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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A local authority installed by the Russian government and led by Sergey Aksyonov as "prime minister" of the "state council of the republic of Crimea" administered Occupied Crimea. The "state council" was responsible for day-to-day administration and other functions of governing. In September 2014 Russian occupation authorities held "parliamentary elections" in which only Russia-based political parties won seats. Authorities closed the election to independent observers; it was not free and fair and was held in contravention of the Ukrainian constitution. Russian authorities maintained control over Russian military and security forces deployed in Crimea.

During the year security services worked to consolidate control over Crimea and continued to restrict human rights by imposing repressive federal laws of the Russian Federation on the Ukrainian territory of Crimea.

The most significant human rights problems in Crimea during the year related directly to the Russian occupation:

First, Russian security services engaged in an extensive campaign of intimidation to suppress dissent and opposition to the occupation that employed kidnappings, disappearances, physical abuse, and deportations. Russian security forces routinely detained individuals without cause and harassed and intimidated neighbors and family of those who opposed the occupation.

Second, Occupation authorities deprived certain groups, in particular Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, of fundamental freedoms, particularly regarding expressions of nationality and ethnicity, and subjected them to systematic discrimination. Continuing their policy of imposing Russian citizenship on all residents of Crimea, occupation authorities subjected persons who refused Russian citizenship to discrimination in accessing education, health, and employment. These authorities interfered with the rights to expression and assembly, criminalizing the display of cultural and national symbols, preventing groups of private individuals from celebrating their national and cultural heritage, and restricting access to education in the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages.

Third, Russian authorities engaged in a widespread campaign to suppress free speech and media in Crimea. They refused to register Crimean media and news organizations, preventing them from operating legally. In particular, Russian authorities denied ATR television and the QHA Crimean News Agency licenses, forcing them to close. Security services also detained and abused journalists and threatened them with prosecution for opposing the occupation.

Other problems included poor conditions in prisons and pretrial detention facilities; political interference in the judicial process; limitations of freedom of movement; the internal displacement of thousands of individuals to mainland Ukraine; failure to allow residents of Ukraine's region of Crimea to exercise the ability to vote in periodic and genuine elections to choose their leaders; official corruption; discrimination and abuse of ethnic and religious minority groups; discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; kidnapping and transport of orphans to Russia by occupation authorities; and employment discrimination against persons who did not hold a Russian passport.

The Russian-installed authorities took few steps to investigate or prosecute officials or individuals who committed human rights abuses, creating an atmosphere of impunity and lawlessness. Occupation and local "self-defense" forces often did not wear insignia and committed abuses with impunity.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

Russian occupation authorities did not adequately investigate cases of abductions and killings of Crimeans from 2014. For example, in January occupation authorities suspended their investigation of the March 2014 killing of Crimean Tatar activist, Reshat Ametov, who observers noted being forced into a car by members of "self-defense" paramilitaries. His body was later found with signs of torture, including his eyes gouged out. Despite video footage of the abduction, police suspended their investigation due to "lack of evidence."

Occupation authorities did not investigate other suspicious deaths and disappearances, occasionally marking them up as suicide. Human rights observers reported that families frequently did not challenge findings in such cases due to fear of retaliation.

b. Disappearance

There were numerous reports of disappearances and abductions that domestic and international observers attributed to Russian occupation authorities. In many cases the whereabouts of individuals were unknown for extended periods of time. Human rights groups reported that police often refused to register reports of disappearances while intimidating and threatening with detention those who tried to report a disappearance.

In March, Fyodor Kostenko disappeared shortly after crossing from Kherson Oblast into Crimea. Kostenko is the father of Euromaidan activist Oleksandr Kostenko, who was convicted in Crimea in May for protesting against the Yanukovych government in Kyiv. The last report concerning Fyodor Kostenko was on March 4, shortly after he crossed into Crimea and after he appeared at a press conference in Kyiv, where he protested his son's detention, which he characterized as illegal. Russian occupation authorities have not investigated his disappearance.

On August 27, men in police uniforms reportedly seized Mekhtar Aislanov, a Crimean Tatar, and threw him into a minivan; there has been no subsequent communication from him. On September 3, Russian authorities opened an investigation into his disappearance.

