

## **Discrimination in Ukraine: Peak or Decline?**

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**Abstract.** Through several reports of the organization Amnesty International, a study of the evolution of the state of human rights in Ukraine from 2007 to 2020 will be carried out. This will relate the current situation in the country and the change that occurred from 2014 with the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the beginning of the war in eastern Ukraine, specifically in the *oblasts* of Donetsk and Luhansk. All this in order to understand the changes that occurred during these years in relation to discrimination and human rights values in the country. Through which it will be seen the main concerns that exist in Ukraine and how they have been evolving conditioned by the country's own internal situation in the governmental and administrative sphere. Along with this, some of the advances that have been made during these years in the country to produce an improvement within Ukraine will be shown.

**Keywords:** *Ukraine, discrimination, xenophobia, human rights, milestones*

### **1. Introduction**

This paper will analyse the evolution of discrimination in Ukraine in the period from 2008 to 2020. It does not mean that it is an exclusive feature of Ukraine, since in all countries of the world, including all countries of the European Union, discrimination is present in everyday life. In the case of Ukraine, it is a state party to several human rights treaties of particular relevance in the field of racial discrimination. It is also a State party to the main United Nations –UN- treaty on the elimination and prohibition of discrimination, namely the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was launched in January 1969.

For this purpose, an analysis of the reports produced by Amnesty International will be carried out in order to see the evolution of the issue of discrimination in the Slavic country during this period of time. This institution was founded in 1961 by the British Peter Benenson. It is defined as a global, independent organisation of more than 10 million people who act against injustice by defending

human rights all over the world<sup>1</sup>. The starting point for this text is 2007 in order to know the situation in this country in that year through a report elaborated by Amnesty International in 2008 and from there to know how it has evolved until more recent dates.

This study will help us to relate the situation of the country in this area during the different governments that have passed through it. The selected years are: 2007, 2010, 2014, 2017 and 2020, so we will also be able to know the situation of this issue during the governments of the last four Ukrainian presidents: Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010), Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014), Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019) and Volodimir Zelenski (2019-present). And it highlights the change that took place in Ukraine, which reached its peak in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the beginning of the armed conflict in the east of the country. Likewise, a description will be made of the main milestones that are being reached in the country in an attempt to contain discrimination through certain political measures that have been developed in recent years.

## **2. Ukraine's Situation through International Reports**

The first of the reports we are going to deal with was published in 2008 by Amnesty International and reflects the situation in various countries during 2007, and specifically in our state of analysis, Ukraine. This was a period of much political movement in the country, which had its effects within the state government. Ukraine experienced two hotly contested national elections and four changes of government in less than two years during 2004-2006, and the beginning of 2007 saw a new constitutional crisis<sup>2</sup>. In this year Viktor Yushchenko was the President of the Republic of Ukraine and Viktor Yanukovich was Prime Minister until almost the end of the year, when he was replaced by Yulia Tymoshenko.

This year's report focuses on four key discriminatory issues that needed to be reviewed by Ukraine because of the situation at the time. The first of these related to torture and ill-treatment in police custody, which was identified as one of the most sensitive issues in the country. The UN Committee against Torture expressed concern about the impunity enjoyed by law enforcement officials who committed

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International Website: <https://www.amnesty.org/es/who-we-are/> (accessed 5 April 2021).

<sup>2</sup> OECD Economic Surveys, (2007): Ukraine Economic Assessment, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Volume 2007/16, p. 67.

acts of torture, as complaints were not investigated. However, it was also stated that since 2005 there had been a slight improvement within the country.

The second focused on refugees and asylum seekers, where concern was expressed about the fear that Ukraine would return people to states where they would be at risk of torture. The third was related to racism, which stated literally: 'Foreign nationals and asylum seekers residing in Ukraine often suffered attacks by ordinary citizens and racist treatment by the police, including excessively frequent document checks'<sup>3</sup>. Among the groups suffering from racism were Asians, Africans, Crimean Tatars, Jews, Muslims and Roma. Proposing that the Ukrainian government take action to end racial discrimination was of great concern because of an increase in racially related crime in the country in 2007.

