



29 July 2014 - Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, calls for an end to the reign of fear and terror in eastern Ukraine.

“I would like to stress to all those involved in the conflict, including foreign fighters, that every effort will be made to ensure that anyone committing serious violations of international law including war crimes will be brought to justice, no matter who they are”, Pillay said. “I urge all sides to bring to an end the rule of the gun and restore respect for the rule of law and human rights.”

Pillay [issued](#) her call yesterday, whilst releasing a report on the situation in Ukraine. According to the UN report, compiled by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission (HRMMU) deployed in Ukraine by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, armed groups in eastern Ukraine have caused a total breakdown of law and order in the region. Armed groups continue to abduct, detain, torture and execute hostages in order to intimidate and to exercise their power over the population in a raw and brutal way.

Responding to this, Government security forces have accelerated their operations in the areas still under the control of the armed groups, with heavy fighting located in and around population centres, resulting in loss of life, property and infrastructure and causing thousands to flee.

Pillay said: “Both sides must take great care to prevent more civilians from being killed or

injured. Already increasing numbers of people are being killed with serious damage to civilian infrastructure, which – depending on circumstances – could amount to violations of international humanitarian law. The fighting must stop.”

The deteriorating situation in eastern Ukraine is impacting adversely on the rest of the country, with more than 100,000 people fleeing the areas of fighting having to be temporarily accommodated in other parts of Ukraine. As of 26 July, at least 1,129 people have been killed and 3,442 wounded.

The report iterates that the human rights situation in Crimea remains precarious. According to the report, harassment and discrimination against Ukrainian nationals, Crimean Tatars, religious minorities in general and activists who opposed the 16 March “referendum” have intensified. NGOs are warning of a possible new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Crimea during the next few months as new restrictions take effect and make people’s lives there untenable. At the moment, the vast majority (86%) of IDPs are from the east, with the UN Refugee Agency estimating the total to be 101,617 as of 25 July - an increase of more than 15,000 since the reporting period ended on 15 July.

Although the majority of Ukrainians that reside outside the east continue to be able to exercise their freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, movement and religion or belief, the report notes some worrying trends. Opinions are becoming more polarized and consequently, hate speech has escalated dramatically. In addition, the level of ‘anti-Russia’ rhetoric has increased along with the physical targeting of Russian-owned banks and businesses on the grounds that they are ‘financing terrorism.

The situation is dangerous for journalists, with harassment, intimidation, manipulation, abductions, detentions and enforced disappearances continuously occurring in the east. At least five journalists have been killed since the fighting began in April.

Despite the daunting tasks the Government of Ukraine faces as it restores law, order and security as well as combats armed groups in the east, the report concludes that there is an urgent need to prioritize attention to good governance, rule of law and human rights issues in line with recommendations made by the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the work of the HRMMU.

“The horrendous shooting down of the Malaysian Airlines plane on 17 July came just after the cut-off date of this report,” Pillay said. “This violation of international law, given the prevailing circumstances, may amount to a war crime. It is imperative that a prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigation be conducted into this event.”

The full report is available [here](#)

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