On December 24, Tatar leader Mustafa Jemilev noted that at least 20 Crimean Tatars have disappeared since the occupation of Crimea began. There was no information on at least eight individuals reported as abducted and missing in 2014. Russian occupation authorities did not adequately investigate the disappearances, and human rights groups believed Russian security forces kidnapped the individuals by for opposing Crimea's occupation.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

There were reports that Russian authorities in Crimea abused residents who opposed the Russian occupation.

Security services reportedly tortured Oleksandr Kostenko prior to his May 15 "conviction" for allegedly injuring a member of the Ukrainian antiriot Berkut force in Kyiv in February 2014. Kostenko accused his captors of beating him, subjecting him to a mock execution, and depriving him of food and water during his detention. A court sentenced Kostenko to four years and two months in prison. Observers noted the conviction was unique because the alleged crime took place outside of both Russia and Crimea and occurred before Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Human rights monitors reported that Russian occupying forces subjected Crimean Tatars in particular to physical abuse and beatings but pressured them not to file complaints. For example, according to Tatar leaders, on December 16, Federal Security Service (FSB) officers detained and allegedly tortured Tatar Ehnver Krosh with electric shock, in an attempt to coerce his cooperation with an FSB operation. Authorities released him the next day, reportedly after having threatened his family.

Human rights monitors reported that occupation authorities also threatened individuals with violence or imprisonment if they did not testify in court against individuals the authorities considered to be in opposition to the occupation.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions reportedly remained harsh and overcrowded. According to a September report on Crimea by the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE high commissioner on national minorities, persons incarcerated during the Russian occupation did not have the opportunity to retain their Ukrainian citizenship. The report also noted that health care in prisons had deteriorated. Human rights groups reported that prisons suffered from overcrowding and poor conditions.

Independent Monitoring: Occupation authorities did not permit monitoring of prison or detention center conditions by independent nongovernmental observers or international organizations.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Authorities arbitrarily detained protesters, activists, and journalists for opposing the Russian occupation.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Russian occupation authorities applied and enforced Russian law in occupied Crimea. Russian government agencies, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the FSB, the Federal Investigative Committee, and the Office of the Prosecutor General, enforced the "law." The FSB also conducted security, counterintelligence, and counterterrorism activities and combatted organized crime and corruption. A "national police force" operated under the aegis of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In addition to abuses committed by Russian forces, "self-defense" forces, largely consisting of former Ukrainian Ministry of Interior officers allegedly linked to local organized crime, reportedly committed many abuses. These forces often acted with impunity in intimidating opponents of the occupation and were involved in beatings, kidnappings, detentions, and arbitrary confiscation of property. While the "law" places the "self-defense" forces under the authority of the "national police," members of the forces continued to commit abuses while receiving state funding for their activities as well as other awards, such as beachfront property and service medals.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Arbitrary Arrest: There were reports Russian-imposed authorities made arbitrary arrests, in particular targeting Crimean Tatars.

Authorities arrested persons involved in competing protests by pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian groups on February 26, 2014, in Simferopol, which resulted in the deaths of two individuals. The event occurred prior to Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. Occupation authorities, nevertheless, subsequently prosecuted individuals alleged to have participated in the protest, although Russia did not exercise control over Crimea at the time. Human rights groups reported that authorities reviewed video of the incident and selectively brought charges against leading Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian individuals who subsequently opposed the occupation, in particular members of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis. The occupation authorities refused to investigate acts of violence committed by pro-Russian "protesters," some of whom observers believed to have been working for Russian security services.

On January 28, police arrested Akhtem Chiygoz, a Crimean Tatar leader and deputy head of the Mejlis, and charged him with participating in the February 26 Simferopol protests. During a hearing in May, authorities extended his detention by three months. While Chiygoz was in detention, occupation authorities held him in solitary confinement, only returning him to the normal prisoner population after he began a hunger strike. In July occupation authorities extended Chiygoz's detention to November 19; authorities extended it again until January 29, 2016. On December 28, the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group cited complaints by Chiygoz's lawyers that authorities deprived them of enough time and access to case materials to provide an adequate defense during the trial, set to start in early 2016.