And finally, violence against women, on which it highlighted some of the progress being made in the country. As can be seen in the resolution of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, they examined the fifth report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Ukraine, in which they recognised certain aspects of improvement in the country. Among them, related to discrimination against women<sup>4</sup>:

- The adoption in 2005 of a Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women;
- Amendments to the Labour Code to prohibit gender discrimination in employment and remuneration.

However, it also notes its concern mainly about the ill-treatment of detainees by the police and the denial of protection against ethnic and religious minorities. It recommends that the country consider enacting more extensive anti-discrimination legislation because of inadequate laws and the government's refusal to recognise certain offences motivated by racism.

The next document is the 2010 report, which was published in 2011,

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<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, (2008): *Amnesty International Report 2008. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 385.  
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/56000/pol100012008es.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, (2008): *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 39th session, 5-23 November 2007. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant. E/C. 12/UKR/CO/5, p. 2.  
<https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2010/7920.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2021).

following the change of government that took place in the country in January 2010. This saw the arrival of Yanukovich -who had been Prime Minister of Ukraine between August 2006 and December 2007- as President of the Republic, and Mykola Azarov as Prime Minister of the country. Ukraine thus voted Yanukovich in as president, in a ceremony that followed weeks of protests over alleged election fraud following his victory in the February ballots<sup>5</sup>. Against this political backdrop, the report acknowledges that in 2010 the outlook in Ukraine became bleak for human rights defenders, who suffered physical attacks and harassment at the hands of law enforcement officials for their legitimate human rights work<sup>6</sup>.

This document maintained three aspects that had been highlighted in the previous 2007 report, while incorporating others that were beginning to cause concern due to their scope in Ukraine. Among those that continued to be of concern in the Amnesty International report were: torture and ill-treatment, which continued to be the order of the day; refugees, migrants and asylum seekers who continued to be exposed to harassment by the police, as well as their return to their countries of origin; while in relation to racism, the police continued to detain people because of their skin colour<sup>7</sup>.

Among the new additions was a case related to one of the previous ones, namely torture and ill-treatment, specifically deaths in police custody. A case in point is the instance of the Georgian Tamaz Kardava, who had been detained in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, since August 2008 on charges of robbery. He had hepatitis C and severe cirrhosis of the liver. He was denied vital medical treatment for two months and ended up in a critical condition<sup>8</sup>, finally dying on 7 April 2010. These acts

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<sup>5</sup>Gabbatt, Adam, (2010): Viktor Yanukovich sworn in as Ukrainian president, *The Guardian*, Thu. 25 Feb. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/25/viktor-yanukovych-ukraine-president> (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International, (2011): *Amnesty International Report 2011. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 67. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/32000/pol100012011es.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International, (2011): *Amnesty International Report 2011. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 436. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/32000/pol100012011es.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2021).

<sup>8</sup>Amnesty International, (2010): *Ukraine: detainee denied medical care, at risk of death: Tamaz Kardava*, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/40000/eur500052010es.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2021).

were compounded by the situation of human rights defenders in Ukraine who faced significant obstacles in carrying out their work for the implementation of human rights for the population as a whole.

The next report we will refer to is that of 2014, published in 2015. In this text it is necessary to take into account the political situation in Ukraine in 2014, which changed the course of events in the country in both internal and external politics. Following the pro-European movement that took place between the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014 on the streets of several Ukrainian cities, there were substantial changes in the Ukrainian government. Three presidents succeeded each other during that year, after Yanukovich's departure as President of the Republic, an interim government was formed, which fell to Oleksandr Turchinov, until after elections in May Petro Poroshenko emerged as the winner and was installed as President in June.

