



ASSOCIATION OF REINTEGRATION
OF CRIMEA

France, Paris, 14 Avenue de l'Opera, 75001
Ukraine, Kyiv, 56 Kharkivske highroad, 02175
arconstructionofcrimea@gmail.com
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To UN Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises

Situation with COVID-19 in the Crimea: current challenges

DrHab, Prof. Borys Babin, PhD Hanna Ustinova-Boichenko, PhD Olexiy Plotnikov, PhD Andrii Chvaliuk, PhD Victor Filatov, experts of ARC

Our Association of Reintegration of Crimea (ARC)¹, as non-governmental expert and human rights organisation², with activities devoted to Crimea's issues, submits this application to the UN Working Group for its report on "COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learnt and moving forward", to be presented to the 50th session of the Human Rights Council. Our responses are devoted to the situation with COVID-19 pandemic in the Crimea; it deals with the issues identified by the Association in its work, namely the issue of intentional and organised Russian policy against rights to life, health and development, also as for gender and racial discrimination committed in the Crimea since 2014.

Illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea by Russia since 2014 have been condemned in a set of international acts, including UN GA resolutions 2014 68/262, 2016 71/205, 2017 72/190, 2018 73/263 2019 74/168, 2020 75/192, 2021 76/70, 2018 73/194, 2019 74/17, 2020 75/29, 2021 76/179³, resolutions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 1988 (2014), 2028 (2015), 2067 (2015), 2112 (2016), 2132 (2016), 2145 (2017), 2198 (2018), 2231 (2018) etc., of the European Parliament's resolutions 2014/2841 (RSP), 2014/2965 (RSP), 2016/2556 (RSP), 2016/2692 (RSP), 2017/2596 (RSP), 2017/2869 (RSP), 2018/2754 (RSP), 2018/2870 (RSP), 2019/2734 (RSP), 2019/2202 (INI) etc. Attempted annexation the Crimea by Russia was never recognized by the international community. Human rights violations in the Crimea now are the subject to consideration in international courts, including the International Court of Justice (case 166)⁴ and the European Court of Human Rights (case 20958/14 and others).⁵

Association gives such information for the questions, pointed by the WG BHR:

1. Russian humanitarian, social and financial 'policy' in the Crimea caused, since 2014, strong negative impact on the health care and educational systems of the peninsula. In 2014 Russia started a "medical reform" in Crimea and implemented its "own insurance medicine model"⁶. In 2020, this resulted in the absence of adequate quantity of medical personnel in Crimean hospitals⁷ that minimized the possibility of effective medical aid to the residents of Crimea^{8,9}, and violated their right

¹ <https://arc.construction/>

² https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/associations/detail-annonce/associations_b/20210005/1348

³ for example, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/179>

⁴ <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/166/166-20191108-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>

⁵ <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-207622>

⁶ <https://arc.construction/14919>

⁷ <https://arc.construction/8847>

⁸ <https://arc.construction/15547>

⁹ <https://arc.construction/3773>

to health and right to life guaranteed by multilateral human rights multilateral. At the same time Russia as occupier-State has an obligation under Geneva Convention IV to ensure adequate medical aid to the population of Crimea, which is bluntly violated by its ineffective medical policies.

Regarding to some so-called “official” statistics, published by Russia-controlled “Crimean and Sevastopol department” of its Federal Statistic Service, the part of Crimean residents that have a “healthy kind of life” decreased from 29.2 % in 2019 to 16.3 in 2021¹⁰. Quantity of medical institutions in the Crimea decreased from 117 in 2014 to 68 in 2020, among them special children hospitals from 6 to 4; quantity of Crimean polyclinics, separated from other structures, decreased in 2014-2020 from 56 to 19; quantity of hospital beds in 24-hour hospitals in Crimea decreased in 2014-2020 from 16328 to 15803 and of beds for pregnant women, women in childbirth and puerperas decreased from 938 to 588; quantity of paramedic-obstetric stations in Crimea decreased in 2014-2020 from 504 to 493¹¹. Regarding to such “official” statistics during 2014-2020 the common quantity of Crimean medic personal increased but in part of number of some “other categories” like military medic personnel; quantity of dermato-venereologists, regarding Russia’s army presence in region, also increased, from 134 to 155¹². But, for example, quantity of Crimean pediatricians decreased from 740 to 705, and of social hygienists and health organizers – from 447 to 307¹³; quantity of obstetrician in the Crimea decreased in 2014-2020 from 902 to 710 persons¹⁴.

It is practically impossible to find figures of deaths’ reasons and incidence dynamics in the Crimea, but regarding Sevastopol “official” data the new-established oncology cases number increased in 2014-2020 from 5505 to 5861 and number of new-established congenital anomalies (malformations), deformities and chromosomal abnormalities increased in Sevastopol from 353 in 2014 to 1629 in 2020¹⁵. So the COVID situation caused collapse in all areas of life in peninsula.