Following Chiygoz's arrest authorities arrested several other Crimean Tatars, accusing them of participating in the February 26, 2014 protests, including Asan Chebiyev (on February 4), Eskender Knemirov (on February 7), Eskender Emirvaliyev (on February 18), Talyat Yusonsov (on March 11), Ali Asanov (on April 15), and Mustafa Degirmindzhy (on May 10). Human rights groups believed that occupation authorities made the arrests to pressure them to testify against Chiygoz.

On April 14, police detained Mustafa Asaba, head of the Belgorod regional Mejlis, and accused him of participating in the February 26 Simferopol protests. Human rights observers believed that Russian security services planted ammunition in his home during a search in September 2014.

Security services also arrested persons involved in a protest on May 3, 2014, when several thousand Crimean Tatars protested at the administrative boundary between Crimea and Kherson Oblast against the occupation authorities' forced expulsion of Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Jemilev. Following the protests authorities fined more than 200 individuals for conducting an "unauthorized meeting." In 2014 occupation authorities indicted four individuals for rioting and violating a state border in connection with the May 3, 2014 events, targeting Crimean Tatar leaders Musa Apkerimov, Rustam Abdurakhmanov, Edem Ebulisov, and Tair Smedlyaev. On January 17, authorities arrested Edem Osmanov, son of Euromaidan activist Mustafa Osmanov, and accused him of using force against the Russian occupation in connection with the May 3,

2014 events. On May 28, Apkerimov received a suspended sentence of four years and four months. On August 4, authorities fined Edem Ebulisov in exchange for a plea of guilty for assaulting a state official. The status of the other investigations and trials was unknown.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Under the Russian occupation regime, the "judiciary" was neither independent nor impartial and remained susceptible to political interference.

Trial Procedures

See the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia for a description of the relevant Russian laws and procedures that the Russian government applied and enforced in occupied Crimea.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Russian occupation authorities together with local "self-defense" forces detained and prosecuted individuals for political reasons (see section 1.d.). Occupation authorities also transferred Crimean cases to Russia's legal system and changed the venue of prosecution for some detainees. On August 25, a Russian court sentenced film director Oleh Sentsov and activist Oleksander Kolchenko to 20 and 10 years in prison, respectively, on politically motivated charges. Occupation authorities had transferred them from Crimea to Russia for trial in 2014 (see *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

On June 2, a Russian court found Khaizer Jemilev, son of exiled Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Jemilev, guilty of manslaughter, sentencing him to five years, later reduced to three and a half, in prison. Occupation authorities had transferred him from Crimea to Russia for trial in 2014. Human rights groups asserted that Russian authorities charged him with murder and later transported him to Astrakhan to put pressure on his father, Mustafa Jemilev, who opposed the occupation of Crimea (see *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

There were reports that occupation authorities and others engaged in electronic surveillance, entered residences and other premises without warrants, and harassed relatives and neighbors of perceived opposition figures.

Russian occupation forces regularly conducted paramilitary exercises with the aim of intimidating residents of Crimea, especially Crimean Tatars. On April 2, Internal Affairs Ministry soldiers entered the town of Zhuravli, searching homes for weapons and "banned materials." Occupation authorities conducted similar searches in Lenino and Fontany. In both cases armed men in uniform without identification conducted extensive searches of houses without a warrant or pretext, accompanied by dogs and helicopters after setting up checkpoints with machine guns at the outskirts of the towns. There were reports that occupation authorities conducted similar searches in Simferopol.

Occupation authorities harassed family members of a number of political opponents. For example, they indicted Oleksandr Kostenko's brother, Felix Kostenko, for "insulting a judge." Occupation authorities also indicted Kostenko's friend, Stabislav Kransov, for "inciting hatred or enmity through mass media" and fled Crimea; security services frequently visited Kostenko's mother, who still resided in Crimea.

