



## ASSOCIATION OF REINTEGRATION OF CRIMEA

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*To UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons*

### **Russian Aggression in Ukraine, Challenges for the Climate Changes and Older Persons' Rights**

Our Association of Reintegration of Crimea (ARC)<sup>1</sup>, as non-governmental expert and human rights organisation<sup>2</sup>, passed long-term researches, related with human rights and humanitarian issues. Since 2020 we sent more than 100 submissions and proposals to UN, OSCE and CoE human rights' strictures, including issues of violation the ecologic rights, major part of them were published in the official web-sources<sup>34</sup>.

On 2021 Our Association submitted to the UN the proposals on two Crimea-related natural objects to the researchathon on sacrifice zones and human rights proposed by the UN Special Rapporteurs, for their forthcoming report on toxic-free environments in which to live, work, study and play to be discussed in UN on 2022. UN rapporteurs intend to highlight the egregious problem of places that are being subjected to severe toxic pollution and risks of climate changes, including emergency disasters.

Since 2014 Crimean peninsula was illegally occupied by Russia. Since 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 Russia committed broad and open military aggression to all Ukraine's territory. Russia refused to execute the ICJ order in this case to stop the aggression<sup>5</sup>.

Russia-controlled troops and mercenaries committed in Ukraine, during this invasion, gross violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights' law already, including broad crimes against property, social and cultural rights and environment, attacks on forests, dams, national parks, riparian and maritime ecosystems, also as against Ukrainian agricultural enterprises<sup>678910111213</sup>.

All war crimes, committed by Russian invaders during ongoing hostilities, are connected with absolutely clear Russia's war targets in maximal destruction the civil infrastructure and environment, including objects, essential for all Ukrainian ethnic and social groups<sup>14</sup>. Those issues now are the subject of the investigation the International Criminal Court<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://arc.construction/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/associations/detail-annonce/associations\\_b/20210005/1348](https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/associations/detail-annonce/associations_b/20210005/1348)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/ARC\\_Submission\\_Responces\\_Toxic\\_01\\_11\\_2021.doc](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/ARC_Submission_Responces_Toxic_01_11_2021.doc)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/toxicwaste/toxics-indigenous-peoples/inputsreceived/2022-07-13/association-reintegration-crimea.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/182>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sofrep.com/news/russian-soldiers-gang-raped-ukrainian-woman-as-her-child-was-crying-in-the-next-room/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/182/182-20220307-PRE-01-00-EN.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-60888528>

<sup>9</sup> <https://hromadske.radio/en/news/2022/03/09/members-of-the-wagner-group-have-been-killed-in-ukraine>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60547807>

<sup>11</sup> <https://arc.construction/26892>

<sup>12</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113652>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/03/ukraine-apparent-war-crimes-russia-controlled-areas>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2022/ukraine-before-after-destruction-photos/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.icc-cpi.int/ukraine>

Due to gross violation the human rights Ukraine filed an application to the European Court of Human Rights<sup>16</sup>. Russian government refused to execute the demand of the ECtHR and the order of ICJ to immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022.<sup>17</sup>

UN General Assembly in its resolution ES-11/1 on 2 March 2022 recognized that the military operations of Russia inside the sovereign territory of Ukraine are on a scale that the international community has not seen in Europe in decades<sup>18</sup>. UN General Assembly in its resolution ES-11/2 on 24 March 2022, articles 5 and 8, demanded again full respect for and protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure<sup>19</sup>.

The UN Human Rights Council adopted on 12th of May a resolution on the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine where pointed that Russia should immediately cease its aggression<sup>20</sup>. Those decisions are not executed by Russian troops, Russia-controlled mercenaries and terroristic groups, which established policy of terror and repressions over the Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine<sup>21,22</sup>.

Till 2023 more new crimes were committed by the Russian troops, including destruction objects of civil infrastructure, forests, dams and other melioration systems by mines explosions, missiles and artillery. Russian forces destroy and loot the technical equipment of Ukrainian forestry and melioration management and of national parks in Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions en masse.

Corresponding negative impacts of Russian aggression against climate include atmospheric pollution due to mass extensive emissions of combustion products, the destruction of thousands of square kilometers of forests and plantations near frontline, as well as natural soils in the combat zone close to the Crimea, the intervention of the Russian occupiers in the melioration management and natural watercourses in Southern Ukraine. All this illegal Russia's activities give strong negative impact on the rights of older persons, including population of Russia-occupied areas.

Also, the negative impact to climate includes the destruction of ecosystems important for oxygen exchange of the Black and Azov seas due to their pollution by oil products and chemicals from Russia's naval vessels and their missile ammunition during Russia's maritime aggression, as well as changes in ecosystems, caused by the mass death of mammals and fish due to noise and explosive pollution under time of sea activity.

