

Chronicle of Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Ukraine

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Contents

1. Manifestations of xenophobia

1.1 Hate-motivated violence.

1.2 Vandalism. Arson

1.3. Public manifestations of xenophobia

1.4 Homophobia

2. Manifestations of xenophobia in the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea

3. Manifestations of xenophobia in terrorist-controlled territory

4. Actions undertaken by law enforcement and government bodies

1. MANIFESTATIONS OF XENOPHOBIA

1.1 Hate-motivated violence.

On **July 15**, a group of young people attacked the congregation of the Islam Center in Dnipropetrovsk. Initially, two hooligans ran up to a Muslim and began beating him. When other members of the congregation came outside to see what the disturbance was, a group of 10-15 people had already been waiting for them.

Criminal proceedings were opened, and preliminary assessment qualified the case according to Article 296, Part 2 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code (“hooliganism”). The victim received a concussion and soft-tissue bruises on his head¹.

On **July 26**, in the Saltivka district of Kharkiv, two policemen approached two dark-skinned young men (who were from Ghana and Nigeria, as it became known later), who were sitting at a stop, and asked them for their documents. One of them showed his student card, to which one of the policemen said, “That’s not a document.” “How is it not a document?” the student replied in surprise. Instead of answering, the policeman began beating the young man, and he and his partner dragged the victim towards their car. The policemen used force, threatened, and insulted the student².

Passersby interfered, demanding that the police show their own documents. “Is this because I’m black? You’re racist!” said the student who had been attacked to the policeman.

1 Information provided by Alexandra Sverdlova (“No Borders!” project of the Social Action Center).

2 <http://dozor.kharkov.ua/news/crime/1165803.html>

A passerby caught the incident on camera and published the recording online. The video garnered significant resonance³. The Kharkiv police promised to report once the incident had been subjected to internal review⁴.

1.2 Vandalism. Arson

In early July, it became known that the “Menorah” memorial to Holocaust victims, standing at the ravine of Babiy Yar (Kyiv), has been vandalized yet again. According to the statement of the Jewish Forum of Ukraine, the “Menorah” memorial and a memorial to Ukrainian nationalists who had also been killed at the mass shooting site were drenched in a liquid of unknown origin⁵.

1.3. Public manifestations of xenophobia

On **July 3**, several Ukrainian national-radical groups, including the military and political movement Right Sector and a number of smaller groups, particularly C14, held a march in Kyiv in the memory of the Grand Prince of Kyiv Svyatoslav Igorevich (Sviatoslav I), timed to an invented anniversary date of his victory over the Khazar Khanate.

Even though direct anti-Semitic rhetoric was not employed at the event (as the “Khazarian” aspect faded into the background, making way for the main articulated demand of the event—revoking the Minsk Protocol)⁶, the context nonetheless evoked veiled anti-Semitic associations.

“What are we celebrating and what are we demanding?” the Right Sector asked of itself in the announcement at its official website. The immediately-given response is a rather curious train of thought. Having invoked the memory of “glorious ancestors,” the anonymous author of the text moves on to the far more pressing issue of “internal enemies.” “Today we can state with certainty that, despite the Maidan, Ukraine continues to suffer under the oppression of a new Khazaria—the criminal oligarchic system. This system keeps Ukraine practically without statehood, robs the population, and leads our country into the abyss of decay—and, what is more, in this time of military aggression, it helps Moscow establish control over Ukraine through its ‘peaceful plans.’ If it were not for the preservation of the oligarchic system, if it were not for the power of poroshenkos, turchinovs, yatsenyuks, groysmans [and others like them], we would have already freed the Donbass and have been in preparation to free the Crimea.”

It makes sense to suppose that in the context of the chosen date and symbolism of the protest march, the link between the “anti-Ukrainian government,” the “oligarchic system,” and the “new Khazaria” was also anti-Semitic to some degree for the planners of the event themselves⁷.