During the months that the so-called *Euromaidan* lasted, the violence that accompanied the protests was the dominant tone, being one of the aspects most rejected by the international community and, of course, reflected in the Amnesty International report published in 2015. To this must be added the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the start of the armed conflict in the east of the country - Donetsk and Luhansk, complicating the human rights situation in the country. Thus, the use of torture and ill-treatment constitute systemic human rights problems in Ukraine that have been aggravated by the ongoing armed conflict that erupted in 2014<sup>9</sup>.

Because of this situation, human rights issues in Ukraine for the year shifted focus to other circumstances related to the events that took place in the first weeks of 2014, focusing on *Euromaidan*, the armed conflict in the east of the country, and the situation in Crimea. Although all linked to the persistence of human rights violations at the hands of the police, along with ill-treatment and torture.

First of all, the *Euromaidan* demonstrations were engulfed in an intense problem over the use of police force, which resulted in the deaths of several people on the streets of Kiev during the protests. The Ukrainian Ministry of Health reported that 75 people were killed and more than 500 injured in the clashes in the centre of

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Human Rights-Office of the High Commissioner, (2019): *United Nations. Human Rights Report 2019*, p. 55.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRreport2019.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2021).

Kiev from 18 to 20 February at 6 p.m.<sup>10</sup>. The bloodshed had immediate political consequences; late on 20 February, the Parliament condemned the use of lethal force against protesters<sup>11</sup>, leading to Yanukovich's ouster. The new authorities publicly pledged to effectively investigate and prosecute those responsible for the deaths during *Euromaidan* and all abuses perpetrated against protesters<sup>12</sup>. This was compounded by the disappearances and killings of *Euromaidan* activists during the same year; and fighting between warring sides in the same city, which went unchecked and uninvestigated by police forces.

Secondly, the consequences in the east of the country -Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts*- of the start of armed fighting between pro-Russian and government forces. The area controlled by these 'republics' is very small, but the number of victims is very high, as more than 5,000 people had died by the beginning of December 2014<sup>13</sup>.

Thirdly, we will refer to the change of course that took place in Crimea with the annexation of this territory to the Russian Federation and what this entailed for the population living there. The situation began to get complicated in Crimea, as the Crimean authorities did not recognise the new interim Ukrainian government and in early May called a referendum, supported by Russia, for the inhabitants to decide whether to remain in Ukraine or become part of Russia<sup>14</sup>. This was held on 16 March 2014. 96.77 percent of the population of the Ukrainian region of Crimea voted in favour of the province's accession to Russia, according to final figures released today by Mikhail Malishev, head of the electoral commission of the Ukrainian autonomous

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<sup>10</sup> Bonet, Pilar, (2014): El régimen ucranio intensifica la represión en el día más sangriento, *El País*, 20 February 2014.

[https://elpais.com/internacional/2014/02/20/actualidad/1392882946\\_706962.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2014/02/20/actualidad/1392882946_706962.html) (accessed 17 April 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Yekelchuk, Serhy, *Ukraine. What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, Nueva York, 2020, p. 99.

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, (2015): *Amnesty International Report 2014/15. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 449.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1000012015SPANISH.PDF> (accessed 16 April 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Solohubenko, Olexiy, (2014): Ucrania: cómo lo que comenzó con un tuit se transformó en una guerra con miles de muertos, *BBC NEWS*, 23 December 2014.

[https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/12/141211\\_ucrania\\_finde2014\\_yv](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/12/141211_ucrania_finde2014_yv) (accessed 15 April 2021).

<sup>14</sup> García Andrés, César, (2019): El tratamiento de la crisis de Ucrania a través de la prensa digital; in Chillón, José Manuel; Requejo, Marta, and Reguero, Itziar (Eds.), *Antropología de la comunicación. Acción y efectos en la literatura y en los media*, Fragua, Madrid, pp. 177-189, p. 183.

republic of Crimea<sup>15</sup>. Thus, since Russia annexed Crimea in March, its restrictive legislation began to be used in the territory to repress the right to freedom of speech, association and assembly. Residents were declared Russian citizens and those who wished to retain Ukrainian nationality had to notify the authorities<sup>16</sup>, and the Tatars, the peninsula's indigenous group, were persecuted for their pro-Ukrainian government statements. It is here that the main complaints about the entry into force of Russian restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Crimea are concentrated. Not to mention all the people who have been displaced by both the annexation of the peninsula and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.

