



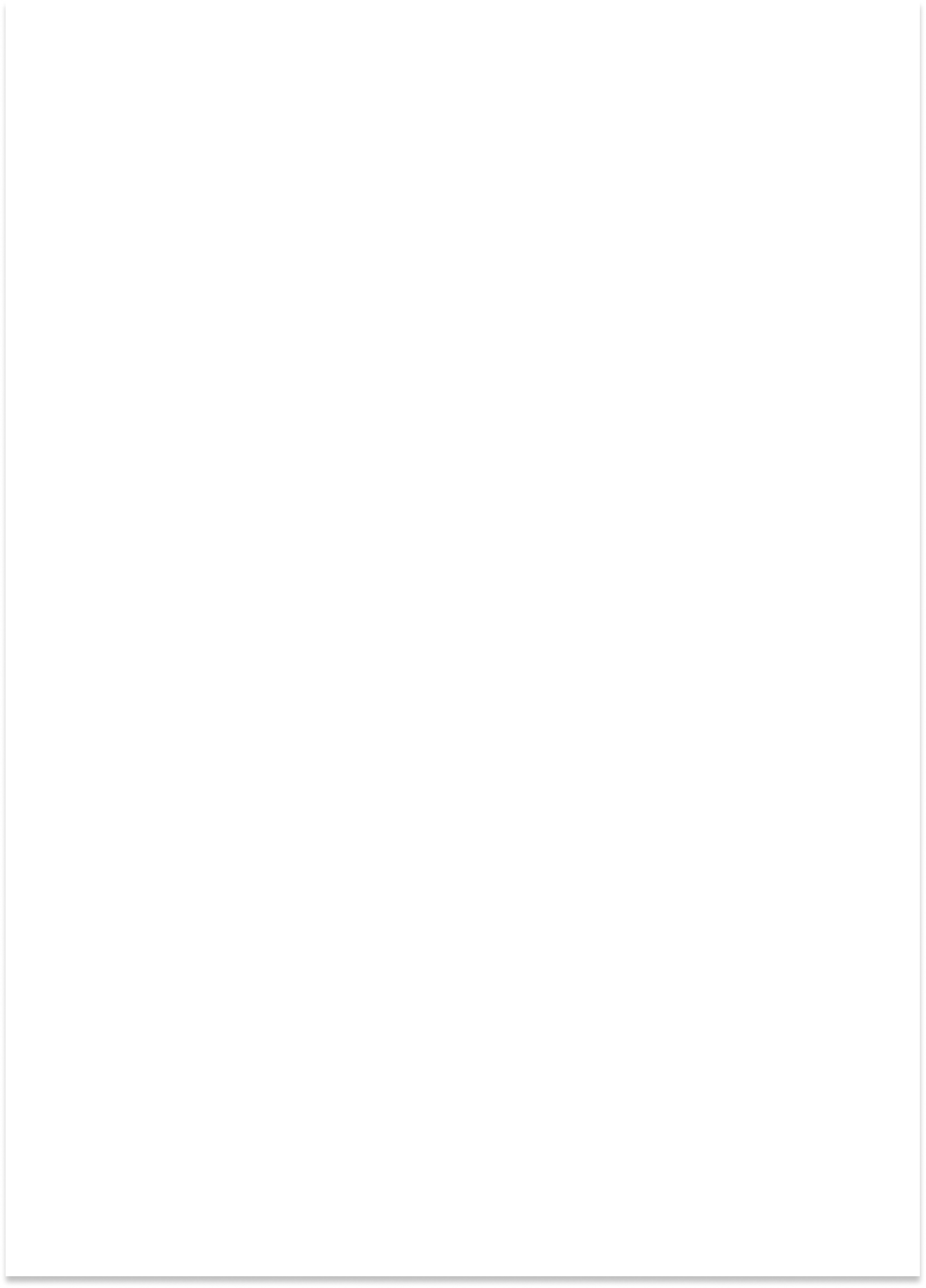
# **CRIMEA:** **IMPORTANT FACTS** **AND FAQs**