On **July 22**, a rally using anti-Semitic slogans took place in Lviv, in front of the building of the Regional State Administration.

The participants of the meeting held posters reading “Say ‘No!’ to the Jewish government!” and “The Jewish Brotherhood Sells Ukraine!”, complete with a deciphering of the “real” (naturally, Jewish) surnames of Ukrainian politicians, including Oleh Tyahnybok (alleged Frotman) and Alexander Turchinov (alleged Cohen).

3 <https://youtu.be/idLcG-eAPnI>

4 http://dt.ua/UKRAINE/harkivski-milicioneri-prinizili-i-pobili-afrikancya-183755_.html

5 <http://jewishkiev.com.ua/novosti-foruma/evrejskij-forum-ukrainy-gotovit-novoe-zayavlenie.html>

6 <https://youtu.be/-iXbFHDxamA>

7 <http://ejc.org/page16/news52053.html>

Over 100 people, including minors, participated in the meeting.

After the end of the event, the coordinators paid the participants for their work (50 hrivnyas, or a little over 2 dollars)⁸.

The official request to hold the rally was made by the “Active Element” NGO, originating in Slavsk city of the Lviv region. According to unofficial information, one of the event coordinators is part of the entourage of Opposition Bloc MP Igor Shurma⁹.

On the next day, **July 23**, the Prosecutor’s Office of the Lviv Region began an investigation as a response to the attempt to incite national hatred (Article 161 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code, Part 1)¹⁰. At the request of the Prosecutor’s Office, the Ukrainian Security Service began a check of the “Active Element” organization¹¹.

The police also initiated an enquiry into the fact of an anti-Semitic event being held¹².

1.4 Homophobia

On **July 13**, former Right Sector MP candidate Oleg Kutserib posted on Facebook that he and his son armed themselves with baseball bats and attacked two men near the entrance to his own house, having decided that they are “faggots.”

Two “sympathizers” were also harmed. According to Kutserib, his victims will “spend no less than two weeks at the hospital.”¹³

On **July 20**, at approximately 4 AM, a grenade was set off near the Odesa “Libertine” club, which has a reputation for being gay-friendly. A security guard was wounded; he was hospitalized with a shrapnel wound on his hip¹⁴.

On **July 22**, the “Bird in Flight” journal published a video recording of a social experiment¹⁵, during which two young men took a stroll through Kyiv holding hands.

On Khreschatik Street [the main street of the city -*transl.*], one of the young men sat down on a bench, and the other sat on his knees. Approximately 6-7 young men approached them and, after a short but heated argument, began beating the participants of the experiment.

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

On **July 2**, a 37-year-old citizen of Ukraine, Yuri Ilchenko, who did not switch over to Russian citizenship, was arrested by the occupational law enforcement bodies in Sevastopol. He is accused

8 <https://youtu.be/Ga-ui0aZHgs>

9 http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?na_proplachenomu_mitingu_pid_loda_rozgornuli_antisemitski_gasla&objectId=1359346

10 <http://www.unian.ua/politics/1104019-antisemitskoyu-aktsieyu-u-lvovi-zatsikavilas-prokuratura.html>

11 <http://bbccnn.com.ua/archives/11109>

12 <http://www.mvs.gov.ua/mvs/control/main/uk/publish/article/1570537>

13 The statement had been posted at the following URL: <https://www.facebook.com/kucerub/posts/900466533366347>. However, later it had been either deleted or closed to the general public. The editors of the bulletin have a screenshot of the post at their disposal.

14 http://humanrights.org.ua/material/v_odeskomu_gejklubi_libertin_stavsja_vibuh

15 https://youtu.be/iH_GWYuDNjw

of publishing a video on social networks, where he reads self-written poetry in which he sharply condemns the Russian occupation (“the enemy makes Muscovites [“moskal,” derogatory term for Russian common in the Ukrainian discourse -*transl.*] from Ukrainian children here” and so on)¹⁶.

