



Communication regarding discriminatory persecution for displaying Ukrainian identity under the guise of combating extremism in the occupied territory of Crimea

Introduction:

Discrimination against Ukrainians in the occupied Crimea after 2014 is a deliberate and systematic policy of the Russian Federation. Any manifestation of Ukrainian national identity, patriotism or resistance to the occupation is seen by the Russian authorities as a threat to 'stability' and 'security'. Those local residents who openly speak out or covertly demonstrate their sympathy for Ukraine are subject to detention, arrest, humiliation and trumped-up cases.

After the occupation of Crimea, regulations were introduced in several stages, banning the use of certain types of Ukrainian symbols as Nazi or extremist. Violation of the ban results in administrative liability under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences, with penalties ranging from a fine to 15 days in prison. In 2024 and the first half of 2025 alone, [there were at least 120 cases](#) of persecution of Crimeans specifically related to Ukrainian issues. Among them, at least 48 people were imprisoned¹.

In parallel with these processes, methods of additional persecution of these people have also been documented, including unmotivated beatings by law enforcement officers during detention, moral abuse with the dissemination of videos of this on social networks and the media, fabrication of additional charges, dismissal from work, etc. The symbiosis of judicial and extrajudicial persecution is observed exclusively against a group of people associated with manifestations of sympathy for Ukraine. As noted in the Crimean Process [research](#) 'Comparative Analysis of the Peculiarities of Persecution of Different Groups under the Guise of Fighting Extremism'², other groups persecuted on charges of extremism, such as sympathisers of Nazi ideology or criminal subcultures, are not subject to extra-legal influence by the occupation authorities, have fewer prosecutions, less harsh decisions and fewer procedural violations during the consideration of cases.

Regulatory and legal restrictions: norms and interpretations outside the norms

In 2014, Russia [classified](#) the Ukrainian organisations Right Sector, UNA-UNSO, Trident named after Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and Brotherhood as extremist organisations whose activities are prohibited (Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation N AKPI14-1292S of 17 November 2014)³. In 2022, this list was [supplemented](#) by the organisations OUN Volunteer Movement, Sich S14, and the Black Committee group (decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of

¹ News by NGO Crimean Process, <https://crimean-process.org/krimski-suddi-loyalnishe-do-naczystiv-nizh-do-ukra%20%D1%97ncziv-doslidzhennya/>

² Research by NGO Crimean Process, <https://crimean-process.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/english-version.pdf>

³ verdict of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, <https://base.garant.ru/70829398/>

08.09.2022)⁴. All Ukrainian organisations banned as extremist do not have symbols and attributes defined in the Russian legal framework. One of the two court decisions on the ban has not been made public at all, and the other contains no mention of emblems, flags, slogans or other details of the symbols.

On 18 January 2024, the Russian Ministry of Justice [banned](#) the symbols of 4 Ukrainian organisations as associated with Nazi Germany: UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army), OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists), UNRA (Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army), UNS (Ukrainian People's Self-Defence). The banned symbols and attributes included the 'official greeting' - 'Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes', several versions of the Trident, the OUN emblem and the black and red flag⁵.

However, as established in the [research](#) 'Analysis of the Peculiarities of Persecution for Pro-Ukrainian Beliefs under the Guise of Combating Extremism and Nazism'⁶, conducted by the Crimean Process NGO, the quasi-judicial system in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea has independently and illegally extended the ban to all possible forms of manifestation of Ukrainian national identity, patriotism or even preferences for works of Ukrainian culture.

Judges systematically take advantage of the absence of a clear system for establishing links between elements of attributes and banned organisations. They deliberately ignore the existing procedure of proof and the lack of a convincing evidence base. They resort to evaluative concepts and their own ideas. As a result, it is typical for courts to attribute such dubious attributes as videos of doors painted with uniform stripes of black and red or Ukrainian folk songs that are arbitrarily regarded as 'unofficial anthems' to the symbols of Ukrainian extremist organisations.

Signs of discriminatory trials

According to the research 'Comparative Analysis of the Peculiarities of Persecution of Different Groups under the Guise of Combating Extremism', it was recorded that, as part of countering the spread of Nazi and extremist ideology, law enforcement agencies and courts in the occupied territory pay much more attention to cases with Ukrainian symbols than to all other cases that qualify as violations of Article 20.3 of the Administrative Code. A research of the circumstances of the offences in the first half of 2025 shows that among the cases available for research, 56% are persecutions for demonstrating Ukrainian identity, 21% are cases of having a tattoo of a prohibited criminal subculture, 20% are cases of demonstrating Nazi symbols and 3% are other prohibited symbols.

One of the peculiarities of the persecution of citizens loyal to Ukraine is the presence of charges of several offences at the same time. As a rule, along with the demonstration of Ukrainian symbols, the court also considers reports on discrediting the Russian armed forces, disorderly conduct on the Internet or disobedience to the lawful demands of a

⁴ News by Russian governmental media TASS, <https://tass.ru/politika/15692551>

⁵ News by Russian governmental media TASS, <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19763167>

⁶ Research by NGO Crimean Process, https://crimean-process.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/english_version.pdf

police officer. In the first half of 2025, out of the 39 cases of the “Ukrainian group”, 14 cases recorded one additional offence and 4 cases recorded two additional offences at once. At the same time, during the period under study, no person from other groups who was brought to administrative responsibility under Article 20.3 was charged simultaneously under other articles of the CAO. Additional prosecutions were recorded only in the group related to Ukrainian issues.