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



CRIMEA  
PLATFORM





## Geopolitical context

- 1. The Russian aggression against Ukraine began with the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in 2014.** February 2025 marks the 11th anniversary of the peninsula's occupation. **The war began not 3 but 11 years** ago with the occupation of Crimea and will only be over when the entire territory of Ukraine is liberated, including the Crimean Peninsula.
- 2. It is a dangerous mistake to think that any "Crimean compromise" (which might be offered to Ukraine directly or indirectly) would bring peace. Russia has had control over Crimea for 11 years, and there is ample evidence of how Moscow abused it:** Crimea has been isolated, oppressed, and turned into a military base to serve Russia's further aggressive strategies. In February 2022, Crimea was used as a springboard for the full-scale Russian offensive on Ukraine. Freezing the conflict will not lead to peace. The world already went through this in 2008 in Georgia, and in less than 6 years, Russia invaded Ukraine. Ukraine pursued a policy of non-provocation and diplomacy from 2014 to 2022, with the number of victims only increasing, and Russia used this time to prepare for the next stage of aggression.
- 3. The geopolitical context will not influence Ukraine's intention to liberate its territories to the 1991 borders,** including Crimea. Ukraine will defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty in the most appropriate way depending on the situation.
- 4. It is not just the land that is at stake for Ukraine, but first and foremost — the Ukrainian citizens,** including the representatives of the Indigenous peoples, **who are being deprived of their right to live freely in their homeland.**
- 5. Support for Ukraine and non-recognition of the attempted annexation** have been expressed in numerous international resolutions, including those of the UN General Assembly, PACE, and OSCE PA. In 2018, the USA issued the Crimea Declaration, which

refuses to recognize the Kremlin's claims of sovereignty over territory seized by force in contravention of international law and thus rejects Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea and pledges to maintain this policy until Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored<sup>1</sup>. In 2024, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) announced its decision in the interstate case *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, where it found Russia responsible for systematic violations of human rights and freedoms in occupied Crimea<sup>2</sup>.

**6. Russia's all-out war against Ukraine would not have been possible without control over Crimea.** In 2024, Russia launched at least 253 attacks on mainland Ukraine from occupied Crimea and/or its territorial waters. No one can feel safe anywhere in Ukraine if Crimea is occupied by Russia and used as a military base for its aggression in the Black Sea region.

**7.** On 5 March 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Russian military commanders for deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. One of them represents the Russian Black Sea Fleet stationed also in Crimea. Namely, Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov, an Admiral in the Russian Navy and 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. Military vehicles, ammunition, and personnel are being transferred to and through the occupied territory to fuel the Russian war against Ukraine. **The liberation of Crimea is essential for the security of the Black Sea region.**

**8.** A secure and just peace requires the de-occupation and reintegration of Crimea as enshrined in the Peace Formula proposed by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This plan remains the only way to restore justice and stable peace because only Ukraine, the country fighting against this war of aggression, can define what justice and sustainable peace look like.

<sup>1</sup> <https://2017-2021.state.gov/crimea-declar>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=002-14347>



**9.** It is important to note **Ukraine's successful operations in the Black Sea, even though Ukraine has a limited fleet.** Ukraine managed to damage and/or destroy  $\frac{1}{3}$  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.

**10.** **The global food crisis provoked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine will not be resolved as long as Crimea remains occupied and the Black Sea remains militarized by Russia.** Without the de-occupation of Crimea, the security of the maritime food routes is impossible.

**11.** **As long as Crimea remains occupied, and the ports are not unblocked, the Ukrainian economy will not operate at full capacity.** Therefore, the de-occupation of Crimea is a matter of the survival of the Ukrainian people, the viability of the Ukrainian economy, and the sustainability of the Ukrainian state.

## Indigenous peoples. Crimean Tatars

**12.** Crimean Tatars are the Indigenous people of Ukraine, who have been constantly oppressed throughout their history of coexistence with Russians. They can only be safe within the Ukrainian state. This is particularly stated and emphasized by the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, which is a self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars.

**13.** **Crimean Tatars, the Indigenous people of Ukraine are a primary target of Russian political persecution and repression.** Of the 218 Crimean political prisoners (as of the beginning of 2025), 132 (about 60%) are Crimean Tatars, although this ethnic group makes up about 15% of the general peninsula's population. Experts note that persecution of Crimean Tatars leads to their "hybrid deportation".

**14. Ukraine guarantees the rights of the Crimean Tatars, as the Law on the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine was adopted in 2021**

(according to that law, Crimean Tatars, Krymchaks, and Karaites are recognized as the Indigenous peoples of Ukraine). Additionally, the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea/Office of the Crimea Platform drafted a law project on the status of the Crimean Tatar people where the rights of the Crimean Tatars are more precisely defined. Crimean Tatars are visible in Ukrainian political, social, and cultural spheres. Meanwhile, the Mejlis is banned and criminalized in Russia as an alleged “extremist organization” (despite the ruling of the UN Court of Justice that Russia should lift this ban), and its leaders are persecuted and either had to flee Crimea to the Ukrainian mainland or were sentenced to long prison terms.

