



Ukraine – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 17 December 2014

Information on conflicts between Ukrainians and Transcaucasian nationals or in general regarding how these nationals get on in Ukraine or in Odessa in particular. Is there any evidence or information on extortion of money or sexual crimes or threats of either?

The 2014 Minority Rights Group International report for Ukraine states:

“Ukraine's status as a major migration hub has also resulted in rising xenophobia against migrants. Asians, Africans and Caucasians are especially vulnerable to bias-motivated attacks.” (Minority Rights Group International (3 July 2014) *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2014 – Ukraine*)

A report from the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute refers to the involvement of Chechen fighters in the current conflict as follows:

“News that Chechens were involved in the Ukraine crisis spread already in March, when a range of news agencies and locals reported of ‘Caucasian-looking’ units deployed in some areas of the Crimean peninsula. Some sources in Crimea spotted Chechens in the eastern Crimean city of Feodosia, identified by their fatigues, equipment, and behavior as members of kadyrovtsy units. Since then, local sources have reported of Chechens in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk on various occasions throughout mid-summer. Video footage from a Donetsk street was released displaying individuals speaking Russian with a heavy Chechen accent.” (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (15 October 2014) *The Sundry Motivations of Caucasians in Ukraine*)

This report also states:

“A range of sources indicate that dozens of South and North Ossetians have also volunteered to the war. While many North Ossetians appear to have joined due to their feeling of loyalty toward Moscow, South Ossetians may have volunteered in order repay Russia’s support during the 2008 Russo-Georgian war.” (ibid)

A report from the Jamestown Foundation states:

“Chechens have also surfaced in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. News agencies have provided links to video reports purporting to show the presence of Chechens among the unidentified armed groups in eastern Ukraine. Sometimes, the uninformed opinion of a lay person looking outside from his car is considered sufficient to figure out that the Chechens are kadyrovtsy, meaning those Chechens who are loyalists of Ramzan Kadyrov, the authoritarian Moscow-backed Chechen leader. The spokesman for the

Ukrainian anti-terrorist operation, Vladislav Seleznev, confirmed that people of Caucasian appearance are among the militants fighting in eastern Ukraine. 'We have operative information about many people of Caucasian appearance among the militants'" (Jamestown Foundation (30 May 2014) *Understanding the Mysterious Appearance of the Chechen 'Vostok' Battalion in Eastern Ukraine*)

This report also states:

"Given the evidence discussed above, one can safely assume that there are Chechens in Ukraine, as well as members other ethnic groups from Russia. The total number of Chechens probably does not likely exceed 100." (ibid)

An article published by the Institute for War & Peace Reporting states:

"There have been sightings of combatants allegedly from Chechnya. Asked by a CNN journalist where they came from, one of them said they were 'from the Russian Federation'. Stanislav Rechinsky, an adviser to the Ukrainian interior minister, has told journalists that each Chechen fighter was being paid 300 US dollars a day." (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (11 June 2014) *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine*)

A Jamestown Foundation report states:

"On June 5, Ingushetia's governor, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, estimated the number of ethnic Ingush who have fought on the side of pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine to be between 20 to 25 persons. According to Yevkurov, four of the Ingush volunteers were killed in hostilities in eastern Ukraine." (Jamestown Foundation (9 June 2014) *Caucasians Have Mixed Attitudes Toward Volunteers Fighting in Eastern Ukraine*)

This report refers to Chechen involvement as follows:

"The reports of Ingush 'volunteers' taking part in skirmishes in eastern Ukraine are just the latest concerning the Caucasians' involvement in the conflict on Russia's side. The first such reports were about Chechen involvement: an estimated 35-45 Chechens killed in eastern Ukraine were reportedly returned to Chechnya on May 28-29 and quietly buried. Later Chechnya's ruler, Ramzan Kadyrov, said only 14 volunteers from Chechnya had been fighting in Ukraine, and that one of them was killed." (ibid)

Referring to other Caucasian ethnic groups this report states:

"The participation of Caucasians in clashes in eastern Ukraine is not limited to Chechens and Ingush. North Ossetian Cossacks (ethnic Ossetians who call themselves Cossacks) openly announced they were hiring 'volunteers' to fight in eastern Ukraine." (ibid)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report states:

"Meanwhile, evidence continues to mount of the presence on the side of the pro-Russian separatist forces in eastern Ukraine of hundreds of fighters sent by Chechen Republic head Ramzan Kadyrov. Those fighters are apparently primarily volunteers from among the various police and security forces

subordinate to Kadyrov, who has consistently denied that there are any 'Chechen battalions' in Ukraine, even after the "Financial Times" quoted a fighter named Zelimkhan who said he and his comrades in arms had been sent to Ukraine in mid-May on Kadyrov's orders." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (30 August 2014) *Chechens Now Fighting On Both Sides In Ukraine*)

A Jamestown Foundation report states:

"Persistent rumors have existed for some time about the involvement of Chechens in pro-Russian military groups fighting in eastern Ukraine (see EDM, July 18). A significant portion of the information about Chechens fighting in Ukraine was unverified; indeed, it sometimes seemed the Ukrainian army was fighting not the Russian army, but a Chechen army." (Jamestown Foundation (18 September 2014) *Under Two Flags: Chechen Fighters in Eastern Ukraine*)

See also Jamestown Foundation report which states:

"Reading the Ukrainian media earlier this year gave one the impression that Ukraine was fighting not Russia, but Chechnya. Few doubted that Chechens were fighting on the Russian side in eastern Ukraine, but their numbers were greatly exaggerated. The deployment of Russian military units from Chechnya in Ukraine was perceived as the deployment of Chechen military units even though the percentage of ethnic Chechens in those units barely reached 1 percent of their total. Those forces also sometimes were referred to as 'kadyrovtsy,' but that was also incorrect, since the units sent to Ukraine were from the defense ministry, not the interior ministry, where the kadyrovtsy actually serve." (Jamestown Foundation (7 November 2014) *Two Battalions of Chechens Now Fighting the Russians in Ukraine*)

This report also states:

"The issue of Chechens fighting in the Ukrainian war evolved in an unexpected way when a Chechen armed group started to fight under the Ukrainian flag. The commander of the group, Isa Munaev, was quite clear from the very beginning about his motives for fighting against the Russians in Ukraine. 'The fight of the Ukrainian people against imperial Russia is part of our common struggle for the decolonization of the Caucasus; we decided to express our support,' Munaev said. In addition, he said that the handful of Ukrainians who gave their lives for the freedom of Ichkeria in the first Russian-Chechen war in 1994-1996 meant that Chechens were obligated to return the favor. Munaev's group is made up of people who fought at the beginning of the second Russian-Chechen war and ended up in European countries for various reasons (pravda.com.ua, September 8). The chance to strike against Russia seems to attract former combatants of the Russian-Chechen war." (ibid)

A Caucasian Knot article states:

"In Ukraine, natives of the Caucasus are fighting on both sides of the conflict. This has been stated by Alan Mamiev, a resident of North Ossetia, who is involved in the hostilities in Ukraine." (Caucasian Knot (11 October 2014) *Caucasian natives fight on both sides of conflict in Ukraine, a combatant asserts*)

A report from the UN News Service states:

“During the reporting period, the human rights situation in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk has continued to deteriorate, the report states, noting the presence of armed people and weapons has increased in both regions, and that 'Representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic' have recognized the presence within their armed groups of citizens of the Russian Federation, including from Chechnya and other republics of the North Caucasus. The escalation in criminal activity resulting in human rights abuses is no longer limited to targeting journalists, elected representatives, local politicians, civil servants and civil society activists,' the report states. 'Abductions, detentions, acts of ill-treatment and torture, and killings by armed groups are now affecting the broader population of the two eastern regions, which are now marked by an atmosphere of intimidation and consequent fear.'” (UN News Service (18 June 2014) *UN cites total breakdown of law and order as 'climate of fear' grips eastern Ukraine*)

The Executive Summary of a report published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in paragraph 1, states:

“The total breakdown in law and order and the violence and fighting in the eastern regions, fuelled by the cross-border inflow of heavy and sophisticated weaponry as well as foreign fighters, including from the Russian Federation, has for the past eight months had a direct impact on all fundamental human rights – including the security, liberty and well-being – of individuals living there.” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (15 December 2014) *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine*, p.3)

In paragraph 3 this report states:

“The HRMMU observed early signs of the rapid deterioration of the security situation as of April 2014. Initially demands from protestors in the east were for a referendum on the federalisation of Ukraine and the recognition of the Russian language as a second State language. Groups of armed men – in a well-organized and coordinated fashion – unlawfully seized public buildings and police and security facilities in cities and towns across the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. As law and order increasingly broke down, so more human rights abuses, such as killings, torture, abduction for ransom and forced labour, started to be committed by members of armed groups, supported by increasing numbers of foreign fighters.” (ibid, p.3)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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