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Crimean Tatars Warned Against Protesting on Anniversary of Stalin-Era Deportations – Activists

May 18, 2023



A memorial to the 1944 Crimean Tatar deportation victims at Siren railway station in Bakhchisaraisky district, Crimea, 2016. **Alexei Pavlishak / TASS**

Russian authorities warned the Crimean Tatar ethnic minority against protesting on the anniversary of their deportation under Stalin, the advocacy group Crimean Solidarity said.

Crimean Tatars, which made up around 15% of the peninsula's population of 2 million, largely opposed Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. They say they now face persecution by Moscow-installed officials.

On May 18, 2023, the Crimean Tatars mark the 79th anniversary of their deportation under the rule of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

According to Crimean Solidarity, Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents and police officers visited several Crimean Tatar activists in person throughout Wednesday.

They had been warned about bans on participating in "meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches and pickets" and the "inadmissibility of violating the law."

"The activists consider these actions as pressure and another attempt to intimidate the Crimean Tatar people on the eve of May 18," Crimean Solidarity said.

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Russian authorities have banned Crimean Tatars from commemorating the Stalin-era deportations since the annexation.

The United Nations has said the human rights situation in Crimea had "significantly deteriorated" after Russia occupied the Black Sea peninsula.

Kyiv has accused Moscow of subjecting hundreds of Crimean Tatars to political persecution and torturing scores of others to death.

Around 30,000 Crimean Tatars, including their leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, left the peninsula for mainland Ukraine after the Russian annexation.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky marked Thursday's anniversary by stating: "79 years ago on this day, the Soviet authorities began deporting the Crimean Tatar people. A people they wanted to erase. Deprive of their homes, deprive of the right to life.

"But the people survived. And they will live freely!"

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