



## OPEN DIALOG FOUNDATION

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### **The Ukrainian authorities report the invasion of armed Russian troops in Crimea**

**On 27 February, 2014, several-dozen armed men seized the building of the Supreme Council and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, in Simferopol (Ukraine). They raised Russian flags on flagpoles and barricaded themselves in the building. The invaders referred to themselves as the 'members of the self-defence units of Russian-speaking citizens of Crimea'. At the same time, manoeuvres of Russian armed forces began in places of deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. On 28 February, 2014, the Russian troops seized the airport in Sevastopol and attempted to seize the airport in Simferopol. The Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs described these activities as an 'armed invasion and occupation'. Both international and Ukrainian societies fear that Russia will attempt to implement the 'Georgian scenario' of 2008 in Ukraine. In Georgia, under the guise of protecting its citizens, the Russian troops occupied the part of the country.**

The situation in the Crimean peninsula has escalated over several days. On 26 February, 2014, an extraordinary plenary meeting of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC, the supreme representative body the autonomy) was scheduled to be held. Presumably, the purpose of the meeting was to consider the situation in the country. In connection with the meeting, on the morning of 26 February, 2014, two groups began to gather near the Supreme Council building: first – a pro-Russian rally (mainly comprised of ethnic Russians), and the second – a pro-Ukrainian rally (comprised of ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars). The participants of the pro-Russian rally demanded that the authorities refuse to recognise the new Ukrainian government, and to sever the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in to become part of the Russian Federation. Minor clashes were reported to have taken place during the rallies. Several people were injured, and one person died of a heart attack. In view of the deteriorating situation in the area, the meeting of the Supreme Council has been cancelled. Officially: due to the lack of a quorum<sup>1</sup>.

The Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Vladimir Konstantinov denied reports by some media, assuming that through the extraordinary plenary session of the Crimean Parliament, they planned to take drastic decisions, including the disconnection of Crimea from Ukraine. ***"The Crimean parliament is not discussing the issue of secession from the state of Ukraine. This is a provocation aimed at discrediting the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Region, to deprive it of its legitimacy. Unfortunately, this provocation was organised and supported by the Government of Crimea, which, for the sake of power, is ready to sacrifice the social and political stability in the peninsula"***<sup>2</sup>, Konstantinov declared.

***In the morning of 27 February, 2014, it was announced that a group of unknown armed men seized the building of the Supreme Council and the Cabinet of Ministers of the ARC.*** This happened at around 4:00 am. In connection with these events, all the internal troops and police on the Crimean peninsula were summoned. The block, in which the Supreme Council and the Cabinet of Ministers are located, is inaccessible. The General Prosecutor of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Security Service opened an investigation into the seizure of administrative buildings in Simferopol. A criminal case has been instituted under the 'terrorist act'. However, it is still unknown who the invaders are exactly. They call themselves the 'members of the self-defence units of Russian-speaking citizens of Crimea'. According

<sup>1</sup> <http://dw.de/p/1BFq8>

<sup>2</sup> <http://kp.ua/daily/260214/440954/>

to the former Minister of Defence of Ukraine, Yevhen Marchuk, the administrative buildings were seized by special military forces from Sevastopol. *“The special military forces came from Sevastopol in two Kamaz trucks. They disarmed the guards and took the building of the Supreme Council and the Cabinet of Ministers. **The invaders stated that they would protect the Crimean parliament and government. Now they are allowing the Crimean deputies into the parliament buildings in order to gather a quorum for the session.** According to my data, there are plans to return to the 1992 Constitution of Crimea, forming an ‘autonomous’ parliament, and then, most likely, holding a referendum”<sup>3</sup>*, said Yevhen Marchuk.

The Presidium of the Supreme Council requested the holding a referendum on the expansion of powers of the autonomy. The Speaker of the Supreme Council of Crimea, Vladimir Konstantinov said that during the extraordinary session, the Crimean parliament would consider two issues – the holding of an all-Crimean referendum on 25 May, 2014, regarding the expansion of powers of the ARC, and on the economic situation in Crimea<sup>4</sup>. People's Deputy of Ukraine, Andryi Senchenko, said that the meeting of the Crimean parliament was held under close supervision of armed men (in his opinion – former soldiers)<sup>5</sup>.

