



# CRIMEA: important facts and FAQs



- 1. The Russian aggression against Ukraine started with the occupation** of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (hereafter — occupied **Crimea**) in 2014. In February, 2024, we marked the **10th anniversary** of the occupation of Crimea. **The war began not two, but ten years ago** with the occupation of Crimea. The war will be over only when all of the territory of Ukraine will be liberated, including the Crimean peninsula.
- 2.** It is a logical mistake to consider that a “Crimean compromise” (that might be offered to Ukraine directly or indirectly) would provide peace. On the contrary, **Russia has had control over Crimea for 10 years and we can see how Moscow used that** — Crimea was isolated, oppressed and turned into a military base to serve further aggressive Russian strategies. In February, 2022, Crimea has been used as a springboard for the Russian full scale invasion of Ukraine.
- 3. It is not just the land that matters for Ukraine, but Ukrainian citizens in the first place**, including Ukrainians and indigenous peoples of Crimean Tatars — **who are deprived of the possibility to live freely in the land of their ancestors that is the only home for them.**
- 4. Russia’s all-out war against Ukraine would not have been possible without control over Crimea.** Multiple rockets targeting mainland Ukraine were and are launched from occupied Crimea and/or its territorial waters. According to the information of the MOD as of end-February 2024, at least 120 times Shaheds and Kalibr missiles were launched from Crimea to mainland Ukraine, including the civilian infrastructure. Moreover, security experts say that in January 2024 only: 3 Kalibr missiles, 9 Iskander ballistic missiles, and 223 Shaheds and 14 different types of UAVs were used to strike the mainland from Crimea.
- 5.** Recently, the International Criminal Court issued two warrants against Russian military commanders for the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure. One of them represents the Russian Black Sea Fleet stationed also in the Crimea. Namely, Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov, an Admiral in the Russian Navy, Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, is “allegedly responsible for the war crime of directing attacks

at civilian objects and the war crime of causing excessive incidental harm to civilians or damage to civilian objects”, says ICC<sup>1</sup>. Military vehicles, ammunition and personnel are transferred to and via the occupied territory to fuel Russian war against Ukraine. **The liberation of Crimea is a must-have for the security in the Black Sea region.**

**6. That is why the deoccupation and reintegration of Crimea is inherited in the Peace Formula suggested by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy.** And none of the 10 points of the formula can be implemented without the restoration of control of Ukraine over the Crimean peninsula. This plan remains the only way to restore just and long-lasting peace for Ukraine. Among the points of the Peace Formula: radiation and nuclear safety, food and energy security, releasing of prisoners and deported persons, restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, withdrawal of Russian troops and cessation of hostilities, restoration of justice, ecological safety, preventing escalation and repetition of aggression, confirmation of the end of the war. **There are no alternatives to this peace plan:** only Ukraine, the country fighting against this war of aggression, can define what just and sustainable peace looks like. Therefore, all the initiatives of other states for a peaceful settlement can only be based on the Ukrainian peace formula.

**7.** It is important to note **Ukraine’s successes in the Black Sea, even though Ukraine has no fleet. Ukraine managed to destroy and/or damage 1/3 of 80 warships of the Russian Black Sea fleet,** which led to the withdrawal of the rest of the Russian fleet from the western part of the Black Sea and subsequent changes in the security situation. Among other things, **it allowed the “grain corridor” to continue to operate.** Also, the number of missile launches from the area has decreased, and the replenishment of the Russian fleet has slowed down.

[1] — [icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-sergei-ivanovich-kobylash-and](https://icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-sergei-ivanovich-kobylash-and)



**8. The global food crisis provoked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine will not be resolved until Crimea remains occupied and the Black Sea remains militarized.** Without the deoccupation of Crimea, demilitarization of the Black Sea is impossible, and, accordingly, the security of maritime food routes is not achievable.

**9. As long as Crimea remains occupied, and the ports are not unblocked, the Ukrainian economy will not work at full capacity.** Therefore, the deoccupation of Crimea is a matter of survival for the Ukrainian people, the viability of the Ukrainian economy and the sustainability of the Ukrainian state.