However, a new concern appeared in that year's report, which referred to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights. The Pride march planned for 5 July 2014 in Kiev was cancelled when the police told the organising committee that they could not guarantee the safety of participants in the face of planned counter-demonstrations. The newly elected mayor of Kiev, Vitaliy Klychko, said on 27 June that it was not the time for such 'spectacles' in Ukraine<sup>17</sup>.

The next step in this analysis is the report published in 2018, which refers to the situation in the country in 2017. At this time, Poroshenko was still President of the Republic, while the Prime Minister in office was Volodymyr Hroysman. This document refers to the problems already mentioned in the 2014 report starting with the continuation of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials towards the civilian population of Ukraine. Similarly, the conflict in the east of the country continued and with it reports of civilians being held in these areas. In these separatist-controlled territories in eastern Ukraine, the de facto authorities continued to illegally detain and imprison critics. 'Guarded by a variety of jailers, in the war-torn provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, in cities such as Odessa, Kharkov,

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<sup>15</sup> Agencies, (2014): El 96,77% de los votantes de Crimea apoyan la adhesión a Rusia, *ABC International*, 18 March 2014

<https://www.abc.es/internacional/20140316/abci-crimea-referendum-separatista-201403160709.html> (accessed 20 April 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, (2015): *Amnesty International Report 2014/15. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 451.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1000012015SPANISH.PDF> (accessed 17 April 2021).

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International, (2015): *Amnesty International Report 2014/15. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 453.

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1000012015SPANISH.PDF> (accessed 17 April 2021).

Kyiv and Moscow, in the annexed Crimea and in inhospitable parts of Siberia, there are civilians and military, hardened activists and casual citizens who, regardless of their origin -Ukrainians, Russians and Tatars above all, have in common their status as prisoners of a war not recognised as such<sup>18</sup>.

In the case of Crimea, repression of the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Crimea continued. The authorities continued to harass mainly ethnic Crimean Tatars through intimidation, harassment and criminal prosecution. Russian security services searched dozens of Crimean Tatar homes, allegedly for illegal weapons, drugs or 'extremist' publications, as part of their intimidation campaign against critics of the occupation of the peninsula<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, with regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights, reference was made to the LGBTI Pride march in the capital, Kyiv, which on this occasion was held with effective police protection. Despite this, reference was made to the increasing number of attacks on LGBTI events across the country: 'On 18 June 2017, thousands of people took part in the biggest celebration of equality to date, the annual LGBTI Pride march in Kyiv, as well as in several dozen counter-demonstrations'<sup>20</sup>.

To conclude this evolution since 2007, we will analyse the state of human rights in 2020, a document published in 2021 by Amnesty International. In this year the President of the Republic of Ukraine was Volodimir Zelenski, who was the winner of the 2019 elections, while the post of Prime Minister until March 2020 was held by Oleksi Honcharuk, passing from that moment to Denis Shmihal. In a year dominated by the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, the human rights situation continued to be of concern to international organisations.

Torture and ill-treatment-related allegations continued to be reported this year. In fact, according to its final data for 2020, the Prosecutor General's Office

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<sup>18</sup> Bonet, Pilar, (2017): Los rehenes de una guerra sin nombre, *El País*, 30 July 2014. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/29/actualidad/1501345515\\_035261.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/29/actualidad/1501345515_035261.html) (accessed 19 April 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International, (2018): *Amnesty International Report 2017/18. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 446. <https://crm.es.amnesty.org/sites/default/files/civicrm/persist/contribute/files/Informeannual2018air201718-spanish%20web.pdf> (accessed 21 April 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International, (2018): *Amnesty International Report 2017/18. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 446. <https://crm.es.amnesty.org/sites/default/files/civicrm/persist/contribute/files/Informeannual2018air201718-spanish%20web.pdf> (accessed 21 April 2021).



registered 129 alleged cases of torture, brought charges in 59 cases and closed proceedings in 52 cases<sup>21</sup>. Discrimination against minority groups in society continued throughout the year with impunity, with a particular focus on persistent discrimination against the Roma community.