Following the sabotage of electrical lines from government-controlled territory to occupied Crimea, Russian officials cut power and natural gas to family members of members of the

Crimean Tatar Mejlis in retaliation. Human rights monitors reported that occupation authorities harassed family and friends of Crimean Tatar leaders and placed them under surveillance.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Occupation authorities significantly restricted freedom of speech and press. Occupation authorities refused to register independent print and broadcast media outlets, forcing them to cease operations. Threats and harassment against international and Ukrainian journalists were common.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: Individuals could not publicly criticize the Russian occupation without fear of reprisal. Human rights groups reported that the FSB engaged in widespread surveillance of social media, telephones, and electronic communication and routinely summoned individuals for "discussions" for voicing or posting opposition to Russian occupation.

On April 21, occupation authorities detained Emir-Usein Kuku, a member of the Contact Group on Human Rights, and seized his laptop and mobile phone, allegedly on suspicion that he was involved in inciting ethnic hatred.

Occupying authorities considered the Ukrainian flag and other Ukrainian symbols to be illegal and arrested and harassed anyone publicly displaying these symbols. On August 24, Ukrainian Independence Day, occupation authorities arrested three men in Kerch for flying a Ukrainian flag and wearing T-shirts with Ukrainian symbols on them. The court sentenced one of the men to 15 days in jail for "disrupting public order." On the same day in Sevastopol, police arrested a small group of Ukrainian activists for laying flowers at a monument to Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko.

Press and Media Freedoms: Independent print and broadcast media could not operate freely. Occupation authorities refused to register most independent media outlets, forcing them to close during the year.

In 2014 occupation authorities required all Crimean media organizations to register with the Russian state media regulator Roskomnadzor by January 1. Occupation authorities extended that deadline to April 1. The authorities subsequently refused to issue licenses to independent news organizations or those that published articles opposing Russia's occupation of Crimea.

In February, Roskomnadzor refused to issue a license to QHA Crimean News Agency, which ceased operations in Crimea on April 1 and moved to Kyiv. Roskomnadzor also refused to register the Tatar language outlets 15 Minut and Avdet.

On April 1, the Crimean Tatar television station ATR stopped transmitting after occupation authorities refused to issue it a license. ATR submitted four applications between October 2014 and April, but occupation authorities refused it each time due to "lack of documents," despite the fact that an experienced Moscow law firm prepared its last two applications. The occupation "prime minister," Sergei Aksyonov stated ATR was an "enemy element" that had no role to play in Russian-occupied Crimea. AI and other human rights groups condemned Russia's decision to close ATR.

On April 29, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) appealed to Russian president Vladimir Putin to improve press freedom, criticizing raids, and detentions, while noting that, of the 3,121 press organizations registered in Ukraine, only 232 had obtained registration from Roskomnadzor.

In particular, the CPJ criticized occupation authorities for singling out Crimean Tatar publications for closure.

On March 2, Russian occupying authorities warned Nariman Dzhelyal, first deputy head of the Mejlis, not to organize any protest against ATR's closing. On March 31, occupation authorities detained eight students after creating a video supporting ATR. On April 15, occupation authorities fined two of them the equivalent of \$200 (14,800 rubles) for participating in an unsanctioned public event.

Occupation authorities took steps to replace independent, Tatar-language media with state-controlled alternatives. On September 22, the Millet television station began broadcasting in the Crimean Tatar language. The occupation authorities closely controlled its content. Millet received approximately 177 million rubles (\$2.4 million) in Russian government funding and does not report on issues such as disappearances of Crimean Tatars.

Violence and Harassment: There were numerous cases of Russian security forces or police harassing independent media and detaining journalists in connection with their professional activities. On January 26, armed members of the Russian security services raided the headquarters of ATR, and demanded that it surrender any footage it had of the February 2014 protests. During a seven-hour search, the security services seized hard drives, video footage, and data. The occupation authorities threatened to arrest and fine individuals who gathered to protest the search.

On March 13, police detained independent journalist Natalya Kokorina for six hours and searched the home of the mother of Anna Andrievska, who wrote an article about the Crimea Battalion in December 2014. Both were independent journalists affiliated with the Center for Investigative Journalism. In separate incidents police also detained independent journalist Anna Shaidurova and former ATR Television cameraman Eskender Nebiyev.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Following Russia's occupation of Crimea, journalists resorted to self-censorship to continue reporting and broadcasting. Russian occupation authorities banned most Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar-language broadcast programming, replacing the content with Russian programming.