### **The increased activity of the Russian armed forces**

Parallely to the deteriorating situation in Crimea, the Russian armed forces increased their activity at the Ukrainian border, in Sevastopol (where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is based), as well as in the area of the Black Sea. In particular, on 26 February, 2014, Russian President, Vladimir Putin issued an order to hold military exercises in the central and western military districts of the Russian Federation (near the Ukrainian border)<sup>6</sup>. The movements of heavily armed Russian soldiers were also recorded by journalists on 26 February 2014. Several military trucks were transporting Russian soldiers from Sevastopol to the ‘Yalta’ sanatorium in Yalta, which belongs to the Russian Federation.

During the morning of 27 February, 2014, a convoy of Russian armoured personnel carriers was spotted near Sevastopol. The carriers were moving towards Simferopol. Later, they turned around and made their way back to Sevastopol. Military spokesmen stated that they were carrying out pre-planned training exercises<sup>7</sup>.

It was also reported that several warships of the Russian Federation had been directed towards Sevastopol<sup>8</sup>.

**On the night of 27 February, 2014, Russian soldiers in full combat gear blocked the ‘Belbek’ airport in Crimea. military and border guards of Ukraine are present inside the airport . On the night of 28 February, 2014, several trucks arrived at the airport in Simferopol with over a hundred armed Russian soldiers on board.** The soldiers entered the airport and positioned themselves inside the restaurant. They made no secret of the fact that they belonged to the armed forces of Russia. When approached by Ukrainian police and told that they “are military and have no right to be here”, they answered briefly: “We haven't been ordered to speak with you!”. The situation is static. No weapons have been used on by either side, thus far. The Russian soldiers are overseeing the work of the airport without intervention. **The Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Arsen Avakov, said that he considered the events a ‘direct military invasion and occupation’<sup>9</sup>.** In turn, the Russian news agency,

<sup>3</sup> [http://m.liga.net/news/politics/174749-marchuk\\_sovmin\\_i\\_parlament\\_kryma\\_zahvatil\\_spetsnaz\\_iz\\_sevastopolya.htm](http://m.liga.net/news/politics/174749-marchuk_sovmin_i_parlament_kryma_zahvatil_spetsnaz_iz_sevastopolya.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unian.ua/politics/890692-spiker-vr-krimu-parlament-priznachit-referendum-na-25-travnnya.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0ef1BaUMZI>

<sup>6</sup> <http://tsn.ua/politika/rosiyski-viyskovi-manevri-bilya-kordoniv-ukrayini-sturbuvali-nato-336912.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://ipress.ua/news/pratsivnyky\\_dai\\_rozvernuly\\_rosiyski\\_btr\\_yaki\\_ihaly\\_u\\_sevastopol\\_50700.html](http://ipress.ua/news/pratsivnyky_dai_rozvernuly_rosiyski_btr_yaki_ihaly_u_sevastopol_50700.html)

<sup>8</sup> <http://tsn.ua/politika/rosiyski-btr-vzhe-v-sevastopoli-a-voyenni-korabli-na-pidhodi-la-stampa-336779.html>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/posts/575205945909080?stream\\_ref=1](https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/posts/575205945909080?stream_ref=1)

Interfax, reported that there was no connection between the Russian military presence and the seizure of the airports, which were taken by the 'self-defence units of Crimea'<sup>10</sup>. It is also worth noting that the day before, the entrances to the Crimean peninsula and the Kherson region were blocked by armed men (with rifles and machine guns).

**On 28 February, 2014, the Supreme Council of Ukraine adopted the resolution on appealing to the countries of the Budapest Memorandum (The United States, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom) to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In its decision, the Supreme Council requires the Russian Federation cease activities which bear signs of encroachment upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine<sup>11</sup>.**

In response to the events in Ukraine, the international community called on the authorities of the Russian Federation not to interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine. In particular, the NATO Secretary General, **Anders Fogh Rasmussen** urged Russia to refrain from escalating the tension. *"I'm concerned about developments in Crimea. I urge Russia not to take any action which could escalate tension or create misunderstanding"*<sup>12</sup>, Rasmussen said. The United States Secretary of State, John Kerry also urged the Russian authorities not to interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine. *"Any kind of military intervention that would violate the sovereign territorial integrity of Ukraine would be a huge... a grave mistake"*<sup>13</sup>, Kerry said. A similar statement was also made by the U.S. Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel: *"We expect other nations to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and avoid provocative actions"*<sup>14</sup>.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey also made a statement on the situation in Crimea. The Ministry stated that a solution to the Ukrainian crisis must be found within the boundaries of the territorial integrity of Ukraine<sup>15</sup>.

