

Chronicle of Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Ukraine

Monthly online information bulletin of the National Minority Rights Monitoring Group

#8 (96) August 2015

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1. MANIFESTATIONS OF XENOPHOBIA

1.1 Hate-motivated violence.

On **August 19**, a fifteen-year-old dark-skinned youth, Uzu David, was attacked in the Kyiv metro. The attack took place at approximately 7:30 PM. According to the victim, a group of over 40 people entered the train carriage. The young people were acting out of line and violated public order. They accosted the dark-skinned youth with racist slurs and threats. When Uzu David left the train at the Poznyaky metro station, a group of approximately ten people surrounded him at the platform. They began shoving him and hitting him. The beating was stopped by other passengers, who interfered.

The policeman on duty of the Line Control Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (division responsible for security on railways and metro lines - transl.) was absent from his post. The victim filed a complain with the Darnitsya Regional Department of the Main Department of the MIA of Ukraine in the city of Kyiv¹.

Criminal proceedings were instigated according to Article 125, part 1 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code (“Intended minor bodily injury”)².

Former Right Sector MP candidate Oleg Kutserib, who had earlier publicly admitted to have taken part in a homophobically-motivated attack (see July issue of this bulletin for details), commented on the post made about the incident by the victim’s mother on Facebook, where he not only used a number of racist expressions, but supported the racist violence towards the youth³. After the

1 <https://www.facebook.com/galina.uzu/posts/974093945946598>

2 <http://www.mvs.gov.ua/mvs/control/kyiv/uk/publish/article/226577>

3 See: <http://ru-an.info/Photo/QNews/n20347/3.jpg>

politician's statements gained a wide resonance, the Right Sector made an official statement, in which they noted that "the person named Oleg Kutserib has no relation to our organization at the moment." According to the statement of the Kyiv wing of the Right Sector, "he did indeed run for an MP position with us in the autumn; however, later he was banned from our organization due to his actions, which denigrated the party's honor."⁴

On **August 21**, Ombudsman of Ukraine Valeriya Lutkovska made an open request to the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Internal Affairs to take the investigation under their personal control and to take measures to ensure a full and objective investigation of the case and its circumstances, due to them being linked with manifestations of racial intolerance, which are present in the perpetrators' actions⁵

On the night of **August 24**, a fight took place between two groups of young people in Kyiv, near Bessarabskaya Square. One of the sides of the conflict was made up of people of African descent. A video recording made by a representative of the patrol police shows one dark-skinned young man demonstrating his bloody hand and shouting "This is because I'm black, isn't it?"⁶

According to official information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the victim cut his hand when he fell on a broken glass bottle. The report notes that this version is confirmed by a surveillance camera installed in one of the nearby stores.

Participants of the incident, having been taken to the Shevchenkivsky district police department, refused to file statements and said that they have no claims against each other⁷.

2.2 Vandalism. Arson

On **August 3**, it became known that an act of vandalism took place at a Jewish cemetery in Uzhgorod (Zakarpattia region), located on Kotlyarevskogo street in the Shahta microdistrict. The police were able to establish that unknown vandals damaged 19 tombstones in the period from July 28 to August 1.

Proceedings were instigated according to Article 297 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("Violation of graves, any other burial place, or a corpse")⁸.

On **August 12**, at approximately 6:30 PM, an unknown man attempted to set fire to wooden building materials (several cubic meters of timber beams and planks), which were stacked near residential buildings belonging to the Romani community of Uzhgorod's Shahta microdistrict, located near school #14. According to the locals, the unidentified man first threatened the Roma and then used a plastic bottle full of incendiary mixture to set fire to the wooden planks. Then he got into his car and drove away. The residents of the houses immediately called both the firefighters and the police. Judging by the photos, the building materials suffered severe fire damage, but the fire

4 <https://www.facebook.com/1406145632985624/photos/a.1428577800742407.1073741829.1406145632985624/1608742102725975/>

5 <http://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/ua/all-news/pr/21815-pc-vidkrite-zvernennya-upovnovazhenogo-verxovnoii-radi-ukraini-z-prav-l/>

6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=1365&v=KsCJzMZdurE>

7 <http://www.mvs.gov.ua/mvs/control/kyiv/uk/publish/article/227355>

8 <http://transkarpathianews.net/crime/15994-bda-priyshla-na-yevreyske-kladovische-vandali-rozgromili-nadgrobn-pliti.html>

did not spread to the houses. The police recorded the crime⁹.