In September occupation authorities directed media outlets not to mention the word "Mejlis" in reporting and not make any mention of its leader Refat Chubarov or former leader Mustafa Jemilev. The Russian-installed "prosecutor general" of Crimea ordered media outlets "to stop using the name or parts of the name of nonexistent organizations in news, articles, and interviews."

National Security: Occupation authorities used national security laws to restrict the work of journalists critical of the Russian occupation.

Internet Freedom

Russian occupation authorities restricted free expression on the internet by imposing repressive laws of the Russian Federation on Crimea (see section 2.a. of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia). Security services routinely monitored and controlled internet activity to suppress contrary opinions. According to media accounts, Russian occupation forces interrogated residents of Crimea for posting pro-Ukrainian opinions on Facebook or on blogs. On April 11, occupation authorities detained former ATR cameraman Amet Umerov and searched his house for allegedly posting remarks critical of the Russian occupation leadership on a social network. The search came days after Roskomnadzor, Russia's media regulator, was granted broad powers to search correspondence on social networking and e-mail systems.

On April 4, during a daylong raid and search of houses in Zhuravki for alleged extremist materials, occupation authorities reportedly cut the town off from internet, telephone, and electrical services.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Russian authorities in Crimea engaged in a widespread campaign to suppress the Crimean Tatar language. While Crimean Tatar is an official language, occupation authorities dramatically reduced instruction in schools, and the language was offered only as an optional language at the end of the school day. Occupation authorities closed the Crimean Tatar school in Bakhchysarai. Additionally, there were reports of authorities pressuring Crimean Tatars to use the Cyrillic, as opposed to the Latin, alphabet.

After the Russian occupation, authorities pressured teachers and parents to discourage Ukrainian language education. In 2014 authorities closed the Ukrainian Philology Department at the V.I. Vernadsky University, creating a shortage of teachers and discouraging Ukrainian instruction. Prior to the occupation, 8.2 percent of Crimean children received instruction in Ukrainian in seven Ukrainian language schools and 165 bilingual Ukrainian and Russian schools. During the year only 1.2 percent of Crimean residents received Ukrainian language instruction and only two Ukrainian language schools remained open. In 2013 some 12,694 students received instruction in Ukrainian; during the year only 949 did. Occupation authorities expunged courses on the history and literature of Ukraine from educational materials in Crimea, and punished teachers found using Ukrainian materials and dismissed some.

Occupation authorities imposed Russian laws regarding "banned" books and materials and reportedly removed Ukrainian language material from libraries in Crimea. In January occupation authorities fined the director of the Feodosia library 2,000 rubles (approximately \$27) because the library contained 12 books about the Holodomor (a man-made famine that occurred in Ukraine in the 1930s), which were deemed to be "extremist materials" because of its supposedly anti-Russian content.

In September occupation authorities threatened Vladimir Kazarin, chair of the Russian and Foreign Literature Department at the Tauride Tauris Academy, with dismissal after he stated that "the arrival of Russia absolutely devastated the educational field of Crimea" at a conference in Prague.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

Organizations representing minority communities reported gross and widespread harassment and intimidation by Russian occupation authorities to suppress their ability to assemble peacefully. Abuses included arbitrary searches, interrogations, threats of deportation, and unsubstantiated accusations of possessing "extremist" literature.

On January 17, approximately 30 titushki, or hired thugs, attempted to break up a meeting of the Second All-Crimean Conference on Crimean Tatar Rights in Simferopol by assaulting and harassing participants. Police and security officers at the scene did nothing to prevent the disruption.

On May 18, Russian occupation authorities detained approximately 60 Crimean Tatars commemorating the 71st anniversary of the Soviet deportation of Crimean Tatars, for displaying Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar flags. Prior to the march, authorities warned members of the

Crimean Tatar Mejlis not to hold such a demonstration. Occupation authorities detained protesters for more than six hours without access to lawyers and released them without formal charges.