With regard to gender-based violence, legal and institutional initiatives taken in recent years to address this violence were often not adequately implemented, if at all. Meanwhile, in conflict areas, the situation continued to disrupt human rights. In the Donbas region, repression of all forms of dissent persisted, including detention, interrogation, torture and other ill-treatment by the de facto authorities, and imprisonment, often in inhumane conditions. Severe repression of human rights work and all forms of dissent persisted in Crimea, as did restrictions on the media.

### **3. Milestones for Leaving Discrimination in Ukraine**

With the evolution of the human rights situation and discrimination in Ukraine over the last few years, the different governments that have been formed have made some improvements to curb these acts within the country. Some of these are highlighted below:

#### **3.1 Diversity initiative in Ukraine**

This initiative was launched in 2007 under the Yushchenko government, and strives to uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and visible minorities in Ukraine. The Initiative has four key objectives that are specified within the International Organization for Migration -IOM<sup>22</sup>:

- Provide a platform and forum for civil society to connect with each other and with representatives of the Ukrainian government.
- Support the Ukrainian government's efforts to promote cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International, (2021): *Amnesty International Report 2020/21. The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International Publishers, p. 444.  
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1032022021SPANISH.PDF> (accessed 21 April 2021).

<sup>22</sup>IOM UN Migration, (2008): *The Diversity Initiative: Foreign Cultural Understanding and Cooperation in Ukraine*. <https://www.iom.int/diversity-initiative-fostering-cultural-understanding-and-cooperation-ukraine> (accessed 18 April 2021).

understanding and inter-agency cooperation.

- Collect and disseminate verified and standardised statistics and other relevant information related to alleged racially motivated crimes in Ukraine.
- Engage in educational and public awareness activities to promote intercultural dialogue.

In 2012, on the occasion of the Initiative's 5th anniversary, the members of the Initiative met to assess the achievements of the project in Ukraine. Through the adoption and implementation of hate crime legislation, a move that led the government to begin to address the problem more systematically<sup>23</sup>.

### **3.2 Legislation against discrimination based on sexual orientation**

As we have seen in 2014, the Gay Pride demonstration in 2014 was suspended, as, in the words of the mayor of Kiev, Klychko: it was not the time for such 'spectacles' in Ukraine. The following year, before the LGBTI march, several Ukrainian politicians, including the radical Right Sector movement, had pledged to disrupt the event<sup>24</sup>. This made clear the situation faced by LGBTI people in the country. In this regard, in November 2015, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a law banning discrimination in the workplace, including on the basis of sexual orientation. In response to the vote, Ukrainian President Poroshenko tweeted: 'Ukraine is freeing itself from the chains of discrimination of the Soviet past. Meanwhile, family values remain inviolable'<sup>25</sup>.

### **3.3 The Law on Some Aspects of State Policy to Ensure Ukraine's Sovereignty over the Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of January 2018**

This state regulation was intended to complement the one adopted in 2014

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<sup>23</sup>Deardorff Miller, Sarah, (2018): *Xenophobia toward Refugees and Other Forced Migrants*, World Refugee Council Research Paper N°5, September 2018, Centre for International Governance Innovation, p. 5. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WRC%20Research%20Paper%20no.5.pdf> (accessed 22 April 2021).

<sup>24</sup> (2015): Ukraine police hurt at Kiev gay pride rally, *BBC NEWS*, 6 June 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33034247> (accessed 22 April 2021).

