



CRIMEAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

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FINDINGS OF MONITORING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE IN CRIMEA

(20-26 APRIL 2020)

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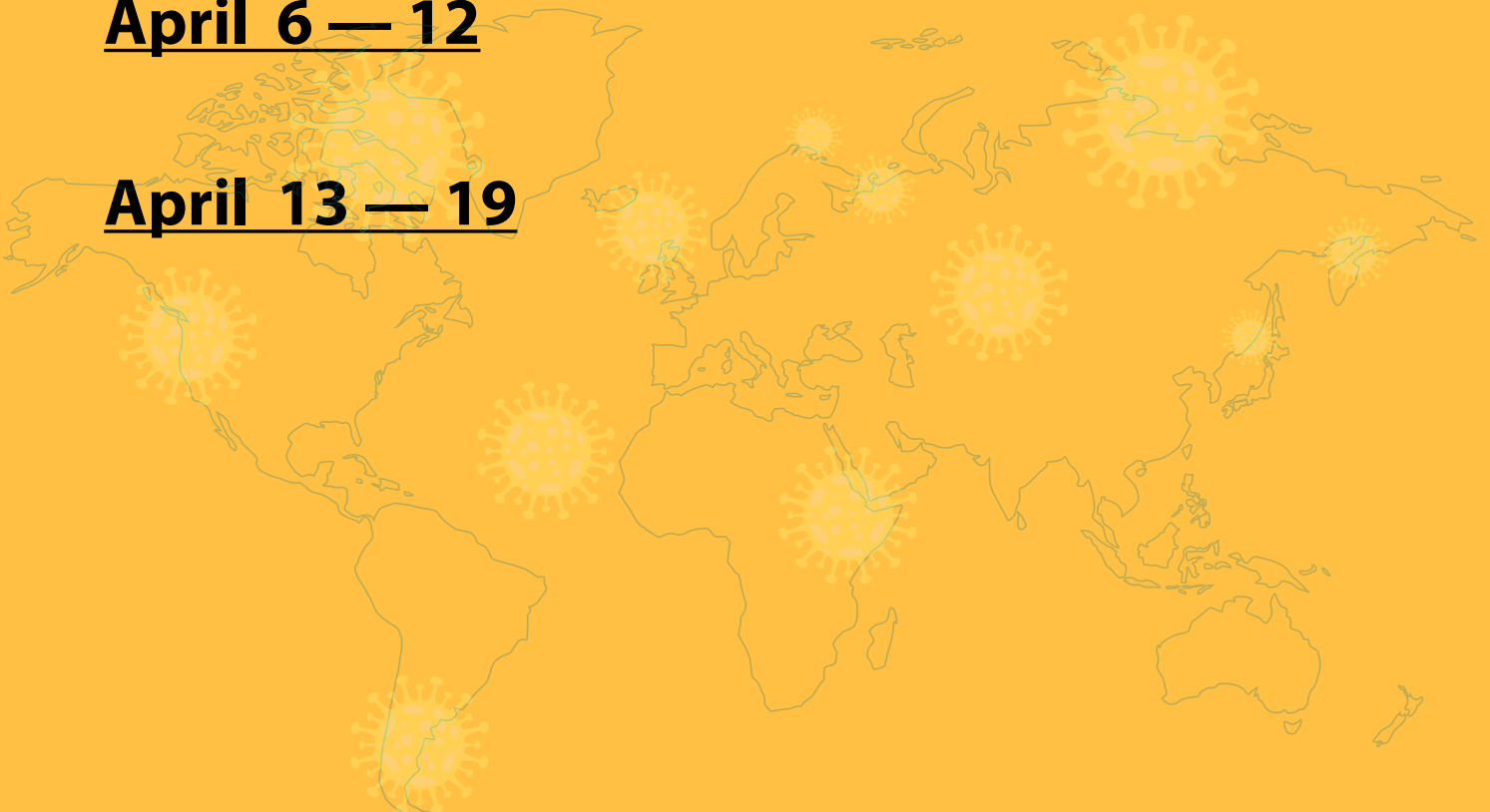
Follow the link to read previous Findings of monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic response in Crimea

March 16-29

March 30 — April 5

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1. ACTS AND DECISIONS OF DE FACTO CRIMEAN AUTHORITIES



1.1. Crimea

On April 20, the so-called “head” of Crimea signed Edict 113-U¹ on amending the edict on the “high alert” regime. The document obliges people living and / or arriving in Crimea and visiting countries with COVID-19 to fill out a questionnaire, a sample of which is established by this edict. It is also necessary to confirm in the questionnaire that the person has been warned of responsibility under RF CoAO Art. 20.6.1.

