



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

37th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
16 March 2018

Item 6
Universal Periodic Review - Ukraine

Human Rights House Foundation statement

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Thank you Mr Chairperson.

Human Rights House Foundation is delivering this statement on behalf of five partner NGOs.

Human Rights House Foundation stresses that responsibility for the dire human rights situation in Crimea lies with the local *de facto* authorities and with the authorities of the Russian Federation.

Nevertheless, we highlight several areas in which Ukraine has the possibility to contribute to the improvement of the rights of current and former inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula.

Following Russian occupation of Crimea, local residents found themselves in a vulnerable position, not only because of the abuses of the *de facto* authorities, but also as a result of the discriminatory policies imposed by Ukraine.

According to the law “On the creation of the Crimea free economic zone and peculiarities of conducting economic activities in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine” Ukrainian citizens living in Crimea and Sevastopol are considered non-residents and can not use bank services or perform other financial transactions for paying taxes and customs duties in Ukraine’s continental parts, which leads to discrimination based on the place of residence.

Internally displaced persons from the occupied territories (including Crimea) are still deprived of their right to vote in local elections, despite living in their respective territorial communities, in accordance with their IDP certificates.

The current procedure for verifying births and deaths of persons in the occupied territory of Crimea fails to address the actual challenges and needs of the Crimean residents. The existing court procedure for verifying these cases is overly tedious for the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol. Parties interested in verifying such facts are obviously at a disadvantage compared to other Ukrainian citizens, which results in discrimination against these people.

The Russian authorities have effectively and systematically denied access to Crimea to nearly all international institutions responsible for monitoring human rights, including those responsible specifically for monitoring the situation in Crimea such as the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU).

However, measures taken by the Ukrainian authorities further complicate access to Crimea for foreign journalists, human rights monitors and lawyers. While the Ministry of Information Policy has facilitated the access for foreign journalists within the existing procedure, there are significant challenges for human rights defenders and lawyers from foreign countries (including Russian lawyers) who apply for a special permit to visit Crimea. There is no possibility for the foreign journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers to apply for the permit from abroad (through Ukrainian embassies) or use other language than Ukrainian, the procedure by itself is lengthy and bureaucratic which represents a significant obstacle to carry out human rights work in Crimea, specifically when the mission is of urgent nature.

Mr Chairperson.

We make the following recommendations to Ukraine:

- 1) Remove legal provisions characterising official residents of Crimea as non-residents of Ukraine;**
- 2) Simplify access to public administrative services for Crimean residents, notably with regard to the procedure for obtaining civil registration of births, deaths and marriages;**
- 3) Guarantee the exercise of the right to vote at the local elections by IDPs from Crimea in the communities where they live on the mainland Ukraine;**
- 4) Simplify the access to Crimea for foreign journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders;**
- 5) Refrain from taking measures aiming at further isolating the Crimean population from its legitimate Ukrainian government and lowering the authorities' responsibilities towards the Ukrainian population living under occupation;**
- 6) Determine the status of persons that were in prison in the occupied territories, to address the issue of social re-integration and adaptation of such persons in Ukrainian society.**

Thank you.

This statement also enjoys support from the following organisations:

- Centre for Civil Liberties
- Crimean Human Rights Group
- Human Rights Information Centre
- People in Need (PiN)
- Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union