Occupation authorities criminalized the display of Ukrainian flags and symbols as extremist activity. On March 9, security services arrested Leonid Kuzmin, Alexander Kravchenko, and Vilidar Shukurdzhiyev in Simferopol after they displayed Ukrainian flags at a public celebration of the 201st birthday of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. On March 13, the court found all three guilty of holding an illegal rally and sentenced them to 40 hours of community service.

Occupation authorities threatened Kuzmin with dismissal from his job as a teacher. On March 14, occupation authorities arrested Kuzmin at a memorial to Shevchenko wearing a blue and yellow ribbon—the Ukrainian national colors. Occupation authorities later issued Shukurdzhiyev an administrative warning for doing the same. On April 17, two unknown individuals assaulted Kuzmin, leaving him with a concussion.

Occupation authorities forbade any assembly marking Crimean Tatar Flag Day on June 26.

Freedom of Association

Russian occupation authorities required all social, religious, and media groups to reregister by January 1, 2016. There was concern that occupation authorities would abuse this process to hinder freedom of association by preventing legitimate associations from reregistering, thereby making their actions illegal.

Security services repeatedly arrested, detained, and searched members of the Mejlis, the recognized, elected representative body of Crimean Tatars. On March 30, occupation authorities subjected Nariman Dzhelyal to a five-hour search of his home following his election to the Mejlis. In September occupation authorities threatened to prohibit the Crimean Tatar Mejlis within the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation Council's July 8 proposed a "patriotic stop list" of 12 foreign NGOs operations it considered to be a potential threat to the internal political situation of Russia; the list included the Crimean Human Rights Field Mission (CHRFM), which conducts monitoring of human rights abuses committed in Crimea. The CHRFM reported that officials and individuals were afraid to discuss human rights with them after they were placed on the "patriotic stop list."

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [Report on International Religious Freedom](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

Russian occupation authorities did not respect rights related to freedom of movement and travel.

In-country Movement: There were reports that occupation authorities selectively detained and at times abused persons attempting to enter or leave Crimea. On January 17, Russian occupation authorities detained without cause Emine Avamileva, a member of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis and Kurultai, for more than two hours at the administrative boundary between Kherson and Crimea. On January 23, occupation authorities detained Eksender Bariyev and Abmedzhyt Suleymanov, members of the Crimean Tatar Rights Committee, as they traveled from Crimea to Kherson Oblast.

Foreign Travel: In July occupation authorities prohibited Nariman Dzhelyal and Ilmi Umerov from the Crimean Tatar Mejlis as well as Zair Smedlyayev, head of the Central Election

Commission of the Kurultai, from traveling to Ankara, Turkey, to attend the Second World Congress of Crimean Tatars.

Exile: On January 23, occupation authorities expelled Sinaver Kadyrov, a Crimean Tatar activist, although he had not formally refused Russian citizenship and had been compelled to accept it.

Mustafa Jemilev and Refat Chubarov, members of the Verkhovna Rada and the former and current chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, respectively, and Ismet Yuksel, general director of the Crimean News Agency, remained banned from entering Crimea by Russian occupation authorities on the pretext that they would incite radicalism. Occupation authorities have banned them since 2014.

Citizenship: In 2014 Russian occupation authorities imposed a Russian citizenship requirement on all residents of Crimea. Those who refused Russian citizenship became subject to arbitrary expulsion. Authorities announced that it would issue only 5,000 Russian "permanent residence permits" to Crimean residents during the year. Additionally, authorities denied those who refused Russian citizenship access to government employment, education, and health care, as well as the ability to open bank accounts and buy insurance, among other limitations. According to media sources, Russian authorities prosecuted private employers who continued to employ Ukrainians.

In some cases authorities compelled residents of Crimea to surrender their Ukrainian passports. Loss of their Ukrainian passports made it potentially difficult for Crimeans to travel internationally, since many countries did not recognize passports issued to them by Russian occupation authorities.

Occupation authorities announced that, as of January 1, 2016, all individuals who retained Ukrainian citizenship must register their passports or be subject to fines or imprisonment.