According to the changes, coal trading as well as remote activity of interest groups, sections, libraries and cultural and leisure institutions are allowed.

In addition, by this edict, “Kazak societies” were included in the list of persons who were not subject to a ban on leaving their place of residence without specific reasons (“self-isolation”).

The medical examination of persons subject to military service in the RF Armed Forces as assigned by military commissariats was added to the list of allowed occupational medical examinations and health screening.

On April 22, by ordinance of the so-called “Council of Ministers” of Crimea No. 536-r², the “Ministry of Health Care” of Crimea was allocated additional financial assistance in the amount of RUR658,800,000.00 for equipping or re-equipping additional beds for the COVID-19 treatment, fitting additional beds with medical gases (oxygen), providing medical staff with personal protective equipment, etc.

1.2. Sevastopol

On April 20, the so-called “government” of Sevastopol issued Resolution 145-PP³, that established incentive payments to the salaries of medical staff involved into providing medical services to control COVID-19. The payment of these funds is regulated by two appropriate procedures.

On April 20, the “government” of Sevastopol issued Resolution 146-PP⁴, which established a one-time payment to families with minor children (under 18 years) in the amount of RUR3,000 per child. To receive this payment, a person should be a holder of an RF individual personal account insurance number (SNILS) that can be obtained only if the person is a holder of the RF national passport or residence permit or temporary residence permit in the RF.

On April 20, a new resolution 147-PP⁵ granted a deferral for paying the lease of land “owned by the city” for the period from March 1 to June 30 (according to international law, this land is the property of Ukraine or citizens of Ukraine). If the tenant’s business appeared to be in the list of businesses that were most affected by restrictive measures (the list of such affected sectors of the economy is determined by the “government” of Sevastopol), then the businessperson is exempt from paying land lease for the period from April 1 to June 30, 2020. The timing for payment of local taxes and fees for small and middle businesses was also modified.

On April 21, an edict of the so-called “governor” of Sevastopol 34-UG⁶ was signed that imposed a ban for the medical staff to work part-time and for the managers to engage medical staff for such work, except for COVID-19 treatment.

This edict prohibits also routine vaccination of adults and the clean-up immunization of children against infantile paralysis. From April 22 to 30, the program of occupational and preventive medical examinations is to be suspended in medical institutions for all but employees in the industrial and service sectors where such examinations are mandatory.

2. RESTRICTIONS ON PASSING CHECKPOINTS AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The entry-exit restrictions introduced by the CMU ordinance⁷ are still in effect at the Ukrainian check-points with Crimea: Ukrainian nationals may leave or enter Crimea in case of any humanitarian reasons (regardless of registration of residence). The decision to pass through the checkpoint due to such reasons is made by the Chairman of the State Border Service of Ukraine.

According to CMU Resolution # 211 dated March 11, 2020 “On preventing the spread of acute respiratory illness COVID-19 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus across Ukraine”⁸, the persons entering from the occupied territory of the AR of Crimea and Sevastopol City through the check-points are subject to a mandatory hospitalizing in the observation facilities (isolators).

On April 24, the Main Directorate of the National Police of Kherson Region reported that since April 6, police had drawn up 201 administrative reports for violating the above norm (“violation of quarantine rules”) for people who arrived from Crimea: 123 reports - in Kalanchak, 76 - in Novotroitskoye, 2 - in Chaplynka. These figures include reports drawn up at the checkpoints for refusing to go to the observation place, and reports on the people who had left the place of observation. The reports have been sent to the court for proceedings⁹.

At the same time, residents of Crimea, who, after leaving the peninsula, were placed for mandatory observation, report inappropriate conditions in medical institutions that force people to leave the places of observation. For example, a Crimean resident who is at the observation in Kalanchak fears that his staying arrangements there pose the risk of COVID-19 infection among healthy people because all are kept in the same room¹⁰.