On the morning of **August 27**, the Melitopol District Council (Zaporizhia region) session began with a notification by Deputy Chairman Alexander Basha that unknown vandals desecrated a Holocaust memorial located at an exit from Konstantinovka village. The anti-Semites placed car tires in different parts of the memorial and set fire to them, apparently with the help of a plastic bottle of incendiary mixture¹⁰.

1.3. Public manifestations of xenophobia

On **August 9**, Victor Baloga, a politician from the Zakarpattia region, responded on Facebook to accusations of his party (Ediniy Centr, “United Center”) spreading separatist materials. In his reply to his opponent, member of the clergy Igor Kovalchuk, the politician permitted himself to use anti-Semitic statements. “[I want you to] get this straight, I’m a Ukrainian and I want one thing only: that the kikes (zhydy) understand that every Ukrainian will be treated appropriately by the state, no matter in which region.”¹¹

It is somewhat difficult to discern from the text of the response which “kikes” exactly need to understand this sentiment, but it can be supposed that Victor Baloga means the leaders of Ukraine in general or even President Petro Poroshenko personally.

On **August 22**, former Ukrainian MP and functionary of the All-Ukrainian “Svoboda” Union political party Yuri Sirotyuk permitted himself anti-Semitic and xenophobic statements when speaking from the stage of the All-Ukrainian Charity Festival in honor of Taras Shevchenko (She.Fest), which took place in the poet’s home village Morintsy (Cherkasy region).

The politician said, “Let these kikes go back to their state of Israel, get elected there, and stop interfering with Ukrainians in our own country.” Judging by the context of the speech, the politician meant particularly President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko. Moreover, according to the Svoboda functionary, “Georgians who are invited to rule over us denigrate our dignity.” This saying was obviously aimed at former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who was appointed Governor of the Odessa Regional State Administration¹².

During his tenure as an MP, Yuri Sirotyuk became infamous for his critical statements towards the singer Gaitana, the first singer of Afro-Ukrainian origin to represent Ukraine at the Eurovision song contest (2012). According to Sirotyuk, “she does not represent our culture.” The parliamentary deputy said: “the millions of people who will be watching the show will see that Ukraine is represented, so to speak, a person that does not belong to our race. It will be widely thought that Ukraine lies somewhere in faraway Africa... Ukraine will be associated with another continent, that is, Africa.”¹³

The All-Ukrainian “Svoboda” Union was one of the sponsors of the She.Fest.

It later became known that the Assembly of Nationalities of Ukraine filed a complaint to the

9 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=866625013420369&id=100002186364769

10 <http://ejc.org/page16/news52557.html>

11 <http://www.trubyna.org.ua/novyny/zakarpatskyj-nardep-baloha-vdavsyia-do-antysemitskoji-rytoryky/>

12 <http://ejc.org/page16/news52518.html>

13 <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1321133-zayavlenie-chlena-svobody-ob-afrikanskih-kornyah-gajtany-vyzvalo-vozmushchenie-v-ryadah-opozicii>

Ukrainian Security Services, in which they argued that Sirotyuk's statements fall under Article 161 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("Willful actions inciting national, racial or religious enmity and hatred").¹⁴

1.4 Homophobia

The queer culture festival "Odessa Pride-2015" took place from **August 14 to August 16**. The organizers originally planned a public March of Equality as part of the festival, to have been held on August 15.¹⁵

However, on **August 12**, the Executive Committee of the Odesa City Council filed a claim with the Odesa Regional Administrative Court against the chairman of the "Odessa Pride-2015" organizational committee. The city council was also backed up by the Odesa City Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the Odesa region. The claimant requested that the court restrict the right to peaceful gatherings of the "Odessa Pride-2015" Organizational Committee in the person of its Chairman by forbidding any sorts of mass public events from August 13 to August 16, including gatherings, rallies, pickets, marches, demonstrations, and any other kind of peaceful gathering on Odesa's streets.