On 27 February, 2014, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, in which they expressed support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The resolution also recalled that the Russian Federation, along with the USA and Great Britain, is a guarantor of the existing borders of Ukraine in accordance with the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. ***"The European Parliament calls on all sides and third countries to respect and support the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine; calls on all political forces within Ukraine and all the international actors involved to commit themselves to work for the territorial integrity and national unity of Ukraine, taking account of the cultural and linguistic composition of the country and its history"***<sup>16</sup>, the resolution says.

Let us recall that according to the memorandum signed on 5 December, 2014, in Budapest, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Kingdom have guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine in exchange for the country's rejection of a nuclear weapons arsenal<sup>17</sup>.

On 27 February, 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine passed a note to the provisional ombudsman of the Russian Federation in Ukraine urging him to refrain from ordering the movement of troops of the Black Sea Fleet of Russia. They also passed a note on the possibility of holding consultations on the issue of Crimea<sup>18</sup>.

**The Russian military are occupying government buildings and facilities and openly moving within the territory of the Crimean peninsula, therefore violating the guarantees of the Budapest**

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.interfax.ru/world/txt/361733>

<sup>11</sup> [http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/28/rada\\_zvernulasya\\_do\\_krayin\\_budapeshtskoho\\_memorandumu\\_schodo\\_krymu\\_dokument](http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/28/rada_zvernulasya_do_krayin_budapeshtskoho_memorandumu_schodo_krymu_dokument)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2014/02/140227\\_europe\\_on\\_ukraine\\_crisis\\_or.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2014/02/140227_europe_on_ukraine_crisis_or.shtml)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2014/02/140227\\_kerri\\_russian\\_troops\\_or.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2014/02/140227_kerri_russian_troops_or.shtml)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/02/27/7016525/>

<sup>15</sup> [http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/27/turechchyna\\_zrobyla\\_zayavu\\_schodo\\_krymu](http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/27/turechchyna_zrobyla_zayavu_schodo_krymu)

<sup>16</sup> [http://dt.ua/POLITICS/yevroparlament-priynyav-rezolyuciyu-schodo-ukrayini-i-zaklikav-rosiyu-dotrimuvatisya-distanciyi-138501\\_.html](http://dt.ua/POLITICS/yevroparlament-priynyav-rezolyuciyu-schodo-ukrayini-i-zaklikav-rosiyu-dotrimuvatisya-distanciyi-138501_.html)

<sup>17</sup> [http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998\\_158](http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998_158)

<sup>18</sup> [http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/27/mzs\\_ukrayiny\\_peredalo\\_rosiyi\\_druhu\\_notu\\_schodo\\_krymu](http://tvi.ua/new/2014/02/27/mzs_ukrayiny_peredalo_rosiyi_druhu_notu_schodo_krymu)

**Memorandum. The protesters on Maidan in Kiev managed to terminate the reign of Putin and Yanukovich at the costs of numerous human fatalities. The former Ukrainian President fled to Russia. Having suffered defeat, the Russian government is trying to play the last card and implement the Georgian scenario in Crimea. 'testing the strength' of declarations of the EU, US and NATO on ensuring the integrity of the Ukrainian state is now one of the key tasks of President Putin.**

**The Open Dialog Foundation calls on the international community not to wait for more victims or the implementation of plans of the Russian dictator. More than 90 activists killed last week in Kiev are indicative of the great potential for the blackest scenarios to occur in Crimea. The Foundation calls on the EU, US and OSCE to send observation missions urgently and in particular to Crimea and Sevastopol.**

Reference:

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an administrative unit in the south of Ukraine, located on the Crimean peninsula. In 1956, the Crimean peninsula was transferred from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Ethnic composition: Russians (58%), Ukrainians (24%), Crimean Tatars (12%).

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