According to the ordinance of the Government of the Russian Federation of March 27, 2020, passing the Russian checkpoints with Crimea is still prohibited even for holders of the Russian national passports. Exceptions are, for example, “citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing in the territories of certain regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine” or those who intend to cross the checkpoint in the event of the death of a close relative¹¹. Thus, Ukrainian nationals with a residence registration on the peninsula cannot leave for the territory controlled by Ukraine¹².

At the entrance to Sevastopol, by decision of the authorities de facto, sanitary check points have been set up for all entering vehicles. Within 7 days, according to the website of the authorities de facto, drivers of 245 cars refused to undergo a mandatory 2-week observation, which means they were not allowed to enter the city. For the same reason, another seven people who arrived in the city by train were unable to stay in it¹³.

3. PRACTICES OF APPLYING RESTRICTIVE MEASURES

After decisions on additional payments for minor children, people queued in Sevastopol in front of bank branches to process these payments¹⁴. The most people are recorded at lunchtime and in the afternoon. The reason for queuing is lack of possibility to make an appointment with the staff by phone in advance.

"The head of the Rospotrebnadzor regional department" said that catering, hotel and rest health treatment facilities would be closed until June¹⁵.

Public transport and movement in the settlements

Passenger trains from Crimea to the regions of the Russian Federation were canceled or rescheduled for later dates¹⁶.

At the same time, Grand Service Express, the private carrier company, in the context of passenger transportation restrictions, organized transfers and bus services along railway routes in Crimea¹⁷.

When buying a ticket for long-distance trains of the Russian Railways, since April 23 passengers are required to provide their contact information - phone number or e-mail¹⁸.

Education system

According to the "head" of Crimea S. Aksionov, the school year in educational institutions will be ended by in the distance learning mode¹⁹.

However, the distance learning is not available for all Crimean children. For instance, 2 thousand Crimean schoolchildren, according to the "minister" of education and science of the Crimea, remain without access to the Internet and are not covered by the educational process²⁰.

According to the results of the survey of parents, it is also important to note the problem of the operation of distance learning sites themselves. Such online platforms, according to children and parents, often do not cope with the load when accessing simultaneously by a large number of users. The result is the children can't connect and perform necessary assignments in the remote mode.

Since April 20 groups on duty for junior pupils whose parents returned to their jobs, have started working in Sevastopol²¹. The number of pupils in such groups should not exceed 12 persons.

Militarization in quarantine context

Earlier it was stated that until April 30, no personal receptions of people and medical commissions would be held as part of the draft campaign, that formally began in Crimea on April 1. However, since April 20, by Edict of S. Aksionov, medical examinations of persons subject to military service in the RF Armed Forces under assignments of military commissariats have been allowed.

Military exercises continue in Crimea. For instance, on April 22, it became known that S-400 Triumph anti-aircraft missile system crews held exercises on air defense in Crimea²².

On April 20, by Edict of S. Aksionov, members of the paramilitary groups - "Kazak Societies", that actively participated in military operations on seizing the military and civilian objects of Crimea and kidnapped activists in 2014, were included in the list of persons who were exempted from the ban to leave their place of residence for no specific reason ("Self-isolation"), as they took part in the "protection of public order".

Detention centers and penal colonies

Some Crimean residents deprived of their liberty within politically motivated criminal cases, were sent to the detention centers and the colonies on the RF territory, though this was a violation of the international humanitarian law. For instance, Nariman Memedeminov, Oleg Prikhodko, Enver Seytosmanov, Refat Alimov, Inver Bekirov, Muslim Aliyev, Memet Belialov, Ernes Ametov, Marlen Asanov, Server Zekiryayev, Timur Ibragimov, Seyran Saliyev, Server Mustafaeyv,, Edem Smailov and others are in Detention Center 1 FKU of GUF SIN of Russia in the Rostov region.