The city council's arguments included an adversarial attitude among the residents of the city towards the upcoming event, the high risk of violence towards participants of the march, and the possible disturbance of public order during the event¹⁶.

On the next day, **August 13**, the court prohibited holding the March of Equality in Odesa.

On **August 15**, the premises of the Queer Home Odessa community center, where the "Odessa Pride-2015" festival was being held, were attacked. A group of youths, likely members of the radical right¹⁷, gathered near the building. According to the festival's spokesperson Kirill Bodelan, a group of young people in masks and camouflage forced its way onto the premises. Two of them threw firecrackers near the entrance to the premises, and one made his way inside and threw a detonating cartridge into the hall. The attackers were able to get away. The other young people continued to stay near the entrance to the building until they were led away by the police. According to Bodelan, none of the participants of the festival were harmed.

The Organizational Committee of the festival, "the attack on the LGBT community center was made by a marginal, extremist group"; however, they also stated that they are not viewing this as "an act of aggression from right-wing national groups, or any other patriotic and religious groups."¹⁸

On **August 16**, the All-Ukrainian "Svoboda" Union political party took responsibility for attempting to obstruct the opening of the "Odessa Pride-2015" festival. According to the PR department of the Odessa regional branch of "Svoboda," 13 party activists and members of its youth organization were arrested for, we quote, "being present near the LGBT festival."¹⁹

14 <http://izrus.co.il/diasporaIL/article/2015-09-02/28719.html>

15 <http://otkat.od.ua/prajd-2015-vmesto-gej-parada-odessu-zhdyot-celyj-gej-uikend/>

16 <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/3550765-sud-zapretyl-provedenye-hei-parada-v-odesse>

17 The man who came up to the participants of the festival to "warn" (i.e. threaten) them showed them symbols of the Right Sector.

18 <https://www.facebook.com/OdessaPride/posts/1642413062638268>

19 <http://www.unian.net/society/1112082-svoboda-vzyala-na-sebya-otvetstvennost-za-sryiv-otkryitiya-festivalya-kvir-kulturyi-v-odesse.html#ad-image-0>

On **August 29**, a group of young people wearing Neo-Pagan and radical right symbols, including symbols of the Azov Regiment, attempted to obstruct the Animal Rights March in Kharkiv, near the Nauchnaya metro station. One of them ripped an “I am lesbian” badge off one of the animal rights movement’s members. Witnesses state that the police made a number of errors in procedure while recording the offense²⁰.

On the night of **August 29**, the Cleopatra café in Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk Region), where a closed LGBT party was being held, was attacked by unidentified persons. At around 2:00 AM, approximately 20 people wearing masks forced their way into the café and beat the guests of the party. Some were wearing T-shirts with Right Sector symbols. According to the Gay Alliance of Ukraine, the police, after having been called to the scene of the incident, let the attackers go without even attempting to identify them, with the notable exception of one of the leaders of the Kryvyi Rih “Automaidan” (umbrella term for groups of car owners in different cities that originally used their heightened mobility to patrol cities for protection from the *titushki* thugs during the Maidan. -*transl.*), who motivated the actions of the attackers by the idea that “the participants of this party are corrupting minors.”²¹

On the evening of **August 30**, at approximately 8:30 PM, a group of unidentified people in masks attacked the Queer Home Krivbas community center. They threw smoke grenades into the building and ransacked it. One of the guests was seriously beaten and had to be hospitalized²².

2. MANIFESTATIONS OF XENOPHOBIA IN THE OCCUPIED AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA

On **August 1**, on the first working day of the II World Congress of Crimean Tatars, which began in Istanbul, several notable representatives of the Crimean Tatars were summoned for questioning in Simferopol. These representatives included Chairman of the Central Election Commission of the Kurultai of the Crimean Tatar People Zair Smedlyayev, First Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Nariman Jelyal, and Mejlis member Lemmar Yunusov²³. The day before, Mejlis Deputy Chairman Ilmi Umerov was also called in for questioning to the Investigation Committee. On that same day, Mejlis member Enver Kurtiev was called in for questioning to the Russian Federation Investigation Committee in the Republic of Crimea by the means of a phone call, as he had already been on his way to the Congress²⁴.

