



15 April 2014 - Misinformation, propaganda and incitement to hatred need to be urgently countered in Ukraine to avoid the further escalation of tension in the country, according to a UN human rights [report released today](#) .

Root causes of the protest that have taken place since November 2013 include, corruption and widespread economic inequality, as well as the lack of accountability for human rights violations by the security forces and weak rule of law institutions. The report, which is based on information collected during two missions to Ukraine in March by Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović and a team of UN human rights monitors on the ground since 15 March, analyses events up to 2 April.



121 people were killed in violence between December 2013 and February 2014 research indicates.. Most acts of severe beatings, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were reportedly attributed to the Berkut special police. Excessive use of force by the Berkut and other security forces led to the radicalisation of the protest movement, the report

found.

“In eastern Ukraine, where a large ethnic Russian minority resides, the situation remains particularly tense,” the report says. “It will be important to immediately take initial measures to build confidence between the Government and the people, and among the various communities, and reassure all people throughout Ukraine that their main concerns will be addressed.” Human rights concerns, especially pertaining to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and other civil and political rights are in a precarious situation the report stresses.

According to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, “It is critical for the Government to prioritise respect for diversity, inclusivity and equal participation of all – including minorities – in political life”. The report underlines that, “A number of measures taken in Crimea are deeply concerning from a human rights perspective”. These include the introduction of Russian citizenship, making it difficult for those who opt to maintain their Ukrainian citizenship to stay in Crimea. “The current situation also raises concerns with regard to land and property ownership, wages and pensions, health service, labour rights, education and access to justice,” the report continues.

The authorities in Crimea should also publicly condemn all attacks or harassment against human rights defenders, journalists or any members of the political opposition, the report urges. Additionally they should ensure full accountability for such acts, through prompt, impartial and effective investigations and prosecutions.

“The international community, including the UN, can play a role in supporting the creation of such an environment. My Office and its monitoring team can provide impartial and authoritative human rights assessments to contribute to establishing the facts, de-escalating tension, and paving the way for an environment that is conducive to the holding of free and fair elections on 25 May,” the High Commissioner noted.

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