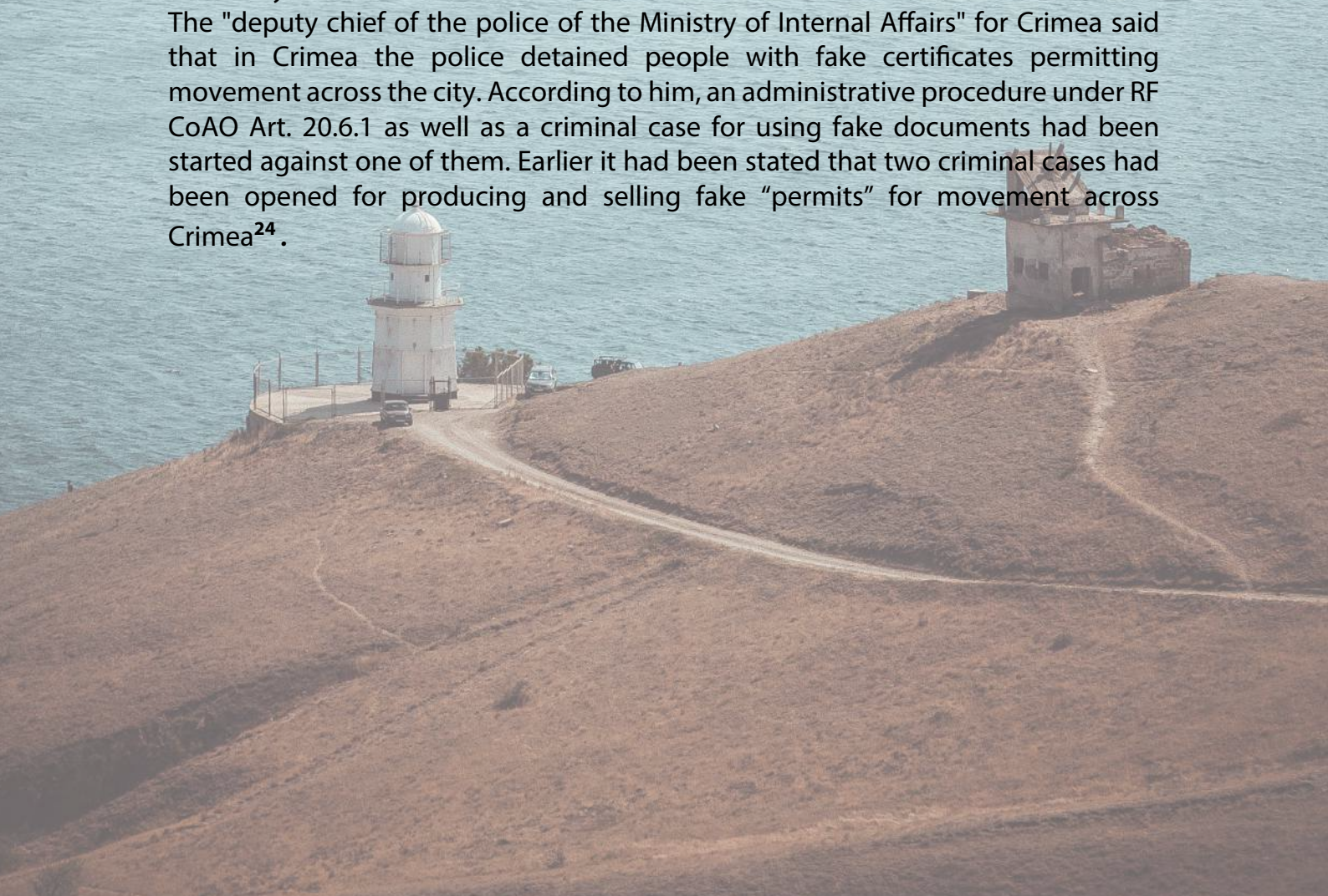
As replied by the Health Unit # 61, there were no cases of patients with COVID-19 and suspected cases of COVID-19 in Detention Center 1 FKU of GUF SIN of Russia in the Rostov region (Rostov-on-Donu). However, as said by the people staying in this Detention Center, the people with COVID-19 symptoms are not tested, and are just ARVI diagnosed or not diagnosed at all.

Based on this answer, no personal protective equipment is provided to persons in custody. The cells are cleaned "by the arrested persons under investigation themselves up to five times a day." But in this case, according to the Federal Penitentiary Service, the prisoners are provided with disinfectant solutions. Given the information of the persons in the detention center and their lawyers, the official information of the FSIN is unlikely to be considered reliable.