The activists of the Crimean Tatar movement believe that these timely summons were driven by the desire of the occupational government to prevent them from participating in the World Congress.

According to Ilmi Umerov, who recorded a video address to the Congress participants, the occupants “are trying to open new criminal cases.”²⁵

On that same day, Mejlis Chairman Refat Chubarov stated at the World Congress of Crimean Tatars that the Crimean Tatars are forced to “live through a new version of genocide,” which is being

20 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=658396367594931&id=100002737228588

21 http://humanrights.org.ua/material/u_krivomu_rozi_napali_na_uchasnikiv_lgbtvechirki

22 http://upogau.org/ru/inform/uaneews/uaneews_2680.html

23 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/08/1/7076424/>

24 <https://www.facebook.com/meclis.org/posts/659102380858668>

25 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/08/1/7076425/>

executed by “that talented heir to the Soviet Union, Putin’s Russia.”²⁶

On the next day, on **August 2**, the Congress called upon the global community to acknowledge that Russia’s actions aimed at destroying the Crimean Tatars, which have taken place from 1783 to the present time, constitute a genocide²⁷.

On **August 3**, coordinator of the Crimean Field Mission Olga Skrypnyk and analyst Vissarion Aseev gave a press-conference dedicated to presenting the mission’s latest report, which contained a multitude of facts about illegal detentions, arrests, and torture of Crimean Tatars.

According to the human rights activists, “restriction of Crimean Tatar rights and pressure from law enforcement is becoming systematic. Activists, who have forsaken hope for any kind of justice, are being kidnapped, and videos from surveillance cameras disappear without a trace.”²⁸

On **August 15**, the Kyiv District Court of the city of Simferopol extended the provisional detention of Ali Aslanov, one of the people involved in the so-called “case of November 26.” On **August 24**, the Supreme Court of Crimea dismissed the complaint filed against this decision.

According to Aslanov’s relatives, he is being pressured to testify against Akhtem Chiyozy, who is being accused by the occupants of organizing mass riots on February 26, 2014²⁹.

In the last decade of August, a case of open and obvious discrimination against Crimean Tatars garnered a wide resonance. The incident took place at a Simferopol barber shop located at 60 Kyivska street.

On **August 18**, the owner of the shop, Natalia Radostina, forbid two of her workers, young Crimean Tatar women, to speak the Crimean Tatar language at work. On the next day, **August 19**, Radostina attempted to forbid the same to Crimean Tatar Rustem Seitov, also a worker. Moreover, she forbid him from performing the salah (namaz) ritual prayer at work. According to the barber, when he applied for the job six years ago, he had stated openly that he was a Muslim and needed to perform the salah ritual, which the administration had no problem with. Seitov said that previously the barbers had spoken both Russian and Crimean Tatar to their clients and among themselves, and before the Russian occupation this had caused no problems whatsoever³⁰.

The young man recorded his conversation with the owner on his phone³¹. “So there are three of you here, and there will never be any more again,” Radostina said.

After the incident became public, the young man and two women, also Crimean Tatars, were no longer allowed to come to work. However, they were not formally fired and their documents were not returned.

Lydumila Lubina, the “ombudsman” appointed by the occupational government, said that it is

26 <http://qha.com.ua/na-kongresse-pokazali-videoobraschenie-chlenov-medjlisa-146636.html>

27 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/08/2/7076475/>

28 <http://qha.com.ua/kpm-zafiksirovala-mnogochislennie-narusheniya-prav-cheloveka-v-krimu-146646.html>

29 <http://hromadskeradio.org/2015/08/24/krymskogo-tatarina-otca-chetveryh-detey-uzhe-pyatyy-mesyac-uderzhivayut-pod-strazhey-v-simferopole>

30 <http://hromadskeradio.org/prava-lyudini/v-simferopole-krymskogo-tatarina-grozyatsya-uvolit-za-razgovor-na-rodnom-yazyke>

31 <http://15minut.org/article/razgovarivaj-zdes-na-russkom-yazyke-video-2015-08-21-11-45-32>

necessary to review the situation in detail and find out whether the workers used the owner's inability to understand their language to "insult her or call her names."³²

Rustem Seitov sees the incident as an open act of discrimination and intends to fight for his rights.

