

Statement by the Spokesperson on the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula

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The administrative detention of human rights lawyer Emil Kurbedinov on 26 January in Simferopol, Crimean peninsula, continues a worrying trend of increasingly frequent attacks on the vital work conducted by human rights defenders to protect the rights of Crimean Tatars and of those who do not recognise the illegal annexation of the peninsula by the Russian Federation. The rights of Mr Kurbedinov should be respected and his release ensured.

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The deterioration of the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula since its illegal annexation by the Russian Federation has been consistently raised by the European Union. In particular, the rights of the Crimean Tatars have been gravely violated through the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, by labelling it "an extremist organisation". Recent extremism charges against the Deputy Chairman, Ilmi Umerov is another example of the persecution of its leaders. We expect these charges to be dropped and Mr Umerov's right to legal counsel to be fully respected. The European Union also continues to call for full, free and unhindered access of international human rights observers to the peninsula.

The European Union remains committed to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. We fully support the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.