Since 2014, Russia bans usage of medical drugs certified by the Ukrainian authorities, including antibiotic and antiviral medicals produced in European countries and allowed for usage in Ukraine¹⁶. Instead, Russia provided Crimean medical institutions and pharmacies with own-produced drugs, often of extremely low quality. Furthermore, Russian “authorities” ban citizens from carrying high-quality medical drugs from Ukraine’s mainland, which is punishable as “smuggling”, including confiscation of drugs¹⁷. In 2020, Russia banned all anti-COVID vaccines in Crimea¹⁸, except those which are produced in the Russia without internationally recognized certification procedure (like “Sputnik” vaccine)¹⁹. To make things worse, the vaccination of Crimean inhabitants by the Russian non-certified vaccine is de-facto obligatory for citizens, including all levels of education²⁰. Such policies bear features of a medical experiment over the population of the occupied territory²². This is another impermissible violation of the Geneva Convention IV. This also violates the rights of Crimean residents to health, to life and to privacy, as well as prohibition of degrading treatment and enforced medical experiments, guaranteed by multilateral human rights treaties.

Russia’s de-facto “authorities” in Crimea did not take action to prevent and address racial discrimination²³, hate speech, xenophobia²⁴, and related intolerance²⁵ including in the COVID-19

¹⁰ [https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/2.9.4.%20Доля%20граждан%20ведущих%20здоровый%20образ%20жизни\(1\).pdf](https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/2.9.4.%20Доля%20граждан%20ведущих%20здоровый%20образ%20жизни(1).pdf)

¹¹ <https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/BNSm8YDK/+Основные%20показатели%20здравоохранения%202014-2020.pdf>

¹² <https://arc.construction/25876>

¹³ <https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/bVyVC718/+Численность%20врачей%20по%20специальностям%202014-2020.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/7C9WGjee/+Средний%20медперсонал%202014-2020.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://crimea.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/классы%20болезней.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://arc.construction/5967>

¹⁷ <https://arc.construction/8252>

¹⁸ <https://arc.construction/5003>

¹⁹ <https://arc.construction/15669>

²⁰ <https://arc.construction/4829>

²¹ <https://arc.construction/9108>

²² <https://arc.construction/5074>

²³ <https://arc.construction/11306>

²⁴ <https://arc.construction/15537>

context. Racial discrimination of ethnic Ukrainians and indigenous Crimean Tatars in Crimea, including IDPs is now subject to consideration in the International Court of Justice²⁶. Russia violated the right to freedom of movement by systematic blockade of all three ABL checkpoints used to enter and exit Ukraine's mainland due to "COVID-related quarantine measures". All Russian policies and measures "to minimize health risks associated with the COVID-19"²⁷ by blocking the visits of Crimean residents to Ukraine's mainland²⁸ and of IDPs to Crimea²⁹ are not effective even potentially, since in 2020-2021 the Russia's "authorities" organized mass visits of Russian tourists to Crimea (more than one million in the summer-2020)^{30,31}, the resettlement of own residents to Crimea (more than sixty thousands of Russians have been resettled to Sevastopol alone in 2020)³², and by massive military trainings (more that twenty thousands Russian soldiers were re-dislocated from Russia to Crimea only in the first half of 2021)³³. Such blockade violates the practice possibility of Crimean girls take part in the educational procedures on the mainland of Ukraine.

The Russian "anti-COVID" policy in Crimea violates the right to sustainable development, guaranteed by the above-pointed multilateral treaties. Russia's "authorities" did not adopt the "COVID-19 socio-economic response and recovery plan"^{34,35} and do not use the human rights-based approach³⁶ in pandemic-related issues³⁷, they do not use the human rights and gender-sensitive indicators³⁸ in this area³⁹. Russia's "authorities" do not protect human rights of the population of Crimea, including IDPs, in the COVID-19 context⁴⁰. Such "powers" violate their right to health, housing, education, information, social protection, basic services, safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration⁴¹.

2-4. So all the "efforts" and "remedies", provided by the so-called "authorities" in the Crimea in the COVID-19 pandemic were definitely non-effective. A "constructive and meaningful dialogue" with civil society actors and communities to address business-related human rights abuses during the pandemic was not organized in the Crimea, any "efforts" including steps to empower and protect workers and to build a resilient and inclusive society and economy able to prevent human rights abuses in future crisis situations was not done by the de-facto "authorities", and risk of vulnerability or marginalization were heightened for the ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, discriminated in the peninsula. UN activities are extremely important in such situation. It would be beneficial if the UN Working Group's research will pay more attention to the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic in zones on conflict and foreign education like modern Crimea. The reports of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine may be suitable for this issue also; we may recommend to this UN Mission monitor more actively the issues of human rights' violations done by the Russia's de-facto "authorities" in the Crimea, especially regarding gender and racial dimension, minorities' and indigenous rights, rights to life, to health, and right to sustainable development also.

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Representative of the Association of Reintegration of Crimea
Dr. Borys Babin

²⁵ <https://arc.construction/5788>

²⁶ <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/166/166-20191108-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>

²⁷ <https://arc.construction/1537?lang=ru>

²⁸ <https://arc.construction/5037?lang=ru>

²⁹ <https://arc.construction/12003?lang=ru>

³⁰ <https://arc.construction/15317?lang=ru>

³¹ <https://arc.construction/1239?lang=ru>

³² <https://www.blackseanews.net/read/176965>

³³ <https://arc.construction/12823?lang=ru>

³⁴ <https://arc.construction/4052?lang=ru>

³⁵ <https://arc.construction/8106?lang=ru>

³⁶ <https://arc.construction/2597?lang=ru>

³⁷ <https://arc.construction/8765?lang=ru>

³⁸ <https://arc.construction/15590>

³⁹ <https://arc.construction/10479>

⁴⁰ <https://arc.construction/7082?lang=ru>

⁴¹ <https://arc.construction/12411>

