



Омбудсман України  
Ombudsman of Ukraine

1944  
DEPORTATION

2014  
OCCUPATION

STRUGGLE  
CONTINUES !





# ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC CHAPTERS IN CRIMEA'S HISTORY – THE 1944 DEPORTATION

**On May 18,**

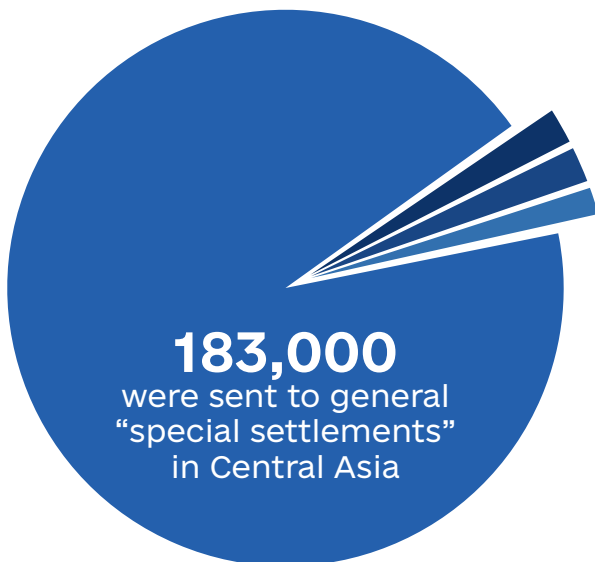
Ukraine marks the **Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People**. It is on this day that we honor the memory of the thousands of Crimean Tatars who were forcibly deported from Crimea by the Soviet regime in 1944. As a result of this forced deportation, they were stripped of their homes and their homeland.



Nearly **200,000** people were forcibly uprooted by the Soviet authorities.

**Regions and places of settlement of Crimean Tatar deportation:**

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**6,000**

were placed in frontline reserve camps

**6,000**

were sent to the Gulag

**5,000**

were forced into labor for the Moscow Coal Trust

Over **40,000** Bulgarians, Armenians, Greeks, Turks, and Roma were also deported.

**The majority of those deported were children, women, and the elderly!**

Additionally, **8,995** servicemen from Crimea were sent to labor camps in Siberia and the Urals in 1945-1946. They were only allowed to reunite with their families in exile in 1953.



**On May 18, 1944, an act of genocide was committed against the Crimean Tatar people.**

**In 2014, Russia occupied the Crimean Peninsula**, and since then, the demographic composition of the region has been deliberately altered, accompanied by ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

# HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN? 1944



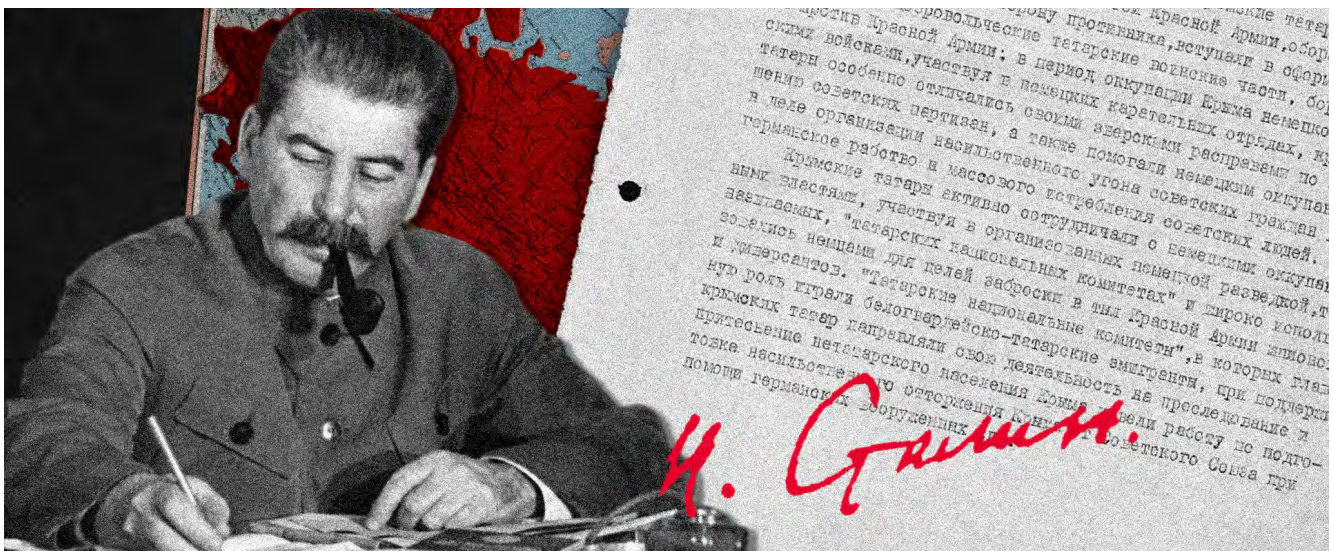
According to the official Soviet version, the **deportation** of Crimea's residents in 1944 was justified by **claims of "mass desertion" and "widespread collaboration."** The Soviet leadership accused the Crimean Tatar indigenous population of collaborating with Nazi Germany during World War II. Later, other Crimean peoples were accused of the same.

