars with necessary resources for their resettlement and integration into the Ukrainian society, cherishing their history, culture and traditions.

Distinguished colleagues,

With the illegal temporary occupation in 2014 by Russia, the second, now hybrid, deportation of Crimean Tatars and an artificial change in the demographic composition of the peninsula began. It is marked with political, religious, cultural persecutions of the Crimean Tatars.

One of the first victims was Rishat Ametov, who on 3 March 2014 went out into the main square of Simferopol to protest against Russian invasion of the

peninsula. He was kidnapped in broad daylight and his body with signs of torture was found on the outskirts of Simferopol ten days later.

More than 43 000 people left Crimea over intimidation, persecution and fears of the return of the past in its worst manifestations. Instead, in the violation of the provision of the international humanitarian law, up to 500,000 Russian citizens moved into the territory of Crimea (according to the human right NGO CrimeaSOS data).

About 100 citizens of Ukraine, most of them Crimean Tatars, are illegally detained or convicted by Russia for political reasons in the territory of the Russian Federation and temporarily occupied Crimea.

In the contradiction with the Order of the International Court of Justice in April 2017 in view of Russia's violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination obliging Russia to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, this democratically elected, self-governing body of Crimean Tatar people remains banned by the Russian authorities. Thus, almost 2,500 members of national and local mejlises are outlawed.

The Crimean Peninsula turned into the zone with no freedom of religion, no freedom of the media and no rights for national minorities. All this has especially negatively affected the Crimean Tatar People.

Before the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, there were 2,083 religious organizations on its territory. So far, only about 700 have survived the campaign of persecution (as of 2019). Independent media were wiped out. Human rights activists have recorded more than 300 violations of journalists' rights since 2014. Out of 3000 registered media outlets only 232 managed to survive so-called "re-registration". Obviously, they had to succumb to the occupation administration censorship. All 12 independent Crimean Tatar media outlets left the peninsula due to persecution.

The occupying power continues to attack such inalienable rights of Crimean Tatars as education in the native language. While in 2013 the Crimean Tatar language was studied by 18,020 schoolchildren (8.6%) out of a total of 210,000 schoolchildren in Crimea, as of January 31, 2019 only 3.1% of children study the Crimean Tatar language.

Mr. Chairman,

Due to COVID19 pandemic, restricted commemorative events were being held on 18 May throughout Ukraine, including with the engagement of the leaders of the state and government. Many Ukrainians lighted the candles in their windows to remember those who lost their lives or who suffered under repression, whether in 1944 or since 2014.

International recognition of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 as a genocide shall be used as a tool to stop new crackdown on Crimean Tatars by Russian occupation administration.

In 1990 Copenhagen Document the OSCE participating States agreed to "clearly and unequivocally condemn totalitarianism". This commitment retains its high relevance. Remembering the victims of totalitarian regimes, it is important to make sure that the tragic chapters of the past are not forgotten, including the grave violations of human rights and freedoms which had led to these tragedies. We should

support continuing historic research and prevent any attempts of glorification of Stalinism and its criminal methods in the OSCE area.

The dire human rights situation in Crimea under Russia's occupation invokes the necessity to restore historical justice with regard to Crimean Tatar People, to take actions to honour the innocent victims of deportation, condemn this crime of the totalitarian communist regime and recognize the deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea in 1944 as genocide of the Crimean Tatar people.

At the same time, we call on international community to continue exerting pressure on Russia and to strengthen sanctions to ensure the implementation of the ICJ Order and stop the oppression of the Crimean Tatar community in the temporarily occupied peninsula.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.