Special risks arise in this zone regarding potential changes in the hydrogen sulfide layer located in the deep-water part of the Black Sea, and corresponding emissions, in particular due to explosive processes.

Such changes also include an indirect impact through Russian attacks on Ukrainian nuclear power facilities, such as the Zaporizhzhia NPP, and on Ukrainian green energy facilities in occupied territories and war zones. Potential risks include nuclear incidents caused by Russian military and terrorist activities and the detonation of underwater gas tunnels in the Black Sea by the Russian invaders.

Since the level of hostilities in Ukraine is unprecedented for modern humanity and has no clear prospect of minimization in the coming months, the above risks and challenges have a strong and direct impact on the issue of climate changes.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press?i=003-7282553-9922068>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/182/182-20220316-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3959039?ln=ru>

<sup>19</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3966630?ln=en>

<sup>20</sup> <https://arc.construction/31039>

<sup>21</sup> <https://hromadske.radio/en/news/2022/03/09/members-of-the-wagner-group-have-been-killed-in-ukraine>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60547807>

From the point of view of international law, such Russia's illegal acts can be considered as terrorism<sup>2324</sup> as Russian forces conjunct the attacks on ecologic objects with politic demands. Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia, also as European Parliament and Parliamentary Assemblies of NATO and Council of Europe recognized Russian politic regime as terroristic one already<sup>25</sup>.

Ukraine started some criminal proceedings regarding issues of destruction the ecosystem by Russian troops, with qualification of such activities as ecocide crime, but the whole concept of ecocide crime is not too develop in modern international law and have no conventional protection<sup>26</sup>.

Relevant activities of UN bodies, in the context of climate change will allow intergovernmental bodies, governments of developing countries, environmental protection and human rights organizations, and institutions of the world's indigenous peoples to start a discussion and assessment of the forms of direct and indirect negative ecological and economic impact of Russian aggression in the field of climate change and the related rights of older persons, indigenous peoples, rights to food, water and sanitation.

The result should be the development of plans to counteract the corresponding negative processes at the level of international organizations, governments and non-governmental environmental protection structures, organizations of the indigenous peoples of the world, the inclusion of relevant issues in international documents of legal and political dimensions, in particular in the dimension of development the ecocide conventional criminalization, increased sanctions pressure and international recognition of the Russian regime terrorist one.

Also the above-pointed issues were discussed during the side-event "Impact on the climate change: Crimea, Indigenous Peoples and International Crimes" on Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) held by our experts together with Crimean Tatar Resource Center and Mission of Ukraine on 17 November, 2022.

Experts stressed on COP 27 that the main negative consequences for the indigenous peoples of Crimea, including the Crimean Tatars older persons, are the destruction or damage due to climatic changes of natural ecosystems and areas of traditional farming, namely: the desertification of the Western Crimea, the deforestation of the Crimean mountains, the destruction and disappearance of marine coastal aquatic complexes, the collapse of biosystems of the Azov seas, soil salinization of the Central and Eastern Crimea. All this negative consequences make negative impact on the agricultural potential of region.

Experts stressed on COP 27 the duty for the discussion and assessment by intergovernmental bodies, governments of developing countries, nature protection and human rights organizations, and institutions of the world's indigenous peoples of the forms of direct and indirect negative environmental and economic impact of Russian aggression in the field of climate change and related rights of the indigenous peoples.

The result should be the development of plans to counteract the corresponding negative processes, at the level of international organizations, governments and non-governmental environmental protection structures, organizations of the indigenous peoples of the world, the inclusion of relevant issues in international documents of legal and political dimensions, in particular, in the dimension of increasing sanctions pressure and international recognition of the Russian regime as a terrorist.

More, it seems to be that negative climate changes are not the side effect of Russian

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<sup>23</sup> <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-galic>

<sup>24</sup> <https://arc.construction/16791>

<sup>25</sup> <https://arcrimea.org/en/analytics/2022/11/05/sevastopols-maritime-cotton-and-terrorist-states-blaming-through-victim/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/upload/documents/20221024T110657->

Prosecution%20for%20Ecocide%20as%20a%20weapon%20in%20armed%20conflict%20reflections%20on%20Crimea.pdf

aggression against Ukraine, but it is one of its major goals. As it is known the administration of Russian president use the narratives that the global warming and ocean level rise are allegedly useful for Russia as such situation will allegedly allow to develop actively the natural resources of Russia-controlled northern part of Eurasia.

So we call Independent Experts, also as all UN authorized bodies and agencies, also as their member states to pay a special attention to Russian illegal activities in Ukraine in framework of global risks for climate and relevant global human rights and sustainable development, including risks of climate change-induced disasters for older persons.

1st of May, 2023

Representative of the ARC  
Dr. Borys Babin