Liability for violating the restrictions

On April 20, the Sevastopol authorities de facto reported that more than 200 administrative reports "for violating the self-isolation regime" had been drawn up in the city.²³

The "deputy chief of the police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs" for Crimea said that in Crimea the police detained people with fake certificates permitting movement across the city. According to him, an administrative procedure under RF CoAO Art. 20.6.1 as well as a criminal case for using fake documents had been started against one of them. Earlier it had been stated that two criminal cases had been opened for producing and selling fake "permits" for movement across Crimea²⁴.



4. INFORMING THE PEOPLE, ACCESS TO NECESSARY MEDICAL SERVICES AND PERSONAL PROTECTION MEANS



According to the official information of the authorities de facto, as of April 26,

100 cases of **COVID-19** infection in Crimea have been recorded²⁵

(69 in the AR of Crimea and 31 in Sevastopol City). Information about the first officially recognized case of the infection in Crimea appeared on March 21.²⁶

In several regions of Crimea, the CHRГ recorded information on deaths caused, according to medical staff, by complications from COVID-19. However, official statistics on the death of people from COVID-19 are not available.

The "Minister" of social policy of Crimea said that there was a shortage of antiviral drugs in Crimea and prices for certain drugs had increased²⁷.

The Crimean Blood Transfusion Center reported that with "high alert" regime introduced, the Center had faced a problem of shortage of donated blood, as local residents feared responsibility for leaving the house²⁸.

Access to medical establishments

On April 22, two hospitals, closed for observation after the discovery of confirmed COVID-19 infection cases, - the town hospital of Armiansk and the branch of hospital # 1 of Sevastopol – are reopened²⁹.

The "Minister of Labor and Social Care" has appealed to the Russian Guard to guard Simferopol City Clinical Hospital # 7, where infected COVID-19 patients are being treated as well as to enhance the security regime at the entrance to the Yevpatoriya Observation Facility³⁰.

Simferopol Clinical Hospital was converted into an observation facility, since two cases of COVID-19 infected doctors had been detected there.

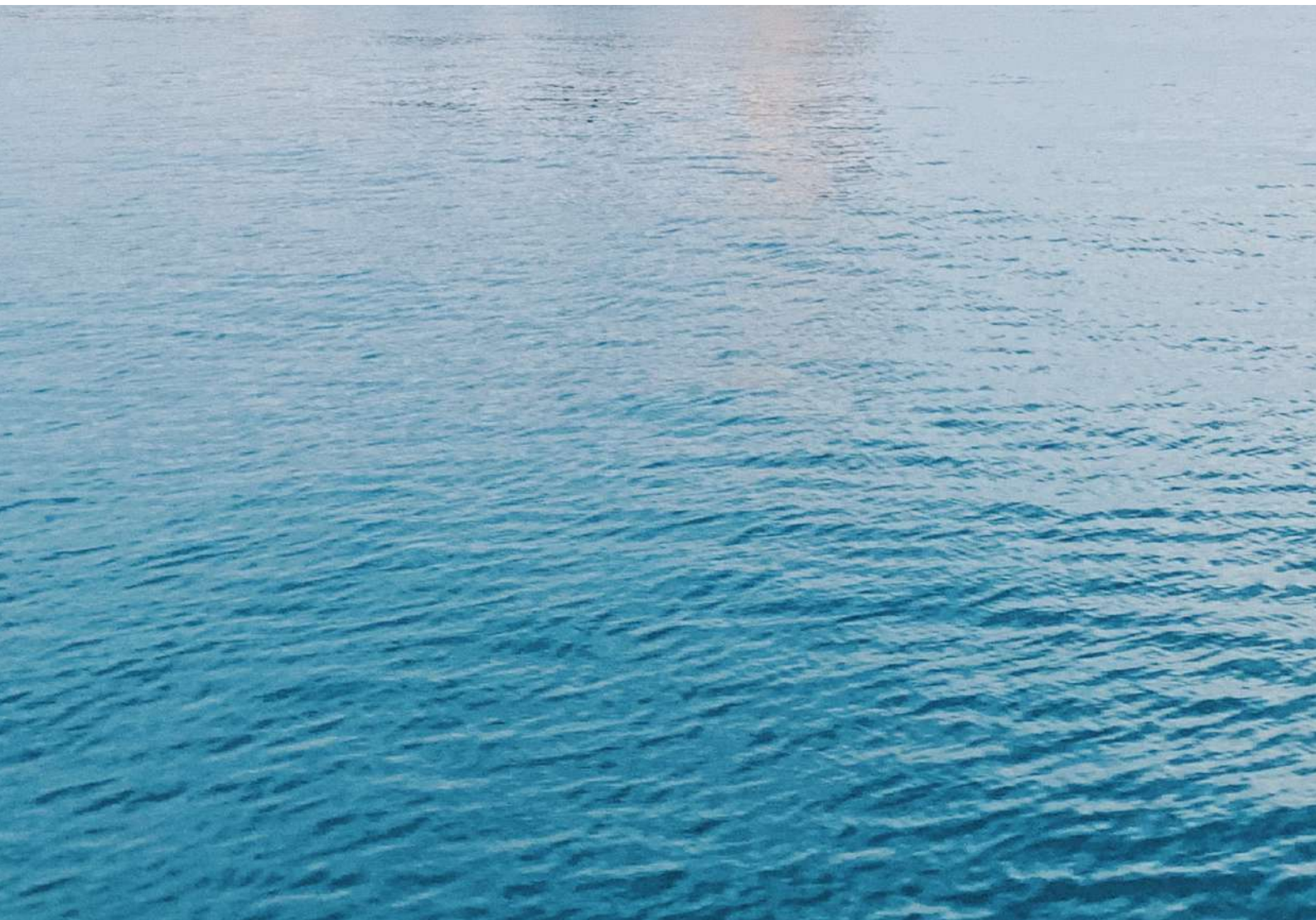
In addition, COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in the hospital of Krasnogvardeysk district and in Saki Hospital as well as there are suspected infection cases in the 'Republican Clinic Hospital for Children'³¹.

