UNPO Calls For Stabilization of Crimea Amidst Unrest in Ukraine

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The United Nations and European Union Must Urge the Ukrainian Government to Appearse the Situation in Crimea, Protect its Minorities and Withstand Russian Intimidation

27 February 2014, Brussels - The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) urges the European Union and the United Nations to intervene in the peninsula of Crimea, Ukraine, in order to protect civilians and especially the vulnerable Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian minorities in the region, amidst escalating tensions that are taking place in the wake of the ousting of former President Yanukovych.

On Thursday morning, up to 50 heavily armed men from Sevastopol, the main port of Crimea where a Russian fleet is located, had occupied the building of the Crimean government in Simferopol. It is unclear what the military affiliation of the men is. Later during the day, the Russian flag was raised above the Crimean Parliament. The day before, several protests from both pro-Russians and pro-Ukrainians had taken place and made tensions in the region rise. Russia’s military movements are being followed closely, according to acting president Oleksander Turchinov, and security forces have been put on alert, although it remains difficult for Kiev to reach out to the region in the aftermath of the revolution.

Refat Chubarov, Chairman of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, urged the residents of Crimea to remain calm and to avoid getting out in the streets. "The buildings of the Crimean Verkhovna Rada and the Government have been captured by unidentified armed men in unmarked uniforms. They appear to be highly trained and armed with modern weapons. I urge the residents of Crimea to remain calm, and not to try to take any initiative in response to the situation. The release of the captured buildings lies at the competence of the designated law enforcement agencies".

The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People supports the integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Being the Indigenous People of the peninsula, their communities, as well as other vulnerable minority groups such as the Ukrainians, find themselves in an extremely precarious situation. Crimea has a unique, autonomous status in Ukraine and is inhabited by a majority of ethnic Russians, in addition to 24% Ukrainians and 12% Crimean Tatars.

In order to counter the escalating violence in Crimea, UNPO calls upon the United Nations and the European Union to intervene in Crimea to protect civilians and vulnerable communities. UNPO furthermore calls upon Ukraine and the international community not to give in to Russian intimidation, and to seek peaceful means as a way out of this threatening crisis, that could potentially affect the wider region.

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