

Ukraine Plans to Set Up Crimean Ministry

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Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers adopted a resolution on Tuesday to begin work on establishing a ministry whose primary task will be securing the return of Crimea to Ukraine, following the peninsula's annexation by Russia in March.

The Cabinet will present plans for the ministry to the Verkhovnaya Rada, Ukraine's parliament, which in turn will be expected to set the legislative framework in motion.

"It is crucial to create a ministry to resolve a range of complex problems connected to Crimea's detachment from Ukraine," the resolution states, as quoted by online news portal Crimea.Reality.

The ministry will not limit its goals to trying to reclaim the peninsula, however. It will also tackle issues affecting those residents that have remained on the peninsula, as well as those who were forced to leave when Russia annexed the territory in March.

Ukraine's Crimean Tatar community, the leader of which was also in attendance at Tuesday's

meeting and who himself was forced to leave Crimea, has urged Kiev to utilize the ministry to monitor the treatment of Muslims on the peninsula.

"We met with Ukraine's Foreign Minister [Pavel] Klimkin. During the meeting, we talked about several issues aimed at activating our work with Turkic and Arab countries, with Muslim countries. The work is ongoing. But major effort is required by Ukraine as well," Refat Chubarov, the leader of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, said in comments carried by Crimea.Reality.

Chubarov said he was hoping for cooperation with foreign countries so that the Crimean Tatars would have more support.

In addition to setting up the new ministry, Chubarov urged Ukraine's Foreign Ministry to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and act as a monitor of Muslims' rights to ensure that the Crimean Tatars were not being discriminated against.

"Ukraine must now take active steps toward cooperation, so that we can depend on international organizations" in upholding Muslim's rights in Ukraine, Chubarov said.

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