Even though there is no precise data, it is likely that criminal proceedings were opened according to Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code (“Incitement of Hatred or Enmity”)¹⁷.

On **July 17**, the Bakhchysarai District Court sentenced the imam of the Turgenevka village mosque Mustafa Yagyayev to two years’ conditional imprisonment for inciting inter-ethnic hatred (Article 282, Part 2 of the Russian Criminal Code). Moreover, he has been banned from “any activity connected with communicating and disseminating any kind of information.”¹⁸

The basis for the sentence was the imam’s critical attitude towards the Russian annexation of the peninsula. According to the investigation, the imam spoke to his three female co-workers (he is a mechanic at the Zheleznodorozhnoye village) in June 2014. During the conversation, he disagreed with their opinion on the Crimea being joined to Russia and stated that the Crimea will be returned to Ukraine, and then war will ensue. Yagyayev allegedly said that the Russians will be butchered and bemoaned the loss of life among his Muslim brothers in advance. The convicted man himself ardently denies having ever said that.

On **July 19**, another Crimean Tatar went missing. The 28-year-old Bitla Umerov left the village of Skvortsovo (Simferopol region) to go shopping in the administrative center of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Simferopol itself, and did not return.

According to the Committee on Protection of the Rights of the Crimean Tatar People, 21 people have disappeared without trace since the occupation began¹⁹.

On **July 24**, it became known that the pension of Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people Ilmi Umerov had been reduced nine times. The basis for the decision was a medical examination that re-evaluated his disability status. Before the occupation, Ilmi Umerov had headed the Bakhchysarai District State Administration. He left the post last August, as he had refused to swear the oath required of all Russian civil servants.

According to Umerov’s opinion, the re-evaluation of his disability status and the corresponding reduction in pension might be connected to his political position. “I know with certainty that Russian Federal Security Bureau representatives showed up at [my] clinic and checked all of my records. They also had the doctors give explanatory reports on whether ‘Umerov was really sick and whether there really is a basis for giving him a pension,’” Umerov said.

Earlier, the politician’s daughter, Aishe, had been fired from the Bakhchysarai Historical and Cultural Preserve. She had been told “to her face” that “Umerov’s daughter won’t be working with us.” Umerov’s wife had owned an art salon, but her request to extend the rent of its premises had been denied. She had to close the business²⁰.

A Crimean Tatar grave marker, erected two months ago at the Schebetovka village of the Feodosia Region of the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea, was destroyed on the night of **July 24**.

16 <http://ru.krymr.com/content/article/27118233.html>

17 <http://grani.ru/Politics/World/Europe/Ukraine/m.242684.html>

18 <http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/persecution/2015/07/d32453/>

19 <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/news/27150963.html>

20 <http://ru.krymr.com/content/article/27151162.html>

The stone was erected on May 18 to commemorate the life of a 17th century saint who had lived in that village and was famous for healing children. The place had been a site of pilgrimage. People had turned to the police after discovering the act of vandalism, but the police refused to open criminal proceedings, citing the fact that the memorial had not been on the balance sheet of Schebetovka village.

The police proposed that the memorial could have just fallen by itself due to strong winds. According to available data, the region had not had any recent strong winds at the time²¹.

On **July 28**, some notable activists of the Crimean Tatar movement were served summonses for questioning on the so-called “case of February 26.” The activists 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 Deputy Chairman Ilmi Umerov.

Umerov’s summons was scheduled for July 29, while Jelyal and Smedlyayev have been called to come in on August 1. The activists themselves believe that the summonses may be connected with the World Congress of Crimean Tatars, to be held at these same dates in Ankara. They will not be able to participate in the Congress due to their questioning²².

On **July 28**, the Kyiv District Court of the city of Simferopol extended the arrest of Akhtem Chigoyz, accused of organizing and participating in mass riots on February 26, 2014, to November 19²³.

