

Ukraine Threatens to Prosecute Stalin for Crimean Tatar Deportation

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The Ukrainian government is preparing to prosecute deceased Soviet dictator Josef Stalin for his 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatars.

Stalin and his chief of secret police, Lavrenty Beria, could both be charged with genocide, [Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office announced on its website.](#)

Kiev's Prosecutor for Crimean Affairs, Gyunduz Mamedov, pledged that "other participants in the crime would be identified" as part of the investigation, which began in December 2015, [Russia's TASS news agency reported.](#)

The case has been dismissed by Russia, with Zaur Smirnov, the head of Russia's State Committee of the Republic of Crimea, describing the case as "a mockery" of the Crimean Tatars' past ordeals.

"These decisions will have no practical effects for the Crimean Tatars," [he told TASS](#). "These criminal cases by the Prosecutor's Office against people who have long passed away is nothing but more crass populism," he said.

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An estimated 230,000 Crimean Tatars were deported from the peninsula to central Asia during World War II. The moves were a form of collective punishment devised by Stalin, who accused the Crimean Tatars of collaborating with the Nazis. Many deportees died from starvation, thirst, or disease during the journey or in relocation camps in Uzbekistan.

The Crimean Tatars were gradually allowed to return to their homeland during perestroika, and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR recognized the deportation as a crime against humanity in November 1989.

Most Crimean Tatars also chose to stay in the area after Russian annexed the peninsula in 2014.

The Medzhlis — the Crimean Tatars' representative body — was later branded an extremist group by the Russian Justice Ministry on April 18, 2016 and forbidden from operating in Russia. The ban prohibits the organization from meeting, publishing its views in mass media and holding public events.

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