According to the data of the authorities de facto, 1,029 persons are under monitoring in Crimea due to COVID-19, including 830 at home, 85 at hospital, and 114 – at observation facility³².



5. HATE SPEECH IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

On April 22, the Crimean media widely circulated the negative statements of the so-called “head” of Crimea S. Aksionov addressed to the Crimeans who had returned to Crimea from holiday places. Some of the Crimeans arrived opposed placing in the observation facility. In response to this, S. Aksionov called them blackmailers and stated: “We are not negotiating with blackmailers in any way! They have no shame or conscience!” He also specifically emphasized using Ukrainian national passports by these people: “Now we still need to check how they left: it may still turn out that they left with Ukrainian biometric passports. They do not name the operator, do not say who brought them to Thailand. Now it’s still becoming clear that they flew through Kiev! The so-called patriots!”³³.



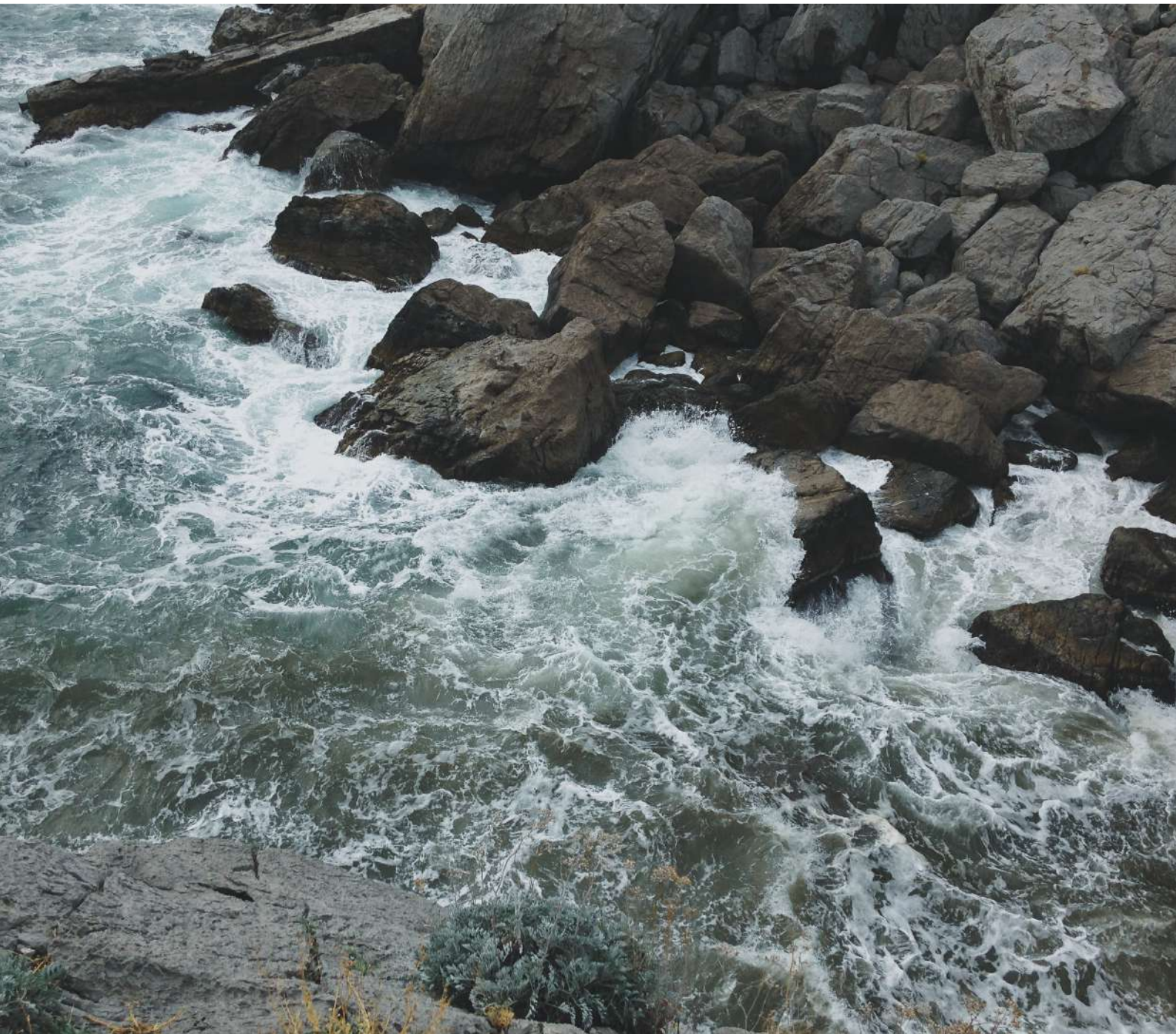
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



In Crimea, the number of officially confirmed cases of COVID-19 continues to grow, as well as the number of medical institutions where COVID-19 infection cases of the medical personnel have been detected.

Information obtained during monitoring still indicates an underestimation of the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases, so the official figures on the number of COVID-19 infection cases are not true.

In some medical institutions, even in cases of suspected COVID-19, medical staff continue to work without special protective means.





The current Crimean healthcare system does not provide the necessary conditions to combat the spread of COVID-19 and treat patients with COVID-19. The authorities de facto allocated budget funds to create additional beds for treating the patients.

