

DO NOT INTERPRET!!

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ACTUAL STATE OF CRIMEA AND CRIMEAN TATARS

UNVER SEL

Chairman of the Board at Federation of Crimean Tatars Cultural Associations

Chairman of Crimea Development Foundation

Honorable Chairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Guests,

On behalf of the whole Crimean Tatar community living in the Crimea and Diaspora, I greet you all with respect.

The common history of our nations dates back to the migration of tribes that shaped today's Europe. We experienced wars, pains and joys all together. Therefore, the Crimean Tatar society is an integral part of the European family.

Without Crimea, the security and stability of Europe is unthinkable. Because Crimea means Rome, Genoese and Venice! Crimea means Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia as well! We are proud of our great, deep-rooted and rich history.

We are aware that all the communities, beliefs and cultures in which we live peacefully and together in the Crimean Peninsula for centuries. This is the greatest wealth of Crimea.

However, we are deeply saddened and embarrassed by the military battalions acting with the Nazi armies during the years when Wehrmacht invaded the Crimea. Just as the German, the Polish, the French, the Ukrainian and the other European nations. In those days Crimean Tatar community, who had been sent into total exile, paid with their blood and life for what a small minority did. Our ancestors lived in exile in Central Asia for half a century away from their motherland. During this period, the inclusion of Crimea into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine by the decision of the then Soviet administration was a step taken within the administrative borders of a single country. This step, which was a kind of gift to the celebration of the anniversary of Ukraine's accession to Russia, was thus purely formal. As the Great Prussian Marshall Clausewitz said, this is the work of people who are very easily excited and whose emotions flash like a straw flame.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Crimean Tatars returned to their lands. Many attempts have been made with the Ukrainian government to restore their political, cultural and economic rights. However, these initiatives have been fruitless for a quarter of a century. In this process, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars was put in front of our society as a distraction tool without any sanction power given to it by law.

27 years before today, in 1992, constitution made a decision to expand the status of Crimea in Ukraine. As a result of this constitution adopted by the Ukrainian administration, almost all

Crimean people tended to connect to Russia. However, this did not happen in the conjuncture that day.

As you may recall, the wave of fear, violence and terror initiated by pro-Nazi Ukrainians in 2014 surrounded Crimea. In these conditions, the people of Crimea, who wanted to protect the most basic human right, the right to life, they decided to reconnect to Russia by referendum. We believe that the entire democratic world should respect the common decision of the Crimean people. However, a brutal embargo targeting the fundamental rights of the Crimean people was introduced after the referendum.

Dear guests,

Now, I present it to your discretion: Is the Crimean Tatar community, especially those living in the Crimea, wanted to be punished for not cooperating with the Nazis? It is imperative for European security and stability to end this injustice and to remove the embargoes imposed on the Crimea.

We have made a decision with our free will based on the principle of *"All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."* as the first article of the both "United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" and "United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights". We expect the entire civilized world to respect this decision.

Distinguished Delegates,

In the days following the reconnection of Crimea to Russia, the social, cultural and political rights of the Crimean Tatars which were not granted during the Ukrainian period given to us under the No: 268 Russian Presidency Executive Order. Also, Crimean Tatar language reinstated as the official language in Crimea. In the five years that have passed, important steps have been taken in relation to this decree and today our children have been granted the right to receive education in their own language. Crimean Tatars exist in social, cultural, economic and political fields.

In addition, a small minority who sucked the blood of our society, exploited their religious feelings and tried to spread extremism, either fled the Crimea and joined the Syrian jihad or took refuge in Ukraine. The partnership of these groups with the Nazi remains in Ukraine against the Crimean people is also a threat to European security. It would be an embarrassment for European history to excuse and even support them with coverings such as human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, as Crimean Tatars, are a small but proud and honorable nation. We are a society that believes in democratic institutions, education, women rights, the environment and equal development. We take our culture of living in peace with others under the most challenging conditions from our centuries old past. In this past there is Rome, there is the Ottoman Empire, there is the Soviet Union and there is Russia. However, there is no artificial belonging and will not.

I invite all of you to think about this for the future of European security, and I extend my respect to your esteemed delegation on behalf of the Crimean Tatars in the Crimea and around the world.