<sup>25</sup> (2015): Ukraine passes anti-discrimination law, *BBC NEWS*, 12 November 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34796835> (accessed 22 April 2021).

on the Protection of Citizens' Rights and Freedoms and Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Crimea. Both laws aim to build a legal framework for Kiev's main political goal -liberating these territories and restoring constitutional order there- although it does not specify how to achieve it<sup>26</sup>. This lays the groundwork for the defence of the human rights of the inhabitants living in the occupied territories, although this is very difficult to maintain as the Ukrainian government does not control the Crimean Peninsula or parts of the pro-Russian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

### **3.4 The Strategy for the Protection and Integration of the Roma National Minority until 2020 and its Action Plan**

One of the most discriminated against population groups in Ukraine in recent years has been the Roma minority. Being uprooted from one's home by war is unimaginably difficult for anyone, but for Roma families displaced by the conflict in eastern Ukraine, a new life in a strange city is especially difficult because of the marginalisation and discrimination they face on a daily basis<sup>27</sup>. This makes the integration of Roma people one of the most important issues to address in the pursuit of human rights in Ukraine.

This is one of the realities that Roma people have been facing since war broke out in eastern Ukraine, and international organisations have urged the country's government to urge changes that would improve the living conditions of this minority. Ukraine must take immediate steps to stop what amounts to 'systematic persecution' of the country's Roma minority, which has been the target of a series of violent attacks<sup>28</sup>. Thus, the strategy set out in the country establishes a

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<sup>26</sup>Milosevich-Juaristi, Mira, (2018): La ley de Ucrania sobre los territorios ocupados por Rusia en Donbas, *Real Instituto Elcano Royal Institute*, 2 June 2018. <https://blog.realinstitutoelcano.org/la-ley-de-ucrania-sobre-los-territorios-ocupados-por-rusia-en-donbas/> (accessed 20 April 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Eastwood, Emma, (2017): Roma families displaced by the war in eastern Ukraine face a double bind of poverty and discrimination, *Minority Rights Group International*, 15 March 2017. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/roma-families-displaced-war-eastern-ukraine-face-double-bind-poverty-and> (accessed 20 April 2021).

<sup>28</sup> (2018): UN experts urge Ukraine to stop 'systematic persecution' of Roma minority, *UN News*, 18 July 2018. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1015022#:~:text=UN%20experts%20urge%20Ukraine%20to%20stop%20'systematic%20persecution'%20of%20Roma%20minority,->

framework for the protection and integration of the Roma minority for their participation in the social, economic and cultural life of the state and intensifying cooperation with Roma civil society organisations<sup>29</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions

As we have seen in the previous pages, the evolution of the state of human rights and discrimination in Ukraine has followed a path in which new aspects have been incorporated which, from this point of view, are of concern to international organisations. Thus, in these years of study (2007-2020), through the different reports that have been analysed, they show us a situation of risk for certain groups.

In all the study reports, the seriousness of torture and ill-treatment by police authorities of certain groups and detainees, and racism, remains a constant concern. The first of these reports reflect concern about the situation of refugees and asylum seekers and human rights defenders, as well as violence against women and children. However, as reflected in the text, the situation took a turn in 2014 as a result of the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the beginning of the armed conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts*. From this moment on, new concerns came to the fore, such as impunity for the killings and violence during the *Euromaidan* demonstrations by the armed forces, the situation of the minority population in Crimea, and the situation of people living in the conflict zone between Ukrainians and pro-Russians. These have become a point of utmost importance in each of the reports that have been published since 2014. Not forgetting, as we have seen, the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in the country.

Thus, the situation in Ukraine regarding discrimination remains complicated, despite government policies and measures that have been adopted in recent years for the betterment of certain minority groups of the population. However, the mechanisms that are being put in place to curb discrimination suggest that change is slow, although significant progress is being made. Nevertheless, it should be clear

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[UN Photo Manual & text = E2809CWe20unequivocally20condemn20the%20heinous,for%20Human%20Rights%20\(OHCHR\) \(accessed 22 April 2021\).](#)

<sup>29</sup> (2019): Implementation of the Action Plan on the Strategy for the Protection and Integration into the