

Dear Server,

Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine has prompted huge amounts of people around the world to see Russia for what it is: an Imperialist, sadistic force bent on destroying human dignity and the right to self-determination. The Crimean Tatars have known this longer and deeper however, and have been fighting deeper and longer than most. You were the most dogged defenders of human rights in Crimea after Russia occupied the peninsula in 2014. The democratic world is now only catching up with the injustices you have been struggling against for so long. You and your people tried to warn us who we were dealing with- too few listened.

I read about your absurd and wrongful arrest and imprisonment, the 14 year sentence for simply defending Tatars' basic human rights ,with both a sense of horror- but also a sigh of familiarity. Through the mass arrests murders and deportations of your ancestors by the Soviets as they ethnically cleansed Crimea, through to the arrest of Tatar human rights defenders today, the Kremlin has always tried to wipe away the memory, choice and culture of Crimea's original population. This is so typical of Russia's rulers: they think they can remake reality, define history despite the evidence, break anyone. But they can't break you and your people. Over centuries the Tatars have proven that they are made of sterner stuff. In this too, you have been an inspiration to us all.

For too long we here in the West looked at the plight of the Tatars and thought it had nothing to do with us. But you were the canaries in the global coalmine. Now Russia is trying to turn whole world pitch black. The abuses that began with you have turned into a geopolitical gas explosion: Russia's wars of aggression; countless war crimes; crimes against humanity; intent to genocide. Finally, the world has taken notice. Finally, some form of awareness is growing of why we have to stop them. We will know we have won when you and your fellow Crimean Tatars have been freed. The evil started with your oppression- and it will end with you too.

Yours,

Peter Pomerantsev

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author*