



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Russian Aggression and Denial of Soviet Genocide in Ukraine September 2021

Ukraine holds [significant geostrategic and agricultural importance](#) for its neighbor, Russia. It became part of the Russian Empire around 1775. It declared an independent Ukrainian National Republic in 1918. But it lost its war of independence (1918-1921) to the Red Army and became part of the Soviet Union. Stalin [prioritized](#) the destruction of Ukrainian culture to [prevent a second uprising](#). The Soviet Union inflicted the Holodomor (“death by starvation”), a genocidal famine, on Ukraine from 1932-1933. It intentionally created conditions of life that starved [3.5 to 4](#) million Ukrainians. Stalin collectivized all farmland in Ukraine.

The Soviet NKVD purged Ukraine of its intelligentsia and clergy, the [foundations of culture](#). The Soviet Union imposed quotas for grain production that were impossible to meet and then confiscated all grain that was produced, leaving the farmers to starve. It imposed the “[Law of Spikelets](#)” which made the theft of just five stalks of grain punishable by death. The Young Communist League and police [confiscated cooking utensils and farming tools](#). The military blockaded villages so they could not seek food in cities. Stalin expanded these policies to Ukrainian enclaves in Russia, proving his intent to destroy the Ukrainian nation.

Stalin launched a [large-scale propaganda campaign](#) to cover up the genocide. Walter Duranty of the New York Times wrote articles denying the mass starvation. Many Russians still revere Stalin and [dispute claims of genocide](#). Deniers contend that the famine was only an unfortunate side-effect of collectivization. [16 countries](#), including the United States, have recognized the Holodomor famine as genocide.

In 1944, Stalin’s secret police, the NKVD, forcibly deported over 180,000 Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan [in just three days](#). 20-40% of Tatars died in transit or in exile during the next five years.

Three Soviet leaders following Stalin (Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Mikhail Gorbachev), ended Russian genocide in Ukraine but they continued the “russification” of Ukraine. The Soviet KGB continued [targeted disappearances](#) and imprisonment of Ukrainian leaders.

In 1988, the Ukrainian independence movement, led by RUKH, began peaceful resistance to Soviet Russian domination. Under Gorbachev’s policies of Glasnost (“openness”), free newspapers and media grew, and independence leaders were even elected to parliament (Rada). When the KGB arrested Stepan Khmara on the floor of parliament, RUKH turned the repression into a mass movement for independence. [Dr. Gregory Stanton of Genocide Watch was legal advisor to RUKH.] On 24 August 1991, Ukraine became independent.

In 2014, President Putin sent Russian troops into [Crimea](#) to exploit division in Ukraine when the Ukrainian president was defeated for favoring closer ties with Russia. On 18 March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea after a [rigged referendum](#). 140,000 Crimean Ukrainians and Tatars [fled the occupied territory](#) as 250,000 Russians took their place. Crimean Tatars who remain on the peninsula face [arbitrary arrests and violence](#). With support from Russia, Russian speaking militias took over Donetsk and Luhansk, resulting in civil war.

Ukraine is at **Stage 6: Polarization**, **Stage 8: Persecution**, and **Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- Russia should officially recognize the Holodomor as genocide.
- Russia should remove its troops from the illegally occupied Crimean Peninsula.
- Russia should stop supplying weapons and personnel to Russian militias in eastern Ukraine.
- The U.S., Canada, and European nations should admit Ukraine to NATO.
- NATO should provide Ukraine with the support it needs to defend its independence.