The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kiev Government and Putin Both Voice Support for Crimean Tatar Rights

By Christopher Brennan

March 18, 2014



Ukrainian Justice Minister Pavel Petrenko said that the country's parliament will soon adopt laws granting the legal instruments of self-determination to the minority Crimean Tatar community on Ukraine's disputed southern peninsula.

The Ukrainian minister's comments, reported by Interfax, came on the same day that President Vladimir Putin said that Russia, which signed an agreement annexing Crimea on Tuesday, would take all necessary measures to rehabilitate Crimean Tatars.

Petrenko said that the law, which would give the ethnic group the right to decide its own legal status, was in the final stages of its preparation and would safeguard "the historical will of the people who live in the Crimea and have all the legal rights historical rights to that land."

Speaking in front of assembled Russian lawmakers before signing the annexation agreement, Putin also stressed that he wanted to "restore the rights" of the Crimean Tatars as well as

their "good name."

Crimean Tatars had previously been deported from their homeland in Crimea to Central Asia en masse by Stalin, allegedly for cooperating with Nazis during World War II.

Putin said that the Muslim ethnic group had suffered injustice and that the roughly 300,000 Crimean Tatars who had returned to their land since the late 1980s and make up about 12 percent of the area's population give the region a "unique combination of cultures and traditions from different peoples."

Senior Crimean Tatar figures such as Mustafa Dzhemilev, former head of the group's unofficial parliament, have denounced Sunday's referendum as illegitimate. The 70-year-old statesman told Reuters in an interview that he feared new attacks on Crimean Tatars if the region became part of Russia, saying that "Crimean Tatars systematically supported Ukraine's territorial integrity and spoke out against pro-Russian separatism, so in these conditions we will probably be the main target."

Red crosses began to appear on the group's buildings in the largely Crimean Tatar city of Bakhchysarai during the run up to the referendum, a sign telling them to leave the territory.

Media reports said that many Crimean Tatars, perhaps listening to the suggestion of Dzhemilev, boycotted the vote, which saw more than 96 percent of ballots cast for union with Russia.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/03/18/kiev-government-and-putin-both-voice-support-for-crimean-tatar-rights-a33095