

Ukraine Marks 1944 Deportation of Crimea's Tatars

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Crimean Tatars and local residents lighting candles during a memorial ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Soviet deportation. About 40% of the Tatars forced to leave Crimea in 1944 died due to disease or hunger.

Several hundred people marched in Kiev on Sunday to commemorate the brutal deportation 70 years ago of Crimea's entire population of Tatars.

Many Tatars later returned to Crimea. They strongly supported the new Ukrainian government and opposed Russia's annexation of the peninsula in March.

While the Kiev rally proceeded without incident, the new Kremlin-backed leaders of Crimea banned Sunday's main rally in the Crimean capital, Simferopol. Some Tatars instead gathered near a mosque on the city's outskirts.

In May 1944, shortly after Soviet troops drove German forces from Crimea, Stalin accused the Tatars of collaborating with the enemy and ordered their deportation. About 250,000 Tatars were shipped in freight trains to Central Asia, where more than 40 percent died

of hunger and disease.

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