Internally Displaced Persons

Approximately 30,000 residents of Crimea registered with Ukraine's State Emergency Service as IDPs on the mainland, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Local NGOs, such as KrymSOS and the Mejlis, believed the actual figure could be as high as 50,000 because the majority of IDPs remained unregistered. Many individuals fled out of fear occupation authorities would target them for abuse because of their work as political activists or journalists. Muslims and Evangelical Christians who left Crimea said they feared discrimination due to their religious beliefs.

Crimean Tatars, who made up the largest number of IDPs, said they were concerned about pressure on their community, including an increasing number of arbitrary searches of their homes, surveillance, and discrimination. Additionally, many professionals left Crimea because Russian occupation authorities required them to apply for Russian professional licenses and adapt to Russian procedures in their work.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

Recent Elections: Russian occupation authorities prevented residents from voting with other Ukrainian citizens in the October 25 local elections by prohibiting the establishment of legitimate district and precinct election commissions and polling places in Crimea.

Participation by Women and Minorities: Russian occupation authorities harassed, detained, and denied freedom of movement to members of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis (see section 2.d.). The Russian-installed "prime minister," Sergey Aksyonov, stated occupation authorities no longer

recognized the Mejlis as an official institution. Under Ukrainian law the Mejlis is the official, recognized, representative council of Tatars in the country.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

There were no known requirements for Russian occupation authorities or their agents to file, verify, or make public any income or asset disclosure statements, nor is there a mechanism to provide for public access to information about their activities.

There were multiple reports during the year of rampant corruption among Crimean "officials," including reports of embezzlement of Russian state funds allocated to support the occupation. For example, in June the FSB opened corruption cases against three prominent officials: Andrei Skrynnik, the peninsula's "minister of industrial policies"; Nikolai Kochanov, the region's "tax inspection chief"; and Dmitri Petrov, the "port chief of Yalta."

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Most independent human rights organizations ceased activities in Crimea following Russia's occupation. Occupation authorities refused to cooperate with independent human rights NGOs and ignored their views, and they harassed human rights monitors and threatened them with fines and imprisonment.

An unofficial Turkish delegation visited Crimea on April 27-30. Its June 5 report stated that occupying authorities placed the delegation under surveillance, attempted to prevent the delegation from having meetings, and criticized the delegation when it did so. According to the report, Russian media engaged in a coordinated campaign to discredit the delegation. The Turkish delegation thanked "Crimean Tatars who agreed to meet with them despite pressures, fear, and threats to the safety of their lives."

From July 6-18, the OSCE conducted a human rights assessment mission on Crimea. Russian occupation authorities refused to meet with the mission and denied the mission entry to Crimea. The mission's report detailed allegations of potentially serious human rights violations, emphasizing the need for independent human rights monitoring.

The CHRFM attempted to monitor the human rights situation in Crimea, but authorities sharply curtailed its activities after placing it on a "patriotic stop list" by the Russian Federation Council. The council recommended that the Russian Prosecutor General's Office, in coordination with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, determine whether the group was an "undesirable foreign organization." Should Russian authorities find the CHRFM "undesirable," members and anyone cooperating or associating with the group would be subjected to fines or imprisonment.

Additionally, Russian laws regulating NGOs prohibit any group that receives foreign funding and engages in vaguely defined "political activity" to register as a "foreign agent," a term that connotes treason or espionage. During the year authorities had not included any Crimean NGOs on the list; however, the law has had a chilling effect on their activities (see sections 2.b. and 5 of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Occupying Russian forces created an atmosphere of impunity, creating a hostile environment for members of ethnic and religious minorities, and fostering discrimination and hostility against LGBTI persons.

Children

Birth Registration: Under both Ukrainian law and "laws" imposed by Russian occupation authorities, birthplace or parentage determines citizenship. Russia's occupation and purported annexation of Crimea complicated the question of citizenship for children born after February 2014, since it was difficult for parents to register a child as a citizen with Ukrainian authorities. Registration in Ukraine requires a hospital certificate, which is retained when a birth certificate is issued. Under the occupation regime, new parents could only obtain a Russian birth certificate and do not have access to a hospital certificate. The situation was further complicated because Ukrainian border guards did not recognize Russian birth certificates, so bringing a newborn child to Ukraine would be difficult.

