

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS AT RISK OF ABDUCTION IN CRIMEA

At least five people went missing after being held by armed men at a military check point in Armyansk, Ukraine, 3km into the Crimean peninsula. They have been released after two-days in captivity, but may still be at risk of abduction.

On 9 March photographer **Oles Kromplyas**, journalist **Olena Maksymenko** and their driver **Eugene Rakhno** disappeared after being stopped at a checkpoint, reportedly manned by riot police officers and armed, plain clothed masked men without any identifiable insignia. The armed men, who claimed to be from Crimea's "self-defence" forces, had guns and knives. Their colleague, journalist Oleksiy Byk, was in a separate vehicle with his brother, a resident of Crimea.

Oleksiy Byk told Amnesty International that he also saw two women kneeling in front of their car with their hands tied. Surrounded by piles of clothing, papers and notebooks, the women were crying. Oleksiy Byk said he could hear the armed men threatening them. The women were later identified by their car licence plate as **Oleksandra Ryazantseva** and **Kateryna Butko**, both AutoMaydan activists from the Kyiv-based group that organized automobile protest actions during the EuroMaydan demonstrations. Kateryna Butko is the group's press secretary and Oleksiy Byk said he saw that she was wearing a press badge identifying her as a journalist. At 4pm Oleksiy Byk and his brother were allowed to leave, due to the brother's residency in Crimea. When they returned 30 minutes later their colleagues' car and the armed men were gone. However Oleksiy Byk said he could still see the two women kneeling, still with their hands tied, in front of a military tent in the distance. Oleksiy Byk and his brother left and immediately contacted Ukrainian media.

On Tuesday 12 March, at around 5pm local time, there were reports from Crimea that Oles Kromplyas, Olena Maksymenko, Eugene Rakhno, Oleksandra Ryazantseva and Kateryna Butko had been released.

Please write immediately in Russian, Ukrainian or your own language to the Crimean parliament:

- Urging it to immediately take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of Oles Kromplyas, Olena Maksymenko Eugene Rakhno, Oleksandra Ryazantseva and Kateryna Butko;
- Ensuring the safety and freedom of movement for journalists and any other persons in Crimea, including visitors from the mainland Ukraine;
- Calling for an immediate and effective investigation by competent authorities of the reported inhuman and degrading treatment of Oleksandra Ryazantseva and Kateryna Butko, and of any other person reportedly detained and subjected to ill-treatment by police or unidentifiable armed persons in Crimea since 26 February, and bringing the perpetrators to account.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 APRIL 2014 TO:

Chairman

Vladimir Andreyevich Konstantinov
Supreme Council of the Autonomous
Republic of Crimea, 18 K. Marx Street
Simferopol, Ukraine, 95000
Autonomous Republic of Crimea
Fax: +380 652 27 25 81

Email: letter2@rada.crimea.ua

Salutation: Dear Vladimir Konstantinov

And copies to:

Acting Minister of Internal Affairs

Arsen Borisovich Avakov
10 Bohomoltsya Street, Kyiv, Ukraine,
01601

Fax: +380 44 256 1633

Email: vidkrytist@mvs.gov.ua

Salutation: Dear Acting Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Crimea is an autonomous republic within Ukraine, and the home of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, in Sevastopol, in accordance with a bilateral Ukrainian-Russian agreement.

On 26 February, clashes were reported in Crimea's capital city Simferopol and elsewhere in Crimea, between pro-Russian activists and supporters of the so-called EuroMaydan protests in Kyiv that had resulted in the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich and the creation of an interim central government.

On the night of 26 to 27 February, buildings belonging to the local authorities across Crimea were simultaneously taken control of by armed groups. A number of objects belonging to the Ukrainian military forces and fleet have been effectively blocked and sieged by organised units of armed men in military uniform without insignia driving military vehicles.

Meanwhile, a new regional administration opposed to the interim central Ukrainian authorities was formed in Simferopol. On 27 February, the Crimean parliament elected a new prime minister in the presence of armed unknown men.

On 6 March, the Crimean parliament voted to hold a referendum in Crimea on 16 March on the question of the region's status, cessation from Ukraine and accession to Russia. The region is effectively controlled by military and paramilitary forces. There is overwhelming evidence – including unofficial admissions by some of the officers – suggesting that the military are Russian personnel, although Moscow has consistently denied that it has deployed its forces in Ukraine's Crimea outside the areas designated to its Black Sea Fleet.

Name: Oles Kromplyas (m), Olena Maksymenko (m) Eugene Rakhno (m), Oleksandra Ryazantseva (f) and Kateryna Butko (f)

Gender m/f: both

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