**15. As a colonial power, Russia has always tried to erase Crimea’s diversity, which did not fit into its strategy of turning the peninsula into a military base.**

Russian imperial colonial policy at different historical stages (whether it was Catherine II in the 18th century or Joseph Stalin in the 20th century) targeted not only the Crimean Tatars as the most disloyal population but also other ethnic groups that contributed to Crimea’s diversity. Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, and Germans were also targeted by the repressive policy, with some of them having been deported. **Moscow continues to implement these neo-imperial and neo-colonial practices in Crimea as well as in other temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories.**

**16.** The brutal **deportation of the Crimean Tatar people** took place on the orders of Joseph Stalin in May 1944. The operation involved 32,000 NKVD (Soviet Internal Security Service) officers. Within 2 days, 200,000 Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia, thousands of kilometers away from their homes. More than 30,000 Crimean Tatars died on the way to the so-called special settlements or during the first year of living there. The Crimean economy, deprived of experienced owners, also **suffered irreversible damage.** There was virtually no Indigenous population left in Crimea, and it was settled by people from other regions of the Soviet Union and subjected to total



Russification instead. The memory of the Indigenous population was also artificially erased by changing the names of 95% of settlements from authentic Crimean Tatar to Soviet and Russian.

**17.** 2024 marked the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people, which is recognized by Ukraine and some other states as genocide of the Crimean Tatar people. Such recognition must be universal and international — not for the sake of the past, but the future. The nature of Russian neo-colonial policy towards the Crimean Tatars has not changed, therefore, the Indigenous peoples of Crimea must be able to live freely and peacefully in their homeland as part of a free and democratic Ukraine. Crimea has to be de-occupied, otherwise, the Indigenous peoples will not be able to freely and peacefully live in their native land.

**18. Every time Russia gained control of Crimea resulted in the colonization of the peninsula.** Before the first annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire in 1783, Crimean Tatars made up around 90% of the peninsula's population. As a result of colonization, this figure dropped to around 29% (as of 1917). The next iteration of the empire — the Soviet Union — and Stalin's deportation of 1944 has left Crimea with almost no Crimean Tatars but with an absolute majority of Russians, who were massively relocated to Crimea. At present, the occupying Russian administration is using various methods to colonize Crimea once again. No less than 100,000 Ukrainian citizens (the majority of whom are Crimean Tatars) have fled Crimea since 2014, with the large-scale invasion most likely doubling this number. Meanwhile, at least 500,000 Russian citizens have been resettled to Crimea, where the total population before 2014 was about 2,3 million people.

## Crimea as Putin's so-called red line. Could its de-occupation trigger nuclear escalation?

**19.** Russia's attempts to threaten the international community by discussing "red lines in Crimea" are indicative of a bluff and intimidation tactic intended to win time and attention. Ukraine is already fighting on Russian territory in Kursk. Despite intimidation and blackmail attempts, Russia has not resorted to the use of nuclear weapons, although the Armed Forces of Ukraine have carried out at least 125 attacks on targets in the occupied peninsula, ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and the Russian Black Sea coast (as of October 2024).

**20.** Russia's red lines are simply more rhetorical than actionable because the threat of nuclear weapons is an argument that appeals to emotions rather than rationality. It is much more profitable than actually using them.

**21.** The use of nuclear weapons would require Russia to admit the fact that it has lost the conventional war, and Putin is unlikely to be willing to concede that easily. Moreover, the unprovoked use of nuclear weapons would contradict the position of China and India, Russia's most important and influential BRICS partners. They have publicly expressed concerns about the possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons.

## Consequences of the occupation

**22.** The process of deportation and illegal transfer of Ukrainian children has also begun from Crimea since at least 2015, as confirmed by independent international observers (including 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”). Ukrainian orphans have been forcibly granted Russian citizenship, and at least some have been adopted by Russian citizens and transferred to Russia. The Ukrainian state does not know their whereabouts, despite multiple official requests from the Ukrainian authorities. This practice has now spread to other territories occupied by Russia, with the worsening of illegal administrative practices that facilitate the process of deportation and illegal adoption.

**23.** The full-scale invasion hit the Ukrainian citizens of **Crimea even harder. The fact that the peninsula was turned into a military base further isolated Crimea: more people were arrested, and new repressive Russian laws** were extended to occupied Crimea territory and applied to the civilian population, resulting in hundreds of new arrests and persecutions. Crimea began to serve as a hub for the illegal transfer of hostages and prisoners of war from the newly occupied territories, including children. The so-called summer camps are used to de facto imprison Ukrainian children from other regions and keep them there for months without even access to communication with their parents and often in conditions that can be considered inhumane.

