



# Minorities and Revolution of Dignity: Creation and Strengthening of Civic/Political Nation in Ukraine

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## **ROUND TABLE**

**Minorities and the construction of inclusive society:  
Moldova, Ukraine and international practice**

**Chisinau, 23 – 24 November 2015**

# Minorities participation in the Revolution of Dignity (2013 – 2014)

- From the very beginning of the protest action on Kyiv Maidan Square in November 2013, pro-European and democratically-minded people consisted not only of ethnic Ukrainians but also of representatives of different ethnic minorities
- Many of them – according to calculations, not less than a half of protesters – were Russian-speakers
- The same situation developed in a number of other cities where local “EuroMaidans” also took place
- Among the most active participants, several groups deserve special mentioning

# Jewish Community of Ukraine

- Representatives of the overthrown government of the president Yanukovich, as well as their “bosses” in Moscow, actively played “Antisemitic card”, accusing “radical Ukrainian nationalists” in xenophobia and, in particular, virulent antisemitism
- Meanwhile, many activists of Jewish organisations of Ukraine took part in “EuroMaidans” protest actions and denounced such kind of charges
- A prominent leader, Yossyp Zisels, who often spoke on the main Maidan square in Kyiv, called for “all of us, members of minorities, to come together to ensure European future of Ukraine”

# Statement

- Among a number of statements, the one signed by prominent Ukrainian Jewish figures was issued in March 2014 and posted in major US, Canadian and Israeli newspapers
- The statement accuses Vladimir Putin of spreading lies about the treatment of minorities, including Jews, in Ukraine
- It points out that “*the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine are not being humiliated or discriminated against, their civil rights have not been limited*”
- It suggests that since Putin’s claims of an increase in anti-Semitism in Ukraine are at odds with the facts, **he is perhaps confusing Ukraine with Russia where such a trend has been recorded**

# Reaction of Ukrainian “Far Right”

## RIGHT SECTOR:

- “..we would like first of all to say that Ukrainian nationalism is not chauvinistic”
- “We have already stated...that the National revolution in Ukraine does not pose any threat to the local Polish minority in Ukraine...[or] any other ethnic minorities. Quite the opposite, we believe the state must guarantee their rights...”
- “The Right Sector feels that past animosity between Ukrainians and Poles, Ukrainians and Hungarians, Ukrainians and Romanians, as well as Hungarians and Romanians, must be overcome once and forever”

# UKRAINE-ISRAEL

- Effective endeavours of Jewish activists, public figures and researchers have led to shifts in public opinion of Israeli population traditionally regarding Ukraine as an “Anti-Semitic nation”



Action of Solidarity with Israel (Kyiv, 1 November 2015)  
“Together Against Terrorism and Separatism!”



# Muslims of Ukraine

- Outstanding leaders of Ukrainian Muslims were also active part of the EuroMaidans and Revolution of Dignity
- In particular, Said Ismagilov, Mufti of the DUMU “UMMA”, often appeared on the main scene of Maidan in Kyiv, stressing the necessity to consolidate efforts of different religious denominations in a peaceful fight for just, democratic and sovereign Ukraine’s future in Europe, and regularly participating in the ecumenical preying



# Annexation of Crimea: Interethnic Solidarity

- Occupation of Crimea immediately followed by the illegal one-sided annexation of Crimea in March 2014 – unprecedented violation of the world order in post-WWII Europe – raised deep grievances and anger of Ukrainians of all ethnic origin
- 23 March 2014 on People's Assembly at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv leaders and representatives of national minorities of Ukraine expressed their solidarity against Russia's aggression in Crimea.
- In the action took part leaders of **Jewish, Polish, German, Volga Tatars, Armenians and other NGOs and associations of ethnic minorities**

# Russians in Ukraine: Vyacheslav Martynov (Krasnodar) on EuroMaidan in Kharkiv



**Martynov: “I’m happy to be eventually legalised in Ukraine! Many thanks to all friends who helped me!”**



# Serhiy Hacman: “I’m a Romanian. I’m a Citizen of Ukraine”



# Crimean Tatars

- Throughout the events related to EuroMaidans and Revolution of Dignity, Crimean Tatars were their active participants
- Volunteers from Crimea joined members of the Crimean Tatar Diaspora in Kyiv and other cities; Crimean Tatar businessmen organised for protesters a “field kitchens” with free-of-charge national dishes
- Crimean Tatar tent(s) on Maidan was extremely popular; many people were eager to communicate, provide different kind of supplies and express support and solidarity

# Symbol of Friendship and Solidarity: 18 May 2015, commemoration of the Day of Deportation “Today we all are Crimean Tatars!”

21  
Листопада  
Ініціатива

Туман розсіється. Вистоїмо. Разом.

18.05.1944. Депортовано 200 000 кримських татар.  
У перші 4 роки загинуло 46,2% депортованих.  
18.05.2015. З окупованого Криму вже виїхало 50 000 людей,  
більшість із них - кримські татари

Пам'ятаємо.

## Musatfa Djemilev, charismatic leader of Crimean Tatar People (2014)

ТІЛЬКИ В УКРАЇНІ БАНДЕРІВЦІ МОЖУТЬ  
ОХОРОНЯТИ СИНАГОГИ, ЄВРЕЇ СТВОРЮВАТИ  
СОТНІ САМОБОРОНИ, РОСІЯНИ БУТИ  
УКРАЇНСЬКИМИ НАЦІОНАЛІСТАМИ, А  
КРИМСЬКІ ТАТАРИ СКАНДУВАТИ «КРИМ - ЦЕ  
УКРАЇНА!».

Я ПИШАЮСЯ ТИМ, ЩО Я  
УКРАЇНЕЦЬ

МУСТАФА ДЖЕМІЛЄВ



# Tradition of Recent Past: Kyiv, November 1989, Meeting of “Rukh” Movement



# CONCLUSIONS

- Turbulent and tragic events of 2013 – 2014 have had a great impact on the Ukrainian society
- In particular, people have felt united by the main goals of the Revolution of Dignity: **to put the end to the authoritarian regime of president Yanukovich blocking Ukraine's path to European integration**, and develop a new **state based on European values**
- High level of inclusiveness, of tolerance towards “others” (differing from the majority by ethnicity, religion, language etc.) ensured an easy-going integration of minorities into the pro-European mainstream
- In such a way Ukrainian **civic/political nation** that emerged in the first years of independence, has become much stronger and at the same time, more assertive.