Formalizing additional social payments due to COVID-19 pandemic is currently organized in a way that creates infection risks for people, since they have to queue. Under these conditions, the authorities de facto do not use electronic systems for receiving and processing documents in order to reduce these risks.

Violating the international humanitarian law norms, the RF keeps on drafting to the RF army and holding military exercises on the occupied Crimea territory.

According to the norms of international humanitarian law, the Russian Federation is an occupying power. Art. 56 of the 4th Geneva Convention obliges the Russian Federation, with all its means available, to ensure and maintain the activities of sanitary and hospital institutions and services, health care and public hygiene in the occupied territory of Crimea, that also includes the preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of epidemics.

Recommendations for the Government of Ukraine:

- * not to establish the exhaustive list of humanitarian grounds for crossing the Ukrainian checkpoints with Crimea, thus preserving the possibility of responding to unforeseen circumstances;

- * inform Ukrainian nationals who do not have a residence registration in the territory controlled by Ukraine about the algorithm of their actions in case of suspected COVID-19 infection.

- * to monitor the situation of the COVID-19 spread in Crimea using available methods, including information from human rights organizations in Ukraine.

Recommendations for international organizations and governments of democratic countries:

- * to monitor, to a possible extent, the situation with COVID-19 spreading in Crimea;

- * not to allow the RF to use the COVID-19 situation for cancelling the sanctions imposed due to the occupation of Crimea, and violation of human rights and the international humanitarian law norms

- * appeal to the Russian Federation with the requirement to comply with the recommendations of the UN and the Council of Europe on preventing the COVID-19 spread in the Crimean places of unfreedom.