

Press release: Minister for Europe concerned by the conviction and sentencing of Crimean Tatar leader by 'de-facto' Russian authorities

Crimean Tatar leader Akhtem Chiygoz has been convicted and sentenced to 8 years in a seriously flawed trial.

Akhtem Chiygoz, Deputy Chair of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, was today found guilty of 'organising mass un-rest', and sentenced to 8 years. Human rights groups have reported serious flaws in the trial. This represents the latest development in a wider campaign by the Russian 'de-facto' authorities of targeting Crimean Tatars.

Speaking after the verdict and sentencing of Akhtem Chiygoz was passed by the so-called 'Supreme Court' of the illegally annexed Crimea, Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

The guilty verdict and sentencing of Akhtem Chiygoz to 8 years for 'organising mass un-rest' in Crimea demonstrates the deeply concerning persecution of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians opposed to the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation.

The trial itself appears to fall well short of international standards: Chiygoz was denied the option to attend court proceedings and his legal representative faced intimidation, which included arrest and temporary detention earlier this year. The alleged offence took place before Russia had even claimed control of Crimea through its illegal annexation, and appears part of a worrying effort to repress any political opposition in Crimea.

The UK calls for the release of Chiygoz as well as the growing number of Crimeans the 'de-facto' Russian authorities have imprisoned for opposing the illegal annexation.

Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine, and as such the UK does not recognise the legitimacy of Russian 'de-facto' authorities in Crimea including those 'elected' since the illegal annexation of the peninsula, such as the so-called 'Governor of Sevastopol'.

Notes to Editors

- Akhtem Chiygoz has been in detention since January 2015 for participating in a pro-Ukraine rally in Simferopol on 26 February 2014 in the days running up to Crimea's illegal annexation by the Russian

Federation.

- More information about the persecution Crimean Tatars face by Russian authorities can be found in the 2016 FCO Human Rights Report.

Further information