Notably, according to the "Constitution" of the so-called "Republic of Crimea," the "state languages" in the occupied peninsula are currently Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar.

On **August 21**, two Crimean Tatars (Memet Selimov, born in 1986, and Osman Imbragimov, born in 1988) disappeared near the city of Simferopol. On **August 27**, their dead bodies with multiple knife wounds were found near Bogdanovka village. According to unofficial information, the identity of the main suspect has already been established. The investigation believes that the homicides were not committed due to any specific motive but rather were a consequence of joint consumption of alcohol with the victims³³.

On **August 27**, the disappearance of another Crimean Tatar, the 45-year-old Mukhtar Arisanov, who lived in the Fontana district of Simferopol, became publicly known³⁴.

3. MANIFESTATIONS OF XENOPHOBIA IN TERRORIST-CONTROLLED TERRITORY

At the end of August, the Ukrainian activist Stanislav Fedorchuk related a chilling tale on his Facebook page, according to which a young female Jewish volunteer had been a prisoner of the terrorists in Donetsk.

After the installation of the puppet "Donetsk People's Republic" in Russian-occupied territories of the Donetsk Region, the young woman moved to Kyiv.

She returned to Donetsk to visit her mother. Early in the morning of **June 17**, terrorists calling themselves "the DNR Ministry of State Security" forced their way into the women's home. According to the victim, two boxes of sniper bullets and a dynamite stick with a fuse were planted among her things, and the young woman was accused of being a sniper for the Right Sector.

From the very moment of her kidnapping, the DNR fighters used anti-Semitic slurs in their speech, as the young woman did not conceal the fact that she was a Jew. The terrorists who kidnapped her, the workers of the DNR Committee for State Security, and even the so-called "DNR Ombudsman," whom the young woman's mother appealed to, accused Jews of "inventing" Fascism, wished that all Jews would die, and so on³⁵.

The kidnapped volunteer was taken to an insulation material plant, which had been turned into a prison by the terrorists. For three weeks she had been given practically no water and food, and had been beaten. The young woman was forced to speak to the media and repent for her cooperation with the Right Sector and the Tornado battalion.

The young woman remained imprisoned until July 22. After she gave a public talk to the press in

32 <http://hromadskradio.org/prava-lyudini/parikmaher-kotorogo-obeshchali-uvolit-za-krymsko-tatarskiy-yazyk-gotovitsya-suditsya>

33 <https://www.facebook.com/nariman.dzhelalov/posts/959190870811440>

34 <http://15minut.org/article/v-krymu-ishhut-propavshego-muzhchinu-foto-2015-08-28-13-21-11>

35 Personal correspondence with S. Fedorchuk

which she said that she had become disillusioned with the Right Sector, she was released³⁶.

4. ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNMENT BODIES

According to the Ombudsman's Office of the Ukrainian Parliament, after an interjection of the regional coordinator for the Ombudsman's office, the Uzhgorod police began an official investigation into an incident that has possible roots in racial discrimination. The investigation began on **August 3**, and the incident itself took place on July 26, when a dark-skinned woman was forbidden from boarding a mini-bus (see the July issue of this bulletin for details)³⁷.

The National Minority Rights Monitoring Group was created by the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine in April 2014.

The informational bulletin "Chronicle of Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Ukraine" had earlier been published under the title "Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, and the Rights of National Minorities in Ukraine." It was published jointly with the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine.

The bulletin has been published since 2006.

Translations from Ukrainian and English into Russian are done by the editors of the bulletin; if in a particular case they are not, an explicit reference is given. The bulletin is translated into English by Kateryna Zorya.

Materials from the media, information provided by Ukraine's national communities and organizations specializing in protection of human rights, and information provided by activists are all employed by the editors in the compilation of this bulletin.

The editors request that any manifestations of anti-Semitism and xenophobia be reported to them.

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³⁶ <http://ejc.org/page16/news52525.html>

³⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/ombudsmanUA/posts/932489556817491>