

Statement against large-scale crack down on human rights activists and other individuals in the occupied Crimea

Today, on 27 March 2019, representatives of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) in the occupied Crimea raided houses of Crimean Tatars located in the city of Simferopol, Bilohirsky and Krasnohvardiysky rayons. Totally, around 27 houses were searched, at least 20 Crimean Tatars were apprehended and taken to the FSB office in Simferopol. This is the largest politically-motivated arrests campaign, conducted simultaneously against Crimean Tatar community (including the activists of the Crimean Solidarity movement) since the beginning of Crimea's occupation by the RF. Detained persons are being accused of organising of (participating in) activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir religious organisation declared as a terrorist one by the RF.

We, the undersigned NGOs, are highly concerned with this new wave of mass searches and strongly condemn the systematic groundless persecution of the Crimean Tatars by the occupational authorities.

In light of the above-mentioned, we demand the authorities of the **Russian Federation** and the **occupational Crimean authorities**:

- To immediately release detained Crimean Tatars.
- To conduct prompt, effective, and impartial investigation of unlawful detentions and instances of physical violence committed against activists in Crimea.
- To ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.
- To take all the necessary measures to prevent such attacks in the future.
- To release the detainees and stop persecution of Crimean Tatars, Crimean Muslims, including administrative arrests, criminal charges, confiscation of property and other repressions.

We ask **international organizations** and **foreign governments**:

- To continue putting pressure on the Russia's government to stop persecution of Crimean Solidarity activists and other Crimean Tatar people.
- To condemn the use by Russia of its own "anti-terrorism and anti-extremism" legislation for prosecuting lawyers, human rights defenders and civil society activists in the occupied Crimea.
- To impose personal sanctions on persons involved into gross violations of human rights in the occupied Crimea, as well as on those directly involved in the obstruction of lawyers' work and persecution of the members of the Crimean Solidarity movement.
- To strengthen sectoral sanctions against the Russian Federation for systematic gross violations of human rights and war crimes committed in the occupied Crimea.

Detailed information:

Searches were carried out in the houses of Crimean Tatar activists belonging to the Crimean Solidarity movement. This is a platform, which unites relatives of political prisoners and their lawyers, with the goal of helping all Kremlin's hostages suffering from injustice in Crimea. In frames of their activity, members of Crimean Solidarity provide legal, financial and moral assistance to the victims and their relatives.

The Russian media reported that five individuals (Remzi Bekirov, Shaban Umerov, Riza Izetov, Farid Bazarov, Ruslan Suleymanov) are accused of organising activities of a terrorist organisation under Article 205.5, Section 1, of the Russian Criminal Code, while others of participating in activities of a terrorist organisation (Article 205.5, Section 2). FSB officers are still looking for another 4 Crimean Tatars. Due to this, FSB officers carry out searches in all the houses in

Strohanivka village of Simferopol region, the whole area is blocked, checkpoints to examine the cars have been set up.

The charges are based on the Crimean Tatars' alleged participation in the Hizb ut-Tahrir religious organisation, recognised as a terrorist one by the Russia's Supreme Court in 2003. According to the Ukrainian legislation, Hizb ut-Tahrir's activity is legitimate.

Moreover, the FSB officials acted in violation of the established rules: for instance, searches were carried out without a warrant, lawyers were not admitted to their clients, the FSB representatives damaged property in the searched houses.

It should be reminded that apart from those persons apprehended today, 33 Crimean Tatars have been already accused on similar charges. Among them is founder of the Crimean Contact Group **Emir Usein Kuku**, who continuously helped the families in search of their abducted relatives and protected rights of other victims of the human rights abuses. He has been imprisoned for more than 3 years already. All the leading human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, qualify his case as a politically motivated. The same relates to **Server Mustafaev**, one of the founders of the Crimean Solidarity movement.

Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin

Center for Civil Liberties

Crimean Human Rights Group

CrimeaSOS Public Organisation

Human Rights Center ZMINA

Media Initiative for Human Rights

Regional Center for Human Rights

Ukrainian Institute for Human Rights

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union