



The OSCE Should Act Decisively and Swiftly to Stop Intervention into Ukraine and Prevent a Major Security Crisis in Europe

An urgent appeal from non-governmental organisations across the OSCE region

4 March 2014

The Civic Solidarity Platform, an OSCE-wide network of 60 leading NGOs, is witnessing with dismay and shock the unfolding developments in the Crimea region of Ukraine. De-facto military intervention by an OSCE participating State into the territory of another OSCE participating State is a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that state, which could develop into a full-scale military conflict and cause great suffering and loss of life. It is also a blatant challenge to the spirit and letter of the Helsinki Final Act that undermines the entire system of international security and cooperation.

We appeal to the OSCE, its participating States and other influential international actors to take urgent and determined actions to de-escalate this dangerous crisis situation, ensure an end to Russia's de facto occupation of Crimea and prevent an expansion of the crisis to other regions of Ukraine. It is crucial that international independent monitoring missions are immediately deployed to Ukraine, effective high-level mediation is undertaken, and targeted economic and diplomatic measures are applied to press relevant stakeholders to act in accordance with their international obligations.

Unilateral Russian military intervention into Ukraine constitutes a gross violation of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, which Russia is bound to respect. The Russian government has argued that it is acting to protect the rights of Russian citizens and Russian-speakers in Ukraine. However, there is no credible information about serious violations of rights of or acts of violence against members of these groups in Ukraine that possibly could justify outside intervention. Likewise, no massive and gross human rights violations or crimes against humanity are taking place in Ukraine that possibly could justify a coordinated international intervention. The Russian government should immediately terminate its de-facto occupation of Crimea, withdraw its troops to their permanent locations, put an end to violence reportedly conducted by paramilitary groups under its control in Crimea and various regions of Ukraine, and abandon any plans for a full-scale military action on Ukraine's sovereign territory.

We urge the Ukrainian government and its citizens not to respond by force to the threats of military intervention, to refrain from responding to provocations or provoking the other side and to make all possible efforts to ensure a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Among these steps should be measures to guarantee the rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities and achieve interethnic accord, to hold free, fair and inclusive elections, and to ensure respect for all the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people in Ukraine. We are confident that issues such as these can be solved in a peaceful and democratic way by the Ukrainians

themselves without outside intervention and interference but with appropriate assistance from the OSCE and other international organisations.

We take note of the call by the UN Security Council members to uphold the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. We echo their appeal to all parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from action and rhetoric that could escalate the situation.

We urge the OSCE participating States to:

- Immediately deploy high-level monitoring missions to Crimea and the eastern regions of Ukraine to thoroughly and independently monitor and document human rights developments and the security situation. An OSCE monitoring mission existed in Crimea until 1999, and the current situation warrants its speedy resurrection and expansion to other regions of Ukraine.
- To engage high-level representatives of OSCE and its participating States in mediation efforts to de-escalate the conflict.
- Provide expert assistance to the government of Ukraine to develop measures and legislation that safeguard the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the holding of free, fair and inclusive elections and guaranteeing the rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities.
- Upgrade the status of the OSCE's presence in Ukraine to that of a full OSCE office, enabling the organisation to provide direct assistance, including assisting in the realization of free and fair elections.

We commend the efforts of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship to promote coordinated responses to the current developments, including a special Permanent Council session held on 3 March, the dispatch of the Chairmanship's personal envoy, Tim Guldemann, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Astrid Thors, to Crimea, as well as the preparation of rapid deployment of larger monitoring missions.

Ukrainian civil society and the member organizations of the Civic Solidarity Platform stand ready to support international efforts to monitor and document the human rights situation in Ukraine. We encourage representatives of the OSCE and other international organisations to coordinate their efforts with the Platform's members and avail themselves of the first-hand knowledge of Ukrainian civil society. This crisis warrants a coordinated effort to uphold human rights and protect against impunity.

At this time, the OSCE and the wider international community is facing an extraordinary situation, which requires extraordinary measures. Such measures must be taken without any delay and with a full sense of responsibility for the future of Europe and its peaceful and democratic development.

Members of the Civic Solidarity Platform who have signed this appeal:

Albanian Helsinki Committee

Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations (Georgia)

Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement (Association UMDPL)

Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House (in exile in Lithuania)

Belarusian Helsinki Committee
Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan
Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)
Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
Center for National and International Studies (Azerbaijan)
Crude Accountability (United States)
Freedom Files (Russia)
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
Helsinki Committee for Human rights in Serbia
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly - Vanadzor
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
Human Rights Group "Citizen. Army. Law" (Russia)
Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
Kharkiv Regional Foundation Public Alternative (Ukraine)
Legal Transformation Center (Belarus)
Moscow Helsinki Group
Norwegian Helsinki Committee
NotaBene (Tajikistan)
People in Need (Czech Republic)
Promo Lex Association (Moldova)
Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
United for Intercultural Action (Netherlands)
Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union