**24. The deportation of children and indoctrination of young Ukrainian citizens in the occupied territories creates further threats and prepares new “cannon fodder” for the Russian army** in all the 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 nation. Russia’s attempts to portray the deportation as “a humanitarian mission” are borne out by evidence 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.

**25. The occupation of Crimea became a playbook for further Russian aggression** against Ukraine. The practices, including serious human rights violations (abductions, torture, and threats, killing of pro-Ukrainian activists) as well as the very **technology of occupation** used in Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014, were copied, multiplied and used in the newly occupied territories in 2022.

## Historical context

**26. Crimea is geographically connected to mainland Ukraine.** The illegally constructed Kerch bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian Federation cannot compensate for the value of the land corridor, which supplies water and electricity and has served for centuries as an economic and cultural link between the people of mainland Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula. The steppe zone of the southern part of Ukraine and Crimea is considered a single geographical zone. **This is why Moscow is so keen on pursuing and maintaining an occupied land corridor from Crimea to Russia.**

**27.** Historically and civilizational, **Crimea and the southern territories of Ukraine belong to the same region**, including from the economic point of view. 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 “the Crimean Tatars, along with the Cossacks, are the ancestors of the Ukrainians.”

**28. Those who criticize Ukraine’s attempts to use historical arguments should first stop saying that “Crimea has always been Russian.”** Ukrainian historian Serhii Hromenko, in his book “250 Years of Lies: Russian Myths about the History of Crimea” based on open data and analysis of historical documents, notes that Russians became the majority in Crimea solely as a result of administrative pressure on Crimean Tatars by the imperial and Soviet governments. Also, out of the 3 millennia of Crimea’s written history (9th century BC — 21st century), Russians on the peninsula have been a relative ethnic majority for only 115 years or 3,8%, and an absolute majority for 72 years, or 2,4% of the entire Crimean history.



## Resistance in Crimea

**29. The Crimean resistance exists.** Since February 24, 2022, more than 1000 people have been accused and/or charged for their actions and activities against the war and in support of the mainland part of Ukraine. These brave actions range from distributing leaflets about war crimes committed by Russia to raising Ukrainian flags and throwing Molotov cocktails into the administrative buildings of occupying forces.

**30.** There are at least **4 underground organizations that act as pro-Ukrainian resistance movements on the Crimean Peninsula.** These are *ATESH*, *Yellow Ribbon*, *Crimean Combat Seagulls*, and *Zla Mavka* — brave people with a pro-Ukrainian position who wait for Ukraine and help the Ukrainian Armed Forces by providing information about the military objects in the occupied territory. Many successful operations were carried out with the help of Crimean guerrillas.

## Ukraine's plan for the reintegration of Crimea

**31. The Ukrainian state is already working on several issues related to the reintegration of Crimea.** The Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea/Office of the Crimea Platform, together with governmental and non-governmental partners, has developed several strategic documents — the Strategy of the economic recovery of Crimea, the Strategy of the first steps of the state after the de-occupation, the Strategy of the cognitive de-occupation. The Team of Crimea Project was launched to prepare human resources for the de-occupied territory of Crimea.

**32. Ukraine is developing systematic approaches that will comply with international law.** Ukraine is learning from the experiences of other countries, but it is also closely monitoring the processes in the liberated Ukrainian territories, observing the problems and challenges they face.

**33. Ukraine will not engage in ethnic profiling. Ukraine distinguishes between ethnic Russians who are citizens of Ukraine and live legally in Crimea and Russian citizens who arrived illegally on the peninsula after 2014** as settlers who participated in Russia's colonization of the peninsula. These people will have to leave the Crimean Peninsula. Ukraine will take a case-by-case approach and follow international law in this process.

**34.** Supporting Crimean Tatars, Karaites, and Krymchaks remains an important priority. A **coherent mosaic of cultures is the basis of relations for the future of Crimea**, which includes responsibilities for the preservation of Indigenous peoples.

**35. Any decision on the status of Crimea can only be made after the Ukrainian victory.** Martial law does not allow any changes to the Constitution of Ukraine at the moment. However, the Ukrainian state is trying to use the legal instruments available to secure as much as possible the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Ukraine, including the Crimean Tatars. All of these strategies are **being developed in coordination and consultation with the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People**, a self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars.

**36.** Human security, public safety, and the implementation of the EU standards in everyday life in Crimea are among the **top priorities for the Ukrainian government and civil society.**

**37.** The Ukrainian authorities and civil society are working to ensure that **transitional justice is transparent** so that all Ukrainian citizens understand and accept its basic principles, including that restoring justice in Crimea is not a call for revenge.