A comparison of the penalties imposed by courts in Crimea shows different approaches depending on the content of the charges: no administrative arrests were imposed on representatives of the criminal subculture during the six-month period, while arrests were imposed in at least 21% of court decisions against supporters of Nazi ideology. At the same time, arrests in cases involving the display of Ukrainian symbols accounted for at least 26%.

The research also identified systemic problems with compliance with procedural requirements for conducting court proceedings in cases related to accusations of propaganda of Nazism or extremism. The most discriminatory approaches can be seen in the issue of ensuring independent expertise that would provide a reasoned conclusion on the connection between the symbols displayed and the symbols of Nazi or extremist organisations. In particular, in 13 out of 15 cases studied (87%), representatives of the criminal subculture had an expert opinion in the case file, while in cases against the display of Nazi symbols, expert opinions are mentioned in two-thirds of all cases, and in cases against the ‘Ukrainian group’ – only in 56%.

The relationship between judicial and extrajudicial prosecution:

The main feature of this form of persecution of residents of the temporarily occupied Crimea is the combination of formally legal grounds for legal proceedings with a set of extrajudicial measures aimed at intimidating the disloyal population and reducing the potential for protest. Such a set of extrajudicial measures usually includes a consistent combination of the following actions:

- a) unmotivated use of physical force during detention;
- b) conducting illegal searches (under the guise of inspections that do not require court permission);
- c) seizure of all digital equipment, sometimes with coercion to unlock it;
- d) arbitrary detention without guarantees of proper protection;
- e) psychological pressure and humiliation – forcing detainees to apologise, sing the Russian anthem, etc.;
- f) dissemination of personal information and videos humiliating detainees on social media;
- g) pressure on employers to dismiss employees or on businesses to cease operations.

In the last six months alone, out of 39 cases related to the expression of Ukrainian beliefs, 11 cases (28%) showed signs of complex extrajudicial and illegal influence on persons accused of committing administrative offences. It is important to emphasise that no such cases were recorded among supporters of the criminal subculture. Among those

prosecuted for promoting Nazism, only one case of moral humiliation was recorded in six months.

It is also worth noting the close correlation between the appearance on social media of videos showing the humiliation of detainees loyal to Ukraine and the dissemination of this information by local media, including government media. According to observations, 100 per cent of publications reposted from social media appeared in the media. At the same time, as a rule, the headlines and content of the texts in the media do not meet the standards of neutral presentation of information, but are aimed at forming a negative attitude towards the detainee and their patriotic beliefs. The [formation](#) of an aggressive attitude towards a group of people with pro-Ukrainian beliefs also occurs in the comments to publications, where direct threats and calls for physical violence against the victims of persecution are encouraged⁷.

Conclusions:

1. The ban on Nazi and extremist ideology in the courts of the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea was arbitrarily, groundlessly and unlawfully extended to any form of demonstration of Ukrainian identity, including a preference for works of Ukrainian culture.
2. The number of court prosecutions of supporters of Ukraine is significantly higher than for any other group of persecuted persons and even higher than the total number of other cases under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences.
3. The prosecution of supporters of Ukraine differs from that of other groups in that it involves additional charges, a higher percentage of punishments involving arrest, and a greater number of procedural violations.
4. The prosecution of Ukraine supporters provides a formal basis for the use of a range of unlawful extrajudicial methods of influence. Other groups involved in similar cases are not subject to comprehensive persecution.
5. Repression under the guise of combating manifestations of Nazism and extremism is one of the elements of measures to intimidate and reduce the potential of ideological groups in Crimea that are disloyal to the occupying authorities. These measures, in turn, are an integral part of the destruction of national consciousness and the colonisation of the population of the occupied territory.

Considering the content of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted 21 December 1965:

- Please reiterate the call the Russian Federation expressed at the UN GA Resolution 79/184 “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol” adopted on 17 December 2024:

⁷ News by NGO Zmina, <https://zmina.info/ru/news-ru/krymskie-siloviki-i-propagandisty-skoordinirovanno-unizhayut-krymchan-za-proukrainskuyu-pozicziyu-chtoby-zapugivat-naselenie-irade>

“To take all measures necessary to bring an immediate end to all violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law against residents of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, in particular reported discriminatory measures and practices, arbitrary detentions and arrests, violations and abuses within the framework of the filtration procedures, enforced disappearances, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, including to compel apprehended persons to selfincriminate or “cooperate” with law enforcement, ensure fair trial, revoke all discriminatory legislation and hold accountable those responsible for those violations and abuses by ensuring the independent, impartial and effective investigation of all allegations;

- Please address the government and the Ombudsman Office of the Russian Federation concerning a large number of cases involving police involvement in unlawful acts that violate human dignity, unmotivated use of physical force, arbitrary detentions, and dissemination of personal information about victims of persecution for further bullying.

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