



## **Propaganda of the service in the Russian army among the Crimea children**

This brief was prepared by a Crimean Human Rights Group

The Crimean Human Rights Group (CHRG) is a non-profit Ukrainian human rights organization of Crimean human rights defenders and journalists, aimed at promoting the observance and protection of human rights in Crimea by attracting wide attention to problems of human rights and international humanitarian law in the territory of the Crimean peninsula. The CHRG focuses on documentation and ongoing monitoring of human rights violations and war crimes in connection with the illegal actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea. The CHRG is guided by principles of objectivity, reliability and timeliness in the preparation and spreading of the information.

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The occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as RF) in February 2014 led to the unlawful and wide-scale conscription of Ukrainian nationals living on the peninsula into the RF armed forces. As of June 2020, the RF **held 11 draft campaigns**, with about **25,000 men from Crimea drafted** into the armed forces of Russia. The 11th draft campaign continues until 15 July. The contingent of draftees was sent to military bases in the Russian Federation.

Persons evading the military service have been and are being held criminally liable. So, as of June 2020, the Crimean Human Rights Group documented that the RF occupation courts heard **117 criminal cases against Crimeans for evading military service** in the RF armed forces. Many young people leave Crimea for the mainland Ukraine in order to avoid being drafted into the army of the Russian Federation.

In order to force the Crimeans to serve in the Russian army in the future and “bind” finally underage Ukrainian nationals living in Crimea to Russia, the state comprehensive educational programs of the so-called “military-patriotic education” are being introduced and are being implemented in Crimean schools. Military schools for children over 11 years old are being created (Sevastopol Presidential Cadet School for 840 children). Both dedicated militarized classes are created, and a school-wide in-depth program of pre-conscription military training is being introduced in the schools. The children are invited into summer camps where they are trained in the military basics and weapon handling. Exhibitions of military equipment, with boards and posters advertising the service in the RF Armed Forces are regularly held in major Crimea cities.

Moreover, review of the regulatory framework in the field of propaganda of RF Armed Forces service, done by the Crimean Human Rights Group, showed that **the fundamental document for educational institutions of Crimea, in fact, is the order of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation No. 210**. This is a special departmental program of the RF Ministry of Defense on patriotic education of citizens. A list of measures to promote military service among children, including in the occupied territory of Crimea, is attached to the order. In Crimea, at least 25 types of events from this list are held (*events for military units patronage over educational organizations, sports events, military sports games, “Draftee Day” campaigns, Russian pre-draft age and pre-draft age Kazak youth spartakiads (sports and athletics contests), paramilitary sports festivals, establishment of a Kazak center for*

*military-patriotic education and training Kazak youth to the military service, the 'Your Choice - Contracted Military Service' action, All-Russian months of defense communication public campaigns).*

**Thus, the system of school education and out-of-school sports children events in Crimea are used actually for propaganda of the service in the Russian army among the Crimea children.**

Budget money has been allocated for the militarization of the children of Crimea. For example, in Crimea, 146 million rubles were spent on implementing the state youth policy in 2015 -o 2017. In April 2020, a new program for the next five years was approved for **1.5 billion rubles**. Among the main program goals is "emergence of the youth potential for the development of the Russian Federation and creation of conditions for educating a high patriotic consciousness, readiness to defend the Motherland". Among the objectives are the development of children paramilitary units and the preparation of children for future military service in the RF armed forces of the Russian Federation.

Therefore, a key purpose of youth policy in Crimea remains to prepare the children to serve in the RF army and to educate the children in purely militarist Russian identity. Thousands of Crimean children are subject to such propaganda every day. According to the occupation authorities' data, **200,000 children are studying in the educational establishments and have usually to participate in the militarist events.**

The Crimean children militarization policy is implemented by the RF Ministry of Defence, the Crimean authorities de facto, public paramilitary units, RF political parties, the Russian Orthodox Church and others.

The wide-scale social movement engaged in the militarization of the consciousness of children on the peninsula is the YUNARMIYA (youth army) of Crimea. Crimean Yunarmiya was set up as a unit of the All-Russian YUNARMIYA military-patriotic social movement. The official website of the RF YUNARMIYA states: "The leaders of the organization aim to raise a generation capable of not only defending the Fatherland with arms in their hands, but also defending Russia's interests in peaceful fields. The Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation has promised the army members that they will have the opportunity to fly aircraft, jump with a parachute and shoot from any weapon, except for missiles." YUNARMIYA holds military processions, contests, exhibitions, competitions for the children on a permanent base, improving their weapon handling skills.

A number of RF political parties and religious organizations participate in propaganda of war and militarization (despite the current RF legislation ban for RF political parties to act in educational institutions). For example, the website of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation reports that on February 13, 2017, a patriotic education event for the young generation dedicated to the Soviet troops pullout from Afghanistan was held in the assembly hall of the Pyatikhatki secondary school in Crimea. Representatives of YEDINAYA ROSSIYA party also participate in various events in Crimea dedicated to the glorification of the Russian army, while clergy representatives hold militarized Orthodox camps on the peninsula.

Violating the international humanitarian law norms, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNGA resolutions 71/205 of 19 December 2016, 72/190 of 19 December 2017, 73/263 of 22 December 2018 and 74/168 of 18 December 2019 on the Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, and UNGA resolutions 73/194 of 17 December 2018 and 74/17 of 9 December 2019 on the Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, Russia has created a **large-scale system of militarization of children in the occupied Crimea, using it to raise a cult of war in children, to educate them tolerant to violence and weapons, to restrict the evolution of child's personality, imposing them exclusively Russian identity, and also to force residents of Crimea, Ukrainian nationals, to serve in the RF army.**