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Violence against indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls

Armed conflict and militarization of Crimea, disproportionately impact indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls. The factors that impact the collective rights of the indigenous peoples – such as militarization of their territories, the lack of commitment to processes of free prior and informed consent, etc. – are important to be analyzed to understand how discrimination and violence impact the lives of indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls in particular. The acceleration of authoritarianism, intolerance increasingly subject indigenous women and girls to persecution in their efforts to assert and protect their human and collective rights. These include gender-specific threats i.e., trumped-up charges and threats in relation to their children.

In Crimea, any civic activity that may cause doubts or criticism of the actions of the de facto authorities is persecuted. Thus, women on the peninsula cannot take an active part in public life, without risk of being detained or arrested.

The most vulnerable on the peninsula are the wives of political prisoners. There are 67 of them in Crimea today. In most cases, these are religious, not very wealthy, large families. After the arrest of the only breadwinner, the entire burden of responsibility for providing the family falls on women. In addition, large financial resources are required to pay for the work of lawyers protecting their husbands. In this regard, women from this category cannot provide proper upbringing of their children, and are also deprived of the opportunity to full self-realization in society. These actions can be regarded as discrimination against the wives of political prisoners in Crimea by the occupation authorities.

A common form of psychological abuse is the refusal to the wives of political prisoners to provide visits with their husbands. Often, they are deprived of the opportunity to see each other for several months. Besides the refusal to grant visits, political prisoners of Crimea are illegally

transferred to the Russian Federation, usually to Rostov-on-Don. In this regard, wives of political prisoners have an additional financial burden in the form of travel costs in order to attend so-called court hearings. In addition to wives, daughters, sisters and mothers of political prisoners in these families are also subjected to psychological abuse. At the moment there are 122 mothers, 67 wives and 103 daughters of political prisoners in Crimea¹.

The case of Fatma Ismailova is a vivid example of psychological pressure on women on the peninsula. On October 12, 2016, her husband Rustem Ismailov was arrested, he was accused of participation in the organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir" banned in Russia. On June 10, 2019 when Fatma, together with her father Enver Omerov, went to Rostov-on-Don, where her husband's trial was to be held, her father was detained. Later, the same day, a search was carried out in the house of Fatma's brother Riza Omerov, who was also detained. Enver and Riza Omerov were also accused of participation in the organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir" banned in Russia. On June 18, 2019 Fatma's husband Rustem Ismailov was sentenced to 14 years, and on January 11, 2021, Enver Omerov was sentenced to 18 years and her brother Riza Omerov to 13 years. Thus, Fatma Ismailova was left without support and care of her father, brother and husband.

Indigenous women are subjected to high risks of violation of human rights and gender violence in a situation of militarization which reinforces social, political and economic insecurity. The deterioration of human rights situation in the region through the development projects, anti-terrorism laws and policies adopted by states, restrictive laws imposed on civil society, including indigenous women suppress the voices of indigenous women.

In total, during the occupation period of Crimea 12 women died on the territory of the peninsula, including 3 indigenous Crimean Tatar women. A blatant example of applying violence against indigenous Crimean Tatar women by the so-called law enforcement officers was the death of 82-year-old Vedzhie Kashka during an attempt to detain her.

The persecution of activists of the Crimean Tatar people has become a negative trend². In November 2015, the household of a journalist Lilya Budzhurova was searched. In November 2017, a new search took place at the dwelling of the teacher of the Crimean Tatar language Lenara Mustafaeva. In June-July 2018, searches were conducted in the dwellings of blogger Elina Mamedova, Nazife Seytumerova, activist Nadzhie Kaidanova, blogger and daughter of the political prisoner Gulsum Aliieva. In June 2018, there was an attempt to initiate a criminal case against the Crimean Tatar poetess Aliye Kendzhe-Ali for her poetry. On May 30, 2019, an activist of the Crimean Solidarity public association Lutfiye Zudiyeva and the wife of one of the political prisoners, coordinator of the Crimean Childhood project Mumine Saliieva were detained. They were found guilty of violating Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (demonstration of the symbols of a prohibited organization) and were fined 2,000 and 1,000 rubbles, respectively. On August 1, 2019, Gulsum Khalilova, a journalist from the first Crimean Tatar TV channel "ATR", was arrested in absentia and placed on the international wanted list. In 2020, the wives of political prisoners are regularly subjected to administrative persecution for allegedly inappropriate behavior during their husbands' trials, as a result of which they are fined. Administrative "cases" against the mother of the defendant of the second Bakhchisaray "case of Hizb ut-Tahrir" Server Mustafayev, mother of the defendant of the Krasnogvardeisky "Hizb ut-Tahrir case" Arsen Abhairov and the mother-in-law of the second Bakhchisaray "Hizb ut-Tahrir case" Edem

