

URGENT ACTION

CRIMEAN TATAR LEADER SENTENCED TO PRISON

Prominent Crimean Tatar activist Ilmi Umerov was sentenced to two years in penal colony on 27 September for his criticism of the Russian occupation of Crimea. The court also imposed a two-year ban on his public activities. Ilmi Umerov's sentence should be quashed immediately and the charges against him dropped.

On 27 September, a de facto court in Simferopol found **Ilmi Umerov**, a prominent critic of Russian occupation and Deputy Leader of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (arbitrarily banned by the Russian authorities), guilty of making "public calls to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation" (Article 280.1 of the Russian Criminal Code). Despite the prosecutor requesting a suspended sentence, the court sentenced him to two years in a penal colony and a two year ban on public activities. In his final statement in court, Ilmi Umerov declared that the charges against him were intended only to "punish those who oppose the annexation" of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014. Ilmi Umerov's lawyers are appealing the sentence. He remains at liberty until the appeal is heard. As yet, no date has been set for the appeal hearing. If the appeal is rejected, Ilmi Umerov will be jailed in a Russian penitentiary system and become a prisoner of conscience.

Ilmi Umerov's lawyers and family have expressed concern that within the Russian penitentiary system he will not be provided with the necessary treatment, which the 60-year old activist requires in connection with him suffering from Parkinson's disease, diabetes and heart disease.

Ilmi Umerov was convicted in relation to a TV interview he gave in March 2016, in which he insisted that Russia should be "forced to leave Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk". Donetsk and Luhansk are cities in eastern Ukraine controlled by armed groups supported from Russia. Ilmi Umerov's sentencing marks yet another stage in the de facto government's lengthy persecution of him.

His imprisonment follows a series of politically-motivated trials, arbitrary arrests and intimidation against critics of the Russian occupation of Crimea, in what constitutes a clear violation of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

Please write immediately in Russian, Ukrainian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the de facto authorities in Crimea to immediately end all criminal proceedings against Ilmi Umerov and ensure that his conviction is quashed and all charges against him dropped, as his prosecution stems solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Demanding an end to the persecution and harassment of dissenting voices from members of the Crimean Tatar community, and for full respect of their and every person's rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 NOVEMBER 2017 TO:

De-facto Prosecutor of Crimea
Oleg Anatolyevich Kamshylov
Fax: +7 365 255 03 10
Email: sekretar@rkproc.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

De-facto Head of Crimea
Sergey Aksyonov
Fax: +7 3652 24 80 20
Email: sovmin@rk.gov.ru
Salutation: Dear Head of Crimea

And copies to:
De-facto Human Rights Ombuds-person in Crimea
Lyudmila Lyubina
Email: upchvrk@mail.ru

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HER EXCELLENCY Ms Natalia Galibarenko, Embassy of Ukraine, 60 Holland Park W11 3SJ, 020 7727 6312, Fax 020 7792 1708, emb_gb@mfa.gov.ua, www.ukremb.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 205/16. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/4786/2016/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ilmi Umerov was born in Uzbekistan to Crimean Tatar parents who were deported by the Soviet authorities from Crimea, together with the peninsula's entire indigenous Crimean Tatar population, in 1944. They were not allowed to go back until the late 1980s. After the Crimean Tatars started gradually returning to the peninsula, Ilmi Umerov became a prominent member of the Crimean Tatar cultural movement and a local politician. In August 2014, following Russian occupation and annexation of the peninsula, he resigned from his position as Head of local administration for Bakhchisaray District in protest, and elected a deputy leader of the Mejlis, the Crimean Tatar community's representative body. Senior members of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People have faced reprisals, including harassment, forced exile and criminal prosecution in connection with their outspoken opposition to the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea. On 29 September 2016, the Supreme Court of Russia pronounced the Mejlis to be an "extremist organisation" under Russian legislation thereby making its membership and any further activities on its behalf a criminal offence.

Amnesty International has documented the alarming rise of violations of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Crimea since its annexation by Russia in March 2014 (see report: *Crimea in the Dark: the Silencing of Dissent*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/5330/2016/en/>). Furthermore, several ethnic Crimean Tatars and other pro-Ukrainian activists have been forcibly disappeared. In the latest instance, Crimean Tatar activist Ervin Ibragimov went missing near his house on 24 May 2016 (see Urgent Action: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/4121/2016/en/>). Footage from a nearby camera showed a group of men forcing him into a van and then driving away. None of these disappearances has been effectively investigated.

In September 2017, two other vocal critics of Russia's annexation of Crimea were convicted after being brought before de facto courts for non-violently opposing the de facto authorities. On 22 September, Ukrainian journalist and Crimea resident, Mykola Semena was found guilty on "separatism" charges. Eleven days before that, Akhtem Chiyyoz, another deputy leader of the Mejlis, was sentenced to eight years in a penal colony after a sham trial.

Further information on UA: 205/16 Index: EUR 50/7271/2017 Issue Date: 13 October 2017