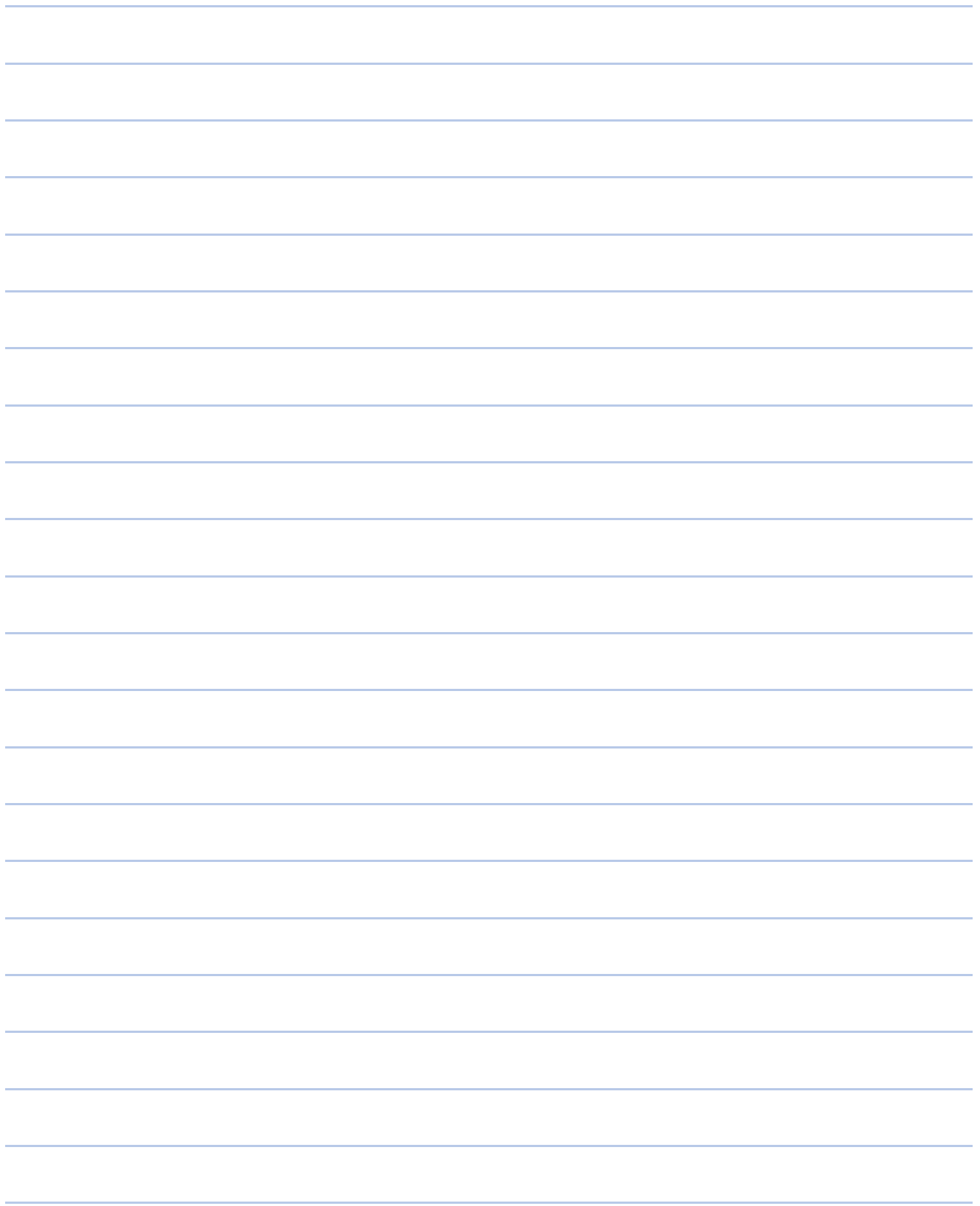


**38.** Ukraine is committed to the **gradual, transparent, and fair implementation** of the policy of remembrance, the policy of the functioning of the Ukrainian language and Indigenous languages, taking into account the specificity of the population and the duration of the temporary occupation of Crimea.

**39.** Ukraine welcomes any **reasonable help and assistance to improve practically and visibly the average standard of living** (including health and socio-economic security) of the Crimean Peninsula's population after the de-occupation.

**40.** The **liberation of Crimea will open a window of opportunity for international investment** in hotels, restaurants, tourism, and other businesses on the peninsula. Ukraine's international partners will benefit from doing business in a free, transparent, competitive environment in liberated Crimea.







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