

External intervention can do little to influence the relationship between Kyiv and Crimea, or the way in which Crimea remains a potential source of conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Outside assistance can, however, play a major role in helping to stabilize the socio-economic situation in Crimea, and assisting beleaguered minorities such as the Crimean Tatars.

The Crimean Tatar community has the good fortune to be headed by pragmatic and authoritative leaders who realize that the Crimean Tatars have the most to lose if inter-ethnic tensions in Crimea lead to open conflict. Thus the Crimean Tatars generally demonstrated very great restraint after their return to Crimea. They have not demanded the return of their original property (although they hope to eventually gain compensation for it), and have consistently advocated peaceful methods of protest against the abuses to which they have been subjected. As a result, they have begun to gradually win the grudging respect of their immediate neighbours.

However, the political situation in Crimea remains unsettled as some local politicians continue to propagate anti-Tatar stereotypes and paint dramatic pictures of Tatar plans to take over the peninsula. In addition, the Crimean Tatar leaders are facing increasing pressure from activists who point to continued discrimination against their community and advocate the use of force to defend their rights. Even moderate figures in the Crimean Tatar movement sometimes ruefully note that their difficult situation will gain substantial domestic and international attention only if violence erupts in Crimea.

Thus given the size and dynamism of the Crimean Tatar returnee community, and the prospect that many more Crimean Tatars will return to their homeland in the next few years, Ukraine faces very great challenges in: 1) providing this population with the infrastructure it needs to satisfy its most basic, immediate needs; and 2) maintaining ethnic "peace" in Crimea.

It is especially difficult to deal with these challenges in view of the severe socio-economic, environmental, and other problems facing Crimea. The stagnant Crimean economy is largely the result of an unholy alliance between various criminal "clans" and local Crimean politicians and bureaucrats. They are attempting to control the most lucrative sectors of the economy by manipulating the process of privatization of state-owned property, and this is a source of great resentment among the Crimean Tatars. They are unlikely to benefit from privatization given the way in which it is currently being conducted.

A variety of international organizations have begun to take an interest in the Crimean situation. However, the international response has left a great deal to be desired, and development projects in Crimea have involved more discussion than concrete action. The restraint shown by Crimean Tatar leaders has paradoxically served to deflect international attention from the situation in Crimea since, as a result of the relatively low level of ethnic conflict there, Crimea does not qualify for certain categories of emergency