

70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Joint statement on human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine)

30 October 2015

This statement is delivered on behalf of Joint statement: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, US as well as Ukraine.

The international community remains deeply concerned by the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the status of which is prescribed by General Assembly resolution 68/262, which continues to be characterized by human rights abuses committed by the *de facto* authorities. We reiterate our support for the territorial integrity, political independence, unity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, which continues to be violated by the illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea.

Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in spring 2014 a number of internationally recognized human rights monitors have published reports on the human rights situation in Crimea, including those of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, and of the Human Rights Assessment Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, which were regrettably denied access by the *de facto* authorities. We also recall the 12 reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine, a substantive part of each of which is dedicated to the situation on human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

These reports reflect a number of serious and systematic human rights abuses that continue to take place in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. These include measures such as the forced implementation of the legal system of the Russian Federation, for example forced issuance of Russian passports, and intimidation, incarceration and politically motivated persecution of Crimea residents. Increasing impediments to the exercise of free expression including tightening control of the media and establishment of new regulations for media re-registration under the Russian Federation law, the intimidation of journalists, systematic harassment and disruption of the news media in the Crimean Tatar and the Ukrainian languages. The human rights violations also encompass police-led brutality against ethnic Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and other ethnicities, including arbitrary searches and seizures and arrests, torture and ill-treatment of detainees; the effective proscription in practice of the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian languages, particularly in public administration, education, religious and other services; the transfer of persons in detention to the Russian Federation; and the seizure and violation of property and

other economic rights of non-Russian citizens along with their deprivation of proper medical care.

We strongly condemn the measures and practices of discrimination and human rights abuses against Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and members of other minorities in Crimea committed by the Russian Federation as exercising de facto control over the peninsula.

We call upon the authorities of the Russian Federation as the occupying power in Crimea to address these concerns through the following measures.

First, the Russian Federation must take all necessary measures to bring to an immediate end all human rights abuses against Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and persons belonging to other ethnicities and others opposed to the occupation living in Crimea, including, in particular, the discriminatory measures and practices, arbitrary searches and seizures, unfair trials and the practice of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Discriminatory legislation, in particular that which has entered into force since March 2014, must be revoked.

Second, the recommendations of the Human Rights Committee, in particular on issues related to nationality, residence, labour, property and land, access to health care and education, as well as the freedoms of expression, association, religion, and peaceful assembly should be given due consideration. In this regard, we call for respect for individuals who self-identify as persons belonging to national minorities, as well as the promotion and protection of their rights.

Moreover, we call for the immediate release of Ukrainian citizens Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Ahtem Chiygoz and other activists who were seized in Crimea, transferred to the Russian Federation and detained and judged in violation of elementary standards of justice.

The killing of Crimean Tatar Reshat Ametov and enforced disappearances of Crimean civil society and human rights activists Timur Shaimardanov, Seiran Zinedinov, Leonid Korzh and Vasyl Chernysh¹ and others must be investigated in a transparent way and the perpetrators brought to justice. Lack of accountability remains one of the main sources of human rights abuses.

The Russian Federation must also reopen the cultural and religious institutions of the Crimean Tatars, cooperate fully and immediately with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and allow unconditional and immediate access of international and regional human rights mechanisms to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We recall that the international community recognizes that Crimea is part of Ukraine *and call upon* Russia to end its occupation.

We believe that there needs to be an international presence in Crimea to monitor the situation of human rights. This is of paramount importance in preventing the situation from further deteriorating. *We encourage* the Secretary-General in this

¹ See paragraph 80 of the 8th HRMMU report on the human rights situation in Ukraine covering period 1–30 November 2014.

regard to consult regularly with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant regional organizations.

We encourage the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to consider preparation of a separate report on the situation on human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) and underline the need for full access for HRMMU and other international human rights missions to the territory of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.