

# **The Civic Chamber of the Republic of Crimea**

## **Comment on the 23<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> periodic reports by the Russian Federation on the implementation of the International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination**

93th session of the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### **Public Organizations Active in the Field of Culture Contributing to Development and Harmonization of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Crimea**

In this review, the Civic Chamber of the Republic of Crimea seeks to indicate the main fields of work of Crimean public organizations and to propose, within the framework of its own activities, recommendations for further actions in this area.

The activities of civil society organizations are of major importance for maintaining peace and interethnic and inter-confessional dialogue in the Republic of Crimea. To date, a network of diverse organizations has already formed on the peninsula. They have undergone the procedure of adaptation to the Russian legal environment: the process of re-registering, building relations with public organizations of federal scale and familiarizing with the Russian legislation regulating activities of public organizations. It should be noted that the Crimean society is distinguished for a high degree of consolidation and active involvement.

At present, more than 1 800 non-profit organizations (NGOs) are officially registered in Crimea. The number of non-profit organizations in Crimea and Sevastopol increased twofold over the last year. The majority of NGOs in Crimea and Sevastopol are human rights organizations, which amount to more than 30 per cent, organizations active in the field of culture and arts

(more than 26 per cent), and organizations supporting youth initiatives (around 22 per cent).

The government provides support for the activities of civil society organizations. For instance, in 2016, the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation allocated 9 mln roubles for grants to Crimean NGOs.

National and cultural autonomies occupy a special place among the public organizations of the Crimean multi-ethnic community. It is a new form of public associations which makes its first steps on the peninsula following its historic reunification with Russia. The following national and cultural autonomies currently operate in the territory of the Republic:

- the Regional Azerbaijani National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional Armenian National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional Bulgarian National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea "Paisiy Hilendarski".
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Greeks in the Republic of Crimea "Tavrida";
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Jews in the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Crimean Karaites in the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Moldavians in the Republic of Crimea "Plai";
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Estonians in the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional German National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional Belarus National and Cultural Autonomy;

- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Crimean Tatars in the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Tatars in the Republic of Crimea;
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Ossetians in the Republic of Crimea "Alania"; and
- the Regional National and Cultural Autonomy of Koreans in the Republic of Crimea.

Each of these organizations contributes to cultural development of the multiethnic Crimean society and to harmonization of interethnic relations. Thus, for instance, the Regional German National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea, the local German National and Cultural Autonomy of Yevpatoria Municipality with support of the State Committee on Interethnic Relations and Deported Citizens of the Republic of Crimea held Days of German Culture in Crimea on October 22–29, 2016. The Republican Association of Deported Crimean Bulgarians Named after the Stoyanov Brothers with support of the State Committee on Interethnic Relations and Deported Citizens of the Republic of Crimea and the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation organized Days of Bulgarian Culture on November 26–27, 2016.

It should be noted that public associations include many organizations that seek to achieve interethnic peace and harmony in Crimea through cultural development. One of the most striking examples in this regard is the work of the Interregional Crimean Tatar Public Movement "Qirim", which aims to restore and protect political, economic, social, ethnic and cultural rights of Crimean Tatars, to revive national and cultural traditions and identity of Crimean Tatars, to ensure their further development in the modern environment, as well as to shape and disseminate in society the ideas of mutual

respect among peoples, intercultural dialogue and interethnic harmony in Crimea.

On August 19, 2016, at the initiative of this association, the grand hall of the GAU RK Crimean Tatar State Academic Music and Drama Theater hosted the conference of public organizations – Our Future Depends on Each One of Us – dedicated to the Russian Federation's State Duma election. More than 30 public organizations participated in the conference. They included the Interregional Crimean Tatar Public Movement "Qirim" (the movement was represented by the organization's head Remzi Ilyasov), the regional public organization Crimean Tatar Society "Inkishaf" (president Eskender Bilyalov), the regional public organization Elders' Council of Elders of the Crimean Tatar People "Namus" (chair Dilshad Ilyasov), the public organization Culture Learning Center "Ethnos" (organization's chair, the national movement veteran, Fikriye Kusarova), the republican public organization Crimean Youth Union (organization's activist and also chair of the Saky city branch of the Crimean Youth Union, chair of the Regional Public Movement for Promoting Civil Initiatives in the Republic of Crimea "Vmeste" Sergey Kapitsa), the public organization Crimean Center for Social and Cultural Development "Initsiativa" (chair Kamil Ametov), science and education professionals, religious leaders, elders of the Crimean Tatar people, delegates of the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar People, as well as veterans of the Crimean Tatars National Movement.

