

Crimean Tatar Leader Reportedly Banned from Entering Russia For 5 Years

By [The Moscow Times](#)

April 22, 2014



Mustafa Dzhemilev, a member of the Ukrainian parliament and the former chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People.

KIEV, Ukraine — A leading figure in the Crimean Tatar minority has been barred by Russia from returning to the peninsula following its annexation by Moscow, the Tatar community's assembly said on Tuesday.

In an online statement, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People said Mustafa Dzhemilev, a member of the Ukrainian parliament and the former chairman of the Mejlis, had been handed a notice banning him from Russia for five years as he crossed back to mainland Ukraine after a weekend in Crimea.

It came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin made a gesture of goodwill toward the Crimean Tatars, many of whom wanted to remain Ukrainian citizens, by signing a decree ruling their mass deportation by Stalin in the 1940s was illegal and guaranteeing autonomous

rights for them and other minorities.

A Turkic-speaking, Muslim community, long present on the Black Sea, Tatars make up about 12 percent of Crimea's 2 million population. Deported to central Asia on suspicion of aiding Nazi German invaders, they began to return in the 1980s and in large numbers after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Mejlis was recognized by the Ukrainian state in the 1990s as a representative body for the Tatars. Dzhemilev, 70, was its chairman from its foundation in 1991 until last year.

The Mejlis statement said the current deputy chairman, Aslan Omer Kyrymly, was also handed a similar banning notice.

There have been tensions between Tatars in Crimea and pro-Russian separatists. On Monday, the Mejlis said unidentified men in camouflage forced their way into its building, which was largely empty for a holiday, and took down a Ukrainian flag.

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