## The course of the deportation:

- April 22** → The planning of the deportation began even before the Nazis were driven out of Crimea. On 22 April, in a memo addressed to NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria, Crimean Tatars were accused of mass desertion from the Red Army.
- May 10** → In a letter to Stalin, Lavrentiy Beria reiterated the earlier accusations, adding claims of "treacherous actions by the Crimean Tatars against the Soviet people" and "the undesirability of further residence of the Crimean Tatars on the border outskirts of the Soviet Union." The letter also suggested that the entire Crimean Tatar population should be deported to Uzbekistan.
- 11 May** → Stalin signs State Defense Committee Decree No. 5859ss "On the Crimean Tatars".
- 18 May** → The deportation of the Crimean Tatar population began at dawn on 18 May and was completed by the evening of 20 May.

**32,000 NKVD officers** were involved in carrying out the deportation operation. Families were given, on average, **only 15 to 30 minutes** to gather their belongings. Officially, each family was allowed **to take up to 500 kilograms of possessions and food**, but in reality, they were limited to only what they could carry by hand.

The deportees were transported by truck to railway stations, where they were loaded into freight cars — **either immediately or after being held for 1-2 days**. The trains remained in transit **for 2 to 3 weeks**. The property left behind by the Crimean Tatars was later inventoried and mostly transferred to settlers brought in from Russia.







Those Crimean Tatars who remained were evicted during the subsequent deportation of Armenians, Bulgarians, and Greeks **on 27-28 June 1944**. The few who returned from the special settlements were expelled again from the peninsula until the late 1960s.

People were transported to special settlements, which were guarded by paramilitary security and enclosed with barbed wire.



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In place of the deported indigenous population, the Soviet authorities began the mass resettlement of citizens loyal to the Soviet regime, mainly from Russia, **which completely altered the ethnic composition of the peninsula.**

Even the memory of the former owners of this land was deliberately erased: **more than 80% of Crimean Tatar place names** were replaced with newly invented Russian-Soviet toponyms.



*Place name sign near the village of Malorychenske (historically **Quchuq-Uzen** village), June 2019*



# VICTIMS AND CONSEQUENCES



According to various estimates, **between 20% and 46% of Crimean Tatars died** in the special settlements – the majority of them were elderly people, women, and children.

In an attempt to cover up its crimes, the Soviet authorities carefully concealed the demographic losses resulting from the deportation and the special settlement regime. For many years, the USSR denied the criminal nature of the deportation of the Crimean Peninsula's population.

**The forced detention of the Crimean Tatar people in places of exile continued until the late 1980s.**



## DEPORTATION IS A CRIME!

1989



By decision of a session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, a special commission was established to address the issues of the Crimean Tatar people.

**In November**, the Declaration 'On Recognizing as Illegal and Criminal the Repressive Acts Against Peoples Subjected to Forced Relocation, and on Ensuring Their Rights' was adopted, along with the Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR 'On the Problems of Soviet Germans and Crimean Tatars'.

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1990



In July **1990**, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a resolution 'On Priority Measures to Address Issues Related to the Return of Crimean Tatars to the Crimean Region'. From that time on, the mass return of Tatars to Crimea began.

1991



**On 12 February 1991**, the Crimean region became the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Ukrainian SSR. **On 24 April 1992**, it was renamed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within Ukraine. Importantly, with the entry into force of the Law of Ukraine 'On Citizenship of Ukraine' **on November 13, 1991**, Crimean Tatars who had already returned and were registered in Crimea at that time automatically became citizens of Ukraine.

2005



Subsequently, **on 10 December 2005**, the National Parliament of the Crimean Tatar people (Kurultai) adopted a resolution 'On the recognition of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people on 18 May 1944, decades of forced detention of Crimean Tatars in places of exile and related crimes as an act of genocide'.

2015



Following Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea in March 2014, **on 12 November 2015**, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution 'On Recognition of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People', according to which **18 May** was established as the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People.



2014



**On 20 March 2014**, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted Resolution No. 1140-18 'On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Guaranteeing the Rights of the Crimean Tatar People within the Ukrainian State', which **recognised the Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people of Ukraine** and guaranteed their right to self-determination within Ukraine.

2016



**In 2016**, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine renamed 75 units of the administrative-territorial structure of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, whose names contained symbols of the communist regime. On the recommendation of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the vast majority of renamed settlements were returned to their historical Crimean Tatar names.



The share of Crimean Tatars in the regions of Crimea (in %)

The figure consists of two maps of Crimea, each divided into administrative districts. The left map is titled '1939 (before deportation)' and shows a high concentration of Crimean Tatars, with percentages ranging from 6.7% to 89.5%. The right map is titled '2001 (after return)' and shows a significantly lower and more evenly distributed share, with percentages ranging from 0.5% to 32.2%.

Region	1939 (before deportation) (%)	2001 (after return) (%)
Simferopol	31.5	12.7
Yalta	31.5	17.5
Alushta	24.3	13.3
Yevpatoriya	23.2	21.5
Sevastopol	11.1	17.2
Feodosiya	16.5	21.6
Armutser	10.7	8.1
Yuzhnoye	8	16.7
Yuzhnoye	15.5	16.0
Yuzhnoye	11.1	22.2
Yuzhnoye	13.8	25.5
Yuzhnoye	18.6	15.5
Yuzhnoye	42.1	17.4
Yuzhnoye	70.3	29.2
Yuzhnoye	55.7	7.0
Yuzhnoye	63.1	21.3
Yuzhnoye	89.5	5.9
Yuzhnoye	29.5	0.5
Yuzhnoye	55	1.3
Yuzhnoye	6.7	3.5
Yuzhnoye	13.4	3.0
Yuzhnoye	9.2	17.2
Yuzhnoye	10.7	21.6
Yuzhnoye	15.5	8.1
Yuzhnoye	11.1	16.7
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Yuzhnoye	55	5.9
Yuzhnoye	6.7	0.5
Yuzhnoye	13.4	1.3
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This totalitarian policy goes hand in hand with the persecution and imprisonment of Ukrainians and representatives of the Crimean Tatar and other indigenous peoples disloyal to Russia and its occupation administrations.

7



# RUSSIA'S CRIMINAL POLICY – VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

The Russian Federation continues to act in Crimea using its traditional methods: **closing educational institutions of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, eliminating independent media, and persecuting local residents.**

**Politically and/or religiously motivated persecution of Crimean residents – citizens of Ukraine – by the occupying administrations**

**223** Ukrainian citizens\* have been illegally imprisoned by the occupiers:

- **45** individuals – arrested (charged and detained);
- Over **160** individuals – imprisoned (convicted and serving sentences);
- **25** individuals – without status (detained, but with no clear information about charges, sentence, or precise location).

**Independent lawyers are not allowed access to illegally detained Ukrainian citizens.** Many of the detainees are deprived of proper medical care, and complaints about serious health deterioration are ignored. Many Ukrainians have been deprived of freedom through travel restrictions, house arrest, or administrative detention.

In addition, **the occupiers forcibly transfer political prisoners from Crimea to the territory of the Russian Federation – a clear violation.** In 2023 alone, at least 45 Crimean political prisoners were transferred to Russian prisons and penal colonies. Prisoners often face physical and psychological torture during these transfers.

**Russia also pursues a systematic policy of ousting all religious communities** not controlled by Moscow: the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Muslim communities, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Politically motivated persecution is frequently carried out based on religious identity**

**127** political prisoner cases are linked to religious beliefs\*, including:

- **113** cases involving Crimean Muslims, and **14** cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses.

**The Crimean Eparchy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is experiencing significant persecution**

**As of the beginning of 2014, it included:**

**45** parishes, served by **14** priests.

**As of the beginning of 2022, the eparchy of Crimea included:**

**7** parishes and **4** priests\*\*.

\* According to the Representative Office of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as of May 2025

\*\* According to the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience



In 2014, Russian occupiers in Crimea, for the first time in modern history, banned the holding of the traditional mourning rally on May 18 in the center of Simferopol.



Since 2015, the Russians on the occupied peninsula **have also been issuing warnings to activists, human rights defenders, and civil society representatives about the inadmissibility of holding rallies.** Activists in Crimea constantly receive on average five warnings per year, usually before key Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar commemorative dates.

**These warnings are an attempt to suppress local initiatives regarding the organization of gatherings or other public events.**

**Alongside this, the Russian Federation is committing crimes against the environment and cultural heritage:** historical values are being exported, monuments are being destroyed, rare species of flora and fauna are dying out, and mass deforestation is taking place, including of trees previously protected by Ukrainian law. For example, Russia is currently **destroying the Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai** – the only existing example in the world of Crimean Tatar palace architecture.

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**The Russian Federation destroyed the UNESCO World Heritage Site – the historical and archaeological reserve of Tauric Chersonesos.** Illegal construction is taking place on the site of the destroyed World Heritage site.

The Chersonesos Tavriya Historical and Archaeological Reserve on the ruins of the ancient Greek city of Chersonesos was established in 1892. In 2013, Chersonesos was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and therefore construction is prohibited. This is the only monument in Crimea that was of global significance.

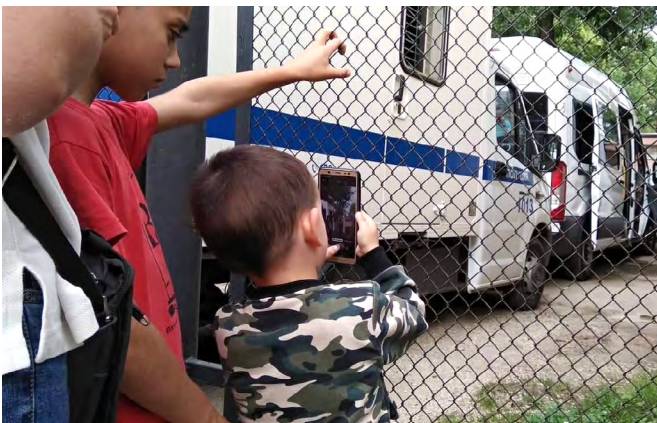


**The militarisation of the region has dealt a serious blow, as large areas have been turned into training grounds.** According to open data, in the five years since the occupation, the Russian Federation has conducted about a hundred military exercises in Crimea.

#### **Children affected by the politically motivated persecution of their parents**

As of January 2025, **more than 230 children were left without a father and a breadwinner in the family.** These children are under psychological pressure as they are bullied by their peers because their parents are considered criminals. **The children's suffering does not end** after the search or after the arrest of their parents, which they witnessed – **they remain in a state of constant stress and fear.**

**The Russian Federation also militarises Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories, involving them in the so-called 'Unarmy' and so on.** The goal is to change the identity of Ukrainian children, to re-educate them so that in the future they become soldiers of the Russian army.



**These actions by Russia are a gross violation of international humanitarian law and human rights.** They are part of a large-scale campaign of intimidation and harassment of those who disagree with the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.



# 2025 – THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!



**Ukraine continues working to return and liberate its citizens!**

Due to the actions of the Russian Federation, the situation in temporarily occupied Crimea continues to deteriorate, especially in areas related to human rights and international humanitarian law.

Russia's crimes in the occupied territories must be publicly assessed by the international community.

**Those responsible must be brought to justice!**



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*Крим – Україна!*

#CrimeaIsUkraine



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