

№ 164/02
«16» March 2021

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Crimea: Urbanization and Indigenous Peoples

Since the beginning of the occupation, the Russian Federation has been implementing a policy of active “colonization” of the Crimean peninsula - the motherland of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people. It is known that due to this policy, the population of Crimea over the past seven years has increased from 2.5 million to about 3.2 million people. At the same time, about 30 thousand representatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people, due to repressions, were forced to leave Crimea. The overwhelming majority of Russians move to the cities of Crimea. For example, the population of such cities as Simferopol and Sevastopol increased from 350 thousand people to 600 thousand people each. This demographic policy is a gross violation of the requirements of the IV Geneva Convention, and at the same time it does not take into account the limited water supply in Crimea.

The purposeful resettlement policy of about 700 thousand citizens of the Russian Federation has increased the needs of the population for water, thus resorting to an unjustified anthropogenic exploitation of areas with limited local sources, primarily the cities of Simferopol and Sevastopol.

Moreover, since 2014, Russia has built and commissioned numerous multi-storey housing stock in Crimea for migrants from the Russian Federation, launched new production facilities, including two thermal power plants, as well as significant infrastructure facilities, primarily highways, which require additional energy resources including water supply. For example, huge water resources were spent on sand extraction by reclamation in the foothills for the construction of facilities in Crimea.

Near the Yalta mountain-forest reserve (part of Big Yalta), trees are being cut down for laying the gas pipeline “SUE RC Chernomorneftegaz”. Also, on the territory of the Foros Natural Park (a complex of landscape architecture on the territory of Big Yalta), construction and felling of trees began. The area of the park is 70 hectares, most of which are covered with relict trees. It is planned to build 90 objects, including 2 buildings with 900 beds, 7 guest villas with 30 beds, 4 villas with 20 beds, a yacht club, a diving center, a multi-level parking center for 600 cars, 3 dormitories with 240 beds, a medical center, a service hotel, a sports complex with an ice rink. At the moment, a collection of signatures

has been organized against the destruction of the park. The occupation authorities also ignored the fact that the water supply system for the cities and towns of Crimea was created mainly before the end of the twentieth century. Until 2014 reconstruction of these systems was carried out partly in sections, but not constantly, as needed. This mode is due to the fact that the service life of pipelines and engineering structures should not exceed 50 years, since they are technically obsolete, requiring modernization and replacement.

Since 2014, these works by the authorities controlled by the Russian Federation in Crimea have been practically curtailed. At a number of facilities that were not put into operation in 2014, the components and assemblies were damaged or plundered due to downtime. This situation affects not only the quality of the transported water, but also the volume of its losses, which for 2020 averages 40% to 60% in the cities and towns of Crimea. For example, in the city of Kerch more than 65% of water supply is lost. Thus, the mismanagement by the occupation authorities of the Russian Federation of the utilities of the Crimean cities artificially increased the need for water use due to constantly increasing losses.

Moreover, since 2014, the occupants have not carried out work to maintain the useful volume of the Crimean surface runoff reservoirs. Silting of the Aian, Simferopol, Partyzansk, Chornorichensk reservoirs over the years led to the fact that their useful volume has significantly decreased. But when forming a strategy for the development of the region, the occupation authorities did not take into account the factors of militarization and the development of industrial and recreational infrastructure, which led to an acute shortage of water resources.

Since 2014, the authorities of the Russian Federation in Crimea, instead of revising the water policy towards increasing the efficiency of water use and prioritizing the needs of the industry, have uncovered additional underground water sources (Novohryhoriivsky, Prostornensky), which were previously in an inviolable reserve. These artesian waters were directed along the channel of the North Crimean Canal to the eastern part of Crimea with significant losses of water volume.

Thus, the cities of Crimea are faced with the problem of overpopulation, since the infrastructure of the cities is not designed for such a number of residents. The ill-considered policy of urbanization of the occupation authorities leads to the fact that only in large cities there are opportunities to receive a higher-quality secondary education, and higher education exclusively in large cities. That is, conditions for economic and social development exist in cities, while most of the Crimean Tatars, more than 70%, continue to live in rural areas.

As part of the urbanization policy of Crimea, the occupation authorities have implemented and continue to implement large infrastructure projects. However, none of them agreed with the indigenous people, as required by Articles 18 and 19 of the UNDRIP. Technical implementation of the provisions of Articles 18 and 19 of the UNDRIP 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 judgment in the case Ukraine v. Russia in the part of the complaint about violation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Racial Discrimination, which ordered Russia to restore the activities of the 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.

Since April 2015, the construction of the so-called Crimean Bridge has been underway, the automobile part of which was opened in 2018, and at the end of 2019 a railway service was launched. The construction of this bridge began without the consent of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people and was carried out with violations of the ecosystems of the Crimean peninsula, as well as the Azov and Black Seas. This construction entails a regional ecological disaster.

Also, with gross violations of the ecosystem of the Crimean mountains in 2020, the construction of Tavryda highway was completed, during the construction of which the karst rocks of the Crimean mountains and the landscape were destroyed, which negatively affects the traditional livelihood of the Crimean Tatars. The Russian-controlled authorities of the peninsula are developing quarries for the purpose of extracting crushed stone and other minerals, thus changing the landscape of Crimea, blew up the top of Mount Aharmysh - the main source of the formation of natural water resources, which led to its destruction, disruption of the formation of groundwater and a change in river channels in the village of Kholodivka, the river has dried up in the Kirovsk district, 300-400-year-old juniper forests are being destroyed. In addition, because of the explosions, houses of local residents are being destroyed. In connection with the construction of this highway, some representatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people were forced to leave the territory of their traditional residence.

Thus, we see that the ill-considered policy of urbanization, as well as the illegal resettlement of Russian citizens to Crimea, has devastating consequences for the Crimean Peninsula, the homeland of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people. It also limits the ability of Crimean Tatars to actively participate in the process of urbanization of the peninsula, violating the collective rights of the indigenous people of Crimea, enshrined in UNDRIP.

Best regards,

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