3. MANIFESTATIONS OF XENOPHOBIA IN TERRORIST-CONTROLLED TERRITORY

On **July 18**, Alexander Zakharchenko, the leader of the puppet “Donetsk People’s Republic” regime, which had been created by Russian aggressors in occupied territories of the Donetsk region, said during a press conference that he “gained a measure of respect” for the national-radical Right Sector movement.

According to Zakharchenko, the reasons for liking the Ukrainian extremists were that “they attempted to remove Poroshenko” and that “they beat the gays in Kyiv.” “They’re just regular normal guys like us,” said the DNR leader approvingly²⁴.

4. ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNMENT BODIES

According to a report of the press service of Ukrainian Ombudsman Valeriya Lutkovska, published on **July 1**, after the Ombudsman appealed to the Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Department in the Mykolaiv Region²⁵, criminal proceedings were opened on the basis of the anti-Semitic vandalism against a Holocaust memorial in Mykolaiv, which took place in the night of March 21. The law enforcement authorities had initially refused to open criminal proceedings²⁶.

21 <https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/photos/a.301261026707333.1073741828.293839707449465/513497938816973/?type=1&permPage=1>

22 <http://ru.krymr.org/content/article/27157381.html>

23 http://www.newsru.ua/ukraine/28jul2015/prodovzhyly_termin_chyigozu.html

24 <http://ruposters.ru/news/18-07-2015/takie-zhe-normalnye-muzhiki>

25 <http://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/ua/all-news/pr/26315-ye-valeriya-lutkovska-zvernulasya-do-nachalnika-upravlinnya-mvs-ukraiini/>

26 <http://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/ua/all-news/pr/1715-gi-valeriya-lutkovska-zlochyni-vchyneni-na-runti->

On **July 24**, the head of the Main Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Kharkiv Region Anatoliy Dmitriyev told the journalist that the pogrom case in Kharkiv, which took place on June 11 now has its first defendant. He is being suspected of hooliganism, according to Article 296, Part 4 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code²⁷. The police denies the possibility that the crime had been motivated by inter-ethnic hatred, as “only four” of the victims were citizens of Jordan. The investigation believes that “it was just a regular brawl. Someone talked smack at a young couple, that went on for a while, then more guys came up, and these ones had knives, and then a fight ensued.”²⁸

Earlier, on **July 3**, First Deputy of the Kharkiv Region Prosecutor Artyom Stepanov said that over 700 witnesses had been questioned about this case²⁹. He also said that “we have an understanding of who might be part of this crime, and we are collecting evidence so that we are able say with certainty to whom we can give notice of suspicion.”³⁰

On **July 26**, a 23-year-old woman from Sierra Leone with an eight-month-old baby was forbidden from boarding a mini-bus. Moreover, the passengers called the police, who, according to the woman, kept her in handcuffs for approximately half an hour. The incident involved racist statements from the passengers³¹. The police later stated that they did not empty handcuffs, while the media cited eyewitness accounts that the handcuffs were only fastened on one wrist. Moreover, journalists cited witness accounts, according to which the woman was requested to leave not for any racist reasons, but because she did not pay the passenger fare³².

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.

The National Minority Rights Monitoring Group can be reached at

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27 <http://dozor.kharkov.ua/news/authority/1164493.html>

28 http://ru.golos.ua/crime/militsiya_harkova_nashla_vinovnyih_v_napadenii_na_studentov_5694

29 <http://nahnews.org/271402-avakov-vs-prokuratura-kto-i-zachem-pokryvaet-prestupleniya-radikalov/>

30 <http://dozor.kharkov.ua/news/authority/1163684.html>

31 <http://obozrevatel.com/crime/97318-privyazhite-ee-k-zaboru-v-uzhgorode-afrikanku-s-mladentsem-vyitolkali-iz-marshrutki.htm>

32 <http://obozrevatel.com/crime/76052-rasizm-v-uzhgorode-chernokozhaya-devushka-do-sih-por-v-shoke-i-zaikaetsya.htm>

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