At the conference, an address of public organizations was adopted, stating in particular the following: "The period of time since the reunification of Crimea with Russia, has shown to all of mankind the consolidation and unity of the Crimeans, their aspiration for peace, and desire to live and work in a single multiethnic family – the Russian Federation. Against a new historical background, we are to address great challenges. In the context where there are countries that are making every effort to provoke clashes among certain ethnic groups in Crimea, our common task is to preserve mutual understanding and

peace, strengthen friendship among all ethnic groups and the desire to bring them together into a single, indestructible family."

On November 1, 2016, Yalta hosted the Regional Scientific-Practical Conference "Multiethnic Crimea. Dialogue of Cultures, Religions and Peoples" organized by the Crimean regional branch of the all-Russian public organization Assembly of the Peoples of Russia. Representatives of ethnic-cultural communities and associations of Crimea and public authorities took part in the conference.

A special place among public organizations of the Republic of Crimea is held by artistic unions, the number of which exceeds 20.

Although the majority of those associations operate mainly in the cultural field, the issues of development and harmonization of interethnic relations are among their priorities.

In particular, the public organization Union of Writers of the Republic of Crimea (based in Simferopol) seeks primarily to unite Crimean writers in the territory of the Republic of Crimea with a view to supporting and developing the art of declamation and philology and promoting, preserving and developing the Russian, Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian languages and literature, as well as languages of other peoples living in Crimea as part of the world culture. The Union's newspaper "Literary Crimea", where main and permanent authors are Crimean writers, publishes works in their original languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar. The same principle is applied by the magazine "Crimea".

The government supports the Union of the Crimean Tatar Writers operating in the Republic. An important contribution to the development of multiethnic culture of Crimea is made by the Crimean republican branch of the all-Russian public creative organization "Union of the Artists of Russia", which has among its members artists of different nationalities residing in Crimea. National cultures and harmonious interethnic relations are also promoted by the

Union of Music Professionals of the Republic of Crimea, which includes dozens of artists of different nationalities.

Other efforts of Crimean public organizations include protection and preservation of cultural heritage of the peninsula's peoples. This issue remains relevant because the cultural heritage of the peoples of Crimea is not only the legacy of the residents of our peninsula but also part of culture of the world civilization. First of all, of special note is the work of the Crimean branch of the All-Russian Society for Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments. Its members participated in the all-Russian scientific and practical conference Current Issues of Protection and Use of the Cultural Heritage of Crimea, which took place in Gurzuf in 2016. Among those who took part in the conference were professional conservators of monuments, along with public figures, representatives of the scientific community, members of youth organizations and public activists.

The House of Friendship of the Peoples of the Republic of Crimea operating with the support of the State Committee on Interethnic Relations and Deported Citizens of the Republic of Crimea serves as a platform where all public associations can express their ideas, put forward their projects and discuss current developments in various areas of public life. This platform often hosts round tables and other events involving representatives of various ethnic and cultural autonomies of the peninsula, as well as public organizations. In particular, one of such round-table meetings focused on the topic "Trends in and major tracks of development of inter-ethnic relations in Crimea in 2016. Activities of ethnic and cultural autonomies and public organizations in the current historical context".

Great attention in Crimea is paid to preserving the historical memory of the Great Patriotic War and World War II and to educating children and youth. The following areas of work can be identified here: implementing activities involving veterans of the Great Patriotic War and former servicemen;

organizing celebrations of (anniversaries of) Victory Day (such activities include the St. George Ribbon campaign under the motto "I remember! I am proud!" and "We remember, we are proud, we inherit!"; ensuring maintenance of memorials, monuments, war graves, obelisks and memorial signs; holding marches, solemn commemorative ceremonies, wreath- and flower-laying ceremonies, special meetings of veterans and youth); laying the foundations for instilling patriotic feelings towards one's birthplace and motherland as a whole; carrying out activities to support ethnic cultures and prevent the spread of the breeding ground for ethnic extremism.

Crimea annually hosts hundreds of events in these areas, which include holding theme-specific lessons in schools and museums, meetings with veterans, training and role-playing exercises, outreach campaigns, extra-curricular activities devoted to patriotic and moral upbringing.

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of the Republic of Crimea



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