¹ [November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#)

² [Persecution and discrimination against women in the occupied Crimea](#)

Smailov were initiated because of single pickets in support of their relatives. In the words of Lilia Gemedzhi, protocols related to Venera Mustafaeva were composed with violations of norms of the current administrative legislation. In particular, the rights and obligations were not clarified. In 2021, in relation to Sevilya Omerova, whose husband, father and brother-in-law were illegally sentenced, an administrative case was initiated relating to her participation in a “court session” on her father. With respect to Zore Emiruseinova and Emine Abdulganieva, mothers of political prisoners of the Krasnogvardeisky group of “Hizb ut-Tahrir case” administrative cases were opened as they held single pickets in support of their sons. Also, they and many other Crimean Tatar women lawyers are regularly given warnings on the inadmissibility of violating extremist legislation. In 2021, the tendency of mass detentions of people that came to the court or FSB buildings to support the political prisoners of Crimea became a regular practice.

On November 23, 2021 the Russian occupation authorities detained 31 people who came to meet a lawyer Edem Semedliaiev from the temporary detention center. Among the detainees were: ten women and even two minor children³. The arrests were made with the sanction of the Center for Combating Extremism. Kulametova Reikhane, Abduramanova Elmaz, Azizova Elvina, Yanikova Fatime, Ibrahimova Nailia were kept all night in the temporary detention facility.

As a result, the so-called courts of the occupied Crimea decided to fine 9 activists. The total amount was 101 thousand rubles (approx. 1 300 USD).

Due to the fact that illegitimate, occupying authorities operate on the territory of the peninsula, women in Crimea are deprived of the opportunity to take an active part in political life and, subsequently, in decision-making regarding their communities and territories⁴.

Traditionally, Crimean Tatar women took an active part in political life. For example, there were 4 women out of 80 delegates to the First Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people in 1917. At the time of the occupation, out of 33 members of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, 4 were women, and out of 248 delegates of the Qurultay – 18 made women. Out of 2,500 thousand members of regional and local Mejlises, about 100 make women. Thus, due to the prohibition of Mejlis, and the actions of the occupation administration of the Russian Federation in Crimea, hundreds of women of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people are limited in the right to exercise their own representative functions, since staying in this capacity on the territory of the Crimean peninsula threatens to be prosecuted as a member of an "extremist organization".

Having restored the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people in 1991, the indigenous Crimean Tatar people realized their right to preserve and govern their representative institution (Article 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

The Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people (the highest representative body of the Crimean Tatar people, which is elected according to certain electoral democratic procedures). The Qurultay forms the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people (representative and executive body) according to certain parliamentary democratic procedures. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people in accordance with the UN ECOSOC 1995/317 decision of November 25, 1995 was recognized as an organization of the indigenous people and, as such, was admitted to the work of the UN. The Qurultay - Mejlis system is

³ [Children, women and journalists: who were detained by the Occupants in Crimea?](#)

⁴ [Violations of the political rights of representatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people](#)

a democratic body that regulates all spheres of life of the Crimean Tatar people. Accordingly, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people is a representative institution of the indigenous people in the meaning of Articles 18-20 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Technically, the implementation of the provisions of Articles 18-19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is impossible, since by the decision of the so-called Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea dated April 26, 2016, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, the representative body of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people, was banned. On April 19, 2017, the International Court of Justice issued an interim ruling ⁵in the case Ukraine vs. Russia in the part of the complaint about the violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which ordered Russia to restore the activities of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People - the representative body of the indigenous people of Crimea. However, the RF has not yet complied with this decision.

These multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are vital factors that define the lives of indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls. They directly impact their possibility to gain and retain access to education, justice, employment, social protection, political participation, personal safety, among others. Numerous forms of discrimination are structural barriers that impede reaching more equal society, where indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls can have equal access to the services and opportunities that are available to the majority of people in the world.

In this regard, we demand from Russia to stop the discrimination and violence against indigenous Crimean Tatar women and girls, as well as to stop the illegal persecution of all residents of Crimea and the illegal occupation of Crimea – the motherland of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people.

⁵ [Order of 19 April 2017 issued by UN ICJ](#)