

Crimean Tatar Assembly Votes for Autonomy as Part of Russia

March 30, 2014

The  Moscow Times

The unofficial Crimean Tatars parliament has voted in favor of seeking "national and territorial autonomy" following Crimea's secession from Ukraine and annexation by Russia two weeks ago.

On Saturday the assembly's leader Refat Chubarov announced plans to negotiate with both Russia and Ukraine, as well as with the UN, European Council, EU, OSCE and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regarding the matter, RIA Novosti reported.

The Crimean Tatars, who were largely against the regional referendum that set in motion Russia's annexation of the peninsula, greatly supported Chubarov's appeal at the assembly in the largely Tatar town of Bakhchisarai to begin legal proceedings for the forming of an autonomous body.

Chubarov explained that the Crimean Tatars have studied Russia's constitution and are aware of the regional laws governing subjects within the Russian Federation, and thus have decided to demand the right to self-determination.

Present at the assembly were the head of Russia's Council of Muftis Ravil Gaynutdin and Rustam Minnikhanov, the president of Russia's republic of Tatarstan, Itar-Tass reported. Both have guaranteed to help Crimean Tatars leaders meet and negotiate with authorities in Moscow.

Both the Russian and Kiev governments have voiced their support for the Crimean Tatars. President Vladimir Putin promised to rehabilitate the inhabitants of the peninsula, and stressed that he wanted to "restore the rights" of this indigenous people of Crimea, who were deported in large numbers to Central Asia by Stalin after World War II for alleged cooperation with Nazi forces.

Crimean Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Temirgaliev has promised Crimean Tatars seats in the new government, while Ukrainian Justice Minister Pavel Petrenko said in mid-March that the government will soon adopt laws granting the minority Crimean Tatar community the right to self-determination.

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