Institutionalized Children: There were reports that Russian authorities continued to permit kidnapping orphans in Crimea and transporting them across the border into Russia for adoption. The Ukrainian government did not know the whereabouts of the children.

Anti-Semitism

According to international Jewish groups, an estimated 15,000 Jews lived in Crimea, primarily in Simferopol. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Since the beginning of Russia's occupation, authorities singled out Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians for discrimination, abuse, deprivation of religious and economic rights, and violence, including killings and abductions.

Crimean Tatars are an ethnic group native to Crimea, dating to the Crimean Khanate of the 15th century. In 1944 Soviet authorities forcibly deported more than 230,000 Tatars to the Soviet Far East for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many surviving Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea. Prior to the Russian occupation, there were approximately 300,000 Crimean Tatars living in Crimea.

Occupation authorities systematically targeted members of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, an elected, representative body of Crimean Tatars that the Ukrainian government legally recognizes. Russian occupation authorities formally banned its leader, Refat Chubarov, from Crimea for five years. Many of the individuals targeted in the cases regarding February 26 protests in Simferopol and March 3 at the administrative border between Crimea and Kherson oblasts were Mejlis members.

Occupation authorities harassed Crimean Tatars for speaking their language in public and forbid speaking it in the workplace. There were reports that teachers prohibited schoolchildren from speaking Crimean Tatar to one another.

Occupation authorities placed restrictions on the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims, which is closely associated with Crimean Tatars. While the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims has registered under Russian law, occupation authorities prohibited individual Muslim mosques associated with Crimean Tatars from doing so. Authorities routinely demanded information on any meeting held at a mosque outside of regular services and required that they be informed if an imam changed mosques.

Russian occupation authorities also targeted ethnic Ukrainians. On May 21, a group of ethnic Ukrainians met in public to celebrate "embroidery day" in honor of traditional Ukrainian dress. Security forces arrested four persons as well as three journalists from TV Inter. According to reports authorities arrested the group for having "prohibited items" and detained them for five hours. According to the Kharkiv Human Rights Monitoring Group, when the group asked why they were being fingerprinted, a security official told them that it was in case "something happens to you tomorrow ... headless bodies get found here."

Occupation authorities have not permitted churches linked to ethnic Ukrainians, in particular the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to register under Russian law. Occupation authorities harassed and intimidated members of the churches. According to Bishop Kliment of the UOC-KP, parishes in Saki, Krasnoperekopsk, and Kerch closed for financial reasons after authorities threatened the economic interests of business persons who supported the churches. Bishop Kliment reported regular and systematic surveillance of UOC-KP churches and parishioners.

Russian occupation authorities targeted businesses and properties belonging to ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars for expropriation and seizure. In particular, they prohibited Crimean Tatars affiliated with the Mejlis from registering businesses or properties.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Human rights groups and local gay rights activists reported most of the LGBTI community fled Crimea after the Russian occupation began. LGBTI individuals were verbally and physically assaulted for their sexual orientation, and members of the LGBTI community reported that they were "completely underground." Russian occupation authorities prohibited any LGBTI groups from holding public events in Crimea. LGBTI individuals faced increasing restrictions on their right to peaceful assembly as occupation authorities enforced a Russian law that criminalizes the so-called propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations to minors (see section 6 of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

Section 7. Worker Rights

Russian occupation authorities announced both the labor laws of Ukraine and those of the Russian Federation were to remain in effect until January 1. Russian occupation authorities have stated that, after that time, conditions specified in employment agreements that do not meet the requirements of federal laws and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation containing the norms of labor law would no longer be applicable after that date (see section 7 of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

Russian occupation authorities imposed labor laws and regulations of the Russian Federation on Crimean workers, limited worker rights and created barriers to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the ability to strike. The NGO Freedom House reported that pro-Russian authorities threatened to nationalize property owned by labor unions in Crimea. Ukrainians who did not accept Russian citizenship faced job discrimination. Only Russian passport holders could continue to work in "government" and municipal positions.

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