## Indigenous Crimean Tatar people

**10. Crimean Tatars, indigenous peoples of Crimea, sunni Muslims, are a primary target of the Russian political persecutions and oppression.** Among 214 political prisoners from Crimea (as of beginning of March 2024) 135 (around 60%) are Crimean Tatars whilst this ethnic group constitutes around 15 % of Crimean population. When the mobilization campaign had started the military commissariats were massively spreading the summonses in the places of the compact living of Crimean Tatars. We cannot afford to abandon people who have been committed to the Ukrainian state and pro-democratic aspirations throughout years of Ukrainian independence.

**11. Russia has always been trying to erase the diversity of Crimea which does not fit into its strategy of turning the peninsula into a military base.** Russian imperial policies of different ages (be it Kathrin the Second in 18 century or Joseph Stalin in 20 century) targeted not just Crimean Tatars as the most unloyal population, but also other ethnic groups which contributed to the Crimean diversity. Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Germans were targeted by the repressive policies, in particular, some of them were deported. **Moscow not just hasn't apologized for this imperial behavior, but it continues to implement these imperial practices in Crimea now as well as in other temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories.**

**12.** This year we will mark the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people which is recognised by Ukraine as well as by some other states as genocide of the Crimean Tatar people. We are advocating for such recognition worldwide - not for the sake of the past, but for the sake of the future. Russian policies towards Crimean Tatars have not changed in its essence and what this fact tells us in the first place - is that Crimea has to be unoccupied, otherwise, the Indigenous peoples will not be able to freely and peacefully live in their own land. The deportation of the Crimean Tatar people took place on the orders of Joseph Stalin in May 1944. The operation involved 32 thousand NKVD officers. Within 2 days, 200,000 Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia, thousands of kilometers from their homes. Over 30 thousand Crimean Tatars were killed during the year. The Crimean economy, deprived of experienced owners, also suffered damage. There was virtually no indigenous population left in Crimea, instead the peninsula was settled by representatives of other regions of the Soviet Union and subjected to total Russification. The memory of the indigenous population was also erased through the renaming of settlements and deprivation of their authentic Crimean Tatar names.

**13. Every time Russia has been gaining control over Crimea it resulted in the colonization of the peninsula.** Before the first annexation of Crimea in 1783 by the Russian empire Crimean Tatars made up around 90% of the population of the peninsula. As a result of colonization, this figure dropped to around 29% (dates as of 1917). Next iteration of the empire - Soviet Union and Stalin's deportation of 1944 has left Crimea with almost 0% of Crimean Tatars and an absolute majority of Russians who were relocated to Crimea massively. Currently, the occupying Russian administration applies various practices to again colonize Crimea. Not less than 100 thousand of Ukrainian citizens (lots of them are Crimean Tatars) fled Crimea since 2014, large scale invasion most likely doubled this figure. Whilst at least 500 to 800 thousand of Russian citizens were brought to Crimea, where the general population before 2014 was around 2,3 million of people.

**14.** Crimean Tatars are the indigenous people of Crimea, who have been constantly oppressed throughout their history of coexistence with Russians. **They can only be safe within the Ukrainian state.** In particular, this is declared and emphasized by the Medzhlis of the Crimean Tatar people, which is a self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars.



**15. Ukraine ensures the rights of Crimean Tatars.** The law on the indigenous peoples of Ukraine was adopted in 2021. The Office of the Crimea Platform developed a draft law on the status of the Crimea Tatar people. Crimean Tatars are currently among the Ukrainian top officials, including the Minister of Defence. In the meantime, the Mejlis is banned and criminalized in Russia as an alleged “extremists organization” (despite the ruling of the UN Court of Justice prescribing Russia should remove this ban), its leaders are persecuted and either had to flee Crimea to the mainland Ukraine or sentenced to huge prison terms - like the deputy head of the Mejlis Nariman Dzhelyal (convicted by the occupying administration to 17 years of imprisonment).

## **How about the thesis that Crimea is Putin’s “red line” and the deoccupation may lead to the use of a nucs?**

**16. Ukraine is already fighting on territory that Russia has declared its own** and included in its constitution. Despite intimidation and blackmail attempts, Russia has not resorted to using nuclear weapons after, for example, the liberation of Kherson as well as after the attack on the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea and after numerous strikes and explosions at military facilities on the territory of the Crimean peninsula. Between January and December 2023, in 365 days, the Ukrainian Defense Forces carried out at least 184 attacks on Russian military targets in the occupied Crimean peninsula and on ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, an average of one attack per day. **Attempts to threaten the international community by talking about “red lines in Crimea” is the same intimidation tactic.**

**17.** Ben Hodges, Lieutenant General (Ret.), former Commanding General of the US Army Europe said in one of the interviews: “These are self-imposed red lines, and we continue to self-deter for 20 months. Every month there is a new red line that we declared or assumed is crossed, and nothing happens. The one that some people were worried about the most is that if Crimea falls or looks so vulnerable, that’s the red line for

the Russians. And instead it's apparently **a red line for the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, who is now having to relocate because their vulnerability** has been exposed by the use of British provided Storm Shadow. **The [Russian] Black Sea Fleet is departing Crimea because of what Ukraine is able to do, even though Ukraine doesn't have a fleet."**

**18. Threatening with nuclear weapons is profitable for Putin**

(because it is an argument that is not aimed at rationality, but at emotions, namely at fear). It is much more profitable than actually using it.

**19.** The **use of nuclear weapons would mean Russia admitting the fact that it has lost the conventional war**, and Putin is unlikely to be ready to admit it so easily.

**20.** The use of nuclear weapons **would contradict the position of China and India**, Russia's key and most influential BRICS partners. They publicly expressed their concerns about the possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons.

## Consequences of the occupation

**21.** The process of **deportation and illegal transfer of Ukrainian children has also started from Crimea since at least 2015 which was confirmed also by the independent international observers (check the report of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism "Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation"** <sup>2)</sup>). Ukrainian orphans were forcefully granted Russian citizenship and at least some of them were adopted by the Russian citizens and transferred to Russia. The Ukrainian state is not aware of their whereabouts, although there were multiple requests from the MFA. Given the possible changes in names there is no chance that we can track their traces now. This practice expanded now to other territories occupied by Russia recently, with the deterioration of the illegal administrative practices that made the process of deportation and illegal adoption even easier.

[2] — [osce.org/odihr/542751](https://osce.org/odihr/542751)





**22. The deportation of children and indoctrination of young Ukrainian citizens in occupied territories creates further threats and prepares new “cannon fodder” for the Russian army**

in all occupied territories, including Crimea. Deportation, family separation, transfer to Russian families or state institutions, imposition of citizenship, russification and militarization have been used to forcibly turn children into enemies of their own people. Russia’s attempts to call the deportation “a humanitarian mission” are shattered by the proven facts of various indoctrination programs designed to force children to renounce their Ukrainian identity and accept Russian citizenship. In the military-patriotic camps that have been operating in Crimea for many years, there is a total russification and militarization of Ukrainian children.

**23.** The full scale invasion hit Ukrainian citizens of **Crimea even harder. The fact that the peninsula was turned into a military base made Crimea even more isolated, more people were arrested, new repressive russian laws** were expanded to the occupied Crimean territory and applied to the civilians which caused dozens of new arrests and persecutions. Crimea started to serve as **a hub for the illegal transfer of hostages and POWs** from the newly seized territories, including children. The so-called summer camps are used to de facto imprison Ukrainian children from other regions and keep them for months there without access even to communication with their parents and oftentimes in conditions that may be considered as inhumane.

**24. Occupation of Crimea became a playbook for further Russian aggression** against Ukraine. Those practices, including major **human rights violations** (abductions, torture and threatening, killing of pro-Ukrainian activists) as well as the very **technology of the occupation** that have been used in Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014 were copied, multiplied and used in the newly occupied territories in 2022.



## How about history? Crimea has always been... what?

**25. Crimea is geographically connected to mainland Ukraine. The Crimean peninsula has a land corridor with mainland Ukraine, unlike Russia.** The Kerch bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian Federation cannot compensate for the value of the land corridor that supplies water, electricity and that served for centuries for economical and cultural interlinks between people living in the mainland Ukraine and in the Crimean peninsula. The stepland zone of the southern part of Ukraine and Crimea are considered to be a single geographical zone. **That is why Moscow is so eager to pursue and sustain an occupied land corridor from Crimea to Russia.**

**26. Those who criticize Ukraine's attempts to use historical arguments should first stop saying that "Crimea has always been Russian" which is not the case.** Furthermore, it was not Ukraine that tried to revise history, but Russia that went against international law and the UN Charter by occupying Crimea and inventing fake historical justifications for doing so. Ukraine has existed and developed within its own internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. **Ethnic Russians constituted the majority in Crimea even before the beginning of the occupation, but even polls of 2013 showed that the majority of the Crimean population supported Ukraine's territorial integrity.**

**27.** Historically and civilizationally, **Crimea and southern Ukrainian regions belong to the same region**, including from the point of view of economy. Omeljan Pritsak, Ukrainian-American historian, Orientalist, founder and first director of the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University and the A. Yu. Krymskyi Institute of Oriental Studies once said that "Crimean Tatars, along with Cossacks, are the ancestors of Ukrainians".



## Resistance in Crimea

**28. Crimean resistance exists.** Since February 24, 2022, more than 700 people were brought to responsibility for the actions and activities against the war and in support of mainland part of Ukraine. These actions range from spreading the leaflets about war crimes committed by Russia to raising Ukrainian flags and Molotov cocktails thrown into the occupying administration buildings.

**29.** Today, we are aware of 4 underground organizations acting in the Crimean peninsula as a pro-Ukrainian resistance movement. These are “ATESH”, “Yellow Ribbon”, “Crimean Fighting Seagulls”, “Zla Mavka” - brave people with a pro-Ukrainian position, who are waiting for Ukraine and help the Armed Forces of Ukraine with providing the information on the military objects in the occupied area. A large number of successful operations were carried out precisely with the help of Crimean partisans. Ukraine has someone and something to return.

## What Ukraine is going to do with the deoccupied Crimea given the severe consequences of the occupation?

**30. The Ukrainian state works on multiple issues related to the reintegration of Crimea even now.** The Office of the Crimea Platform jointly with governmental and non-governmental partners came up with several strategic documents - Strategy of the economic restoration of Crimea, Strategy of the first steps of the state after the deoccupation, Strategy on the cognitive deoccupation. The project “The Team of Crimea” was launched to prepare human resources for the deoccupied territory of Crimea.

**31. Ukraine is developing systematic approaches that will comply with international law** and is eager not to repeat its own or others' mistakes. We learn from other countries' experiences, but we also closely monitor the processes in the Ukrainian liberated territories, observing the problems and challenges they face.

**32. Ukraine is not going to make any ethnic profiling. We distinguish between ethnic Russians who are citizens of Ukraine and live in Crimea legally, and Russian citizens who arrived on the peninsula illegally after 2014** as settlers participating in the colonization of the peninsula by Russia. Such people will have to leave the Crimean peninsula, but Ukraine will apply a case-by-case approach, will follow international law and will not resort to mass deportation.

**33. Any decisions of the status of Crimea can be made only after Ukrainian victory.** Martial law does not allow any changes into the Constitution of Ukraine right now. However, now we try to use legal instruments available to us to ensure as exhaustive as possible rights of the indigenous peoples of Ukraine, including Crimean Tatars.

**34.** All of these strategies are **being developed in coordination and consultations with the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people**, self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars.

**35.** Civil security, public safety and imposing the EU standards in everyday life in Crimea are among the top-priorities for Ukraine's government and civil society.

**36.** The **liberation of Crimea will open a window of opportunity for international investment** in the hotel, restaurant, tourism and other businesses. Ukraine's international partners will benefit from doing business in a free, transparent and competitive environment in the de-occupied Crimea.



Mission  
Of The President Of Ukraine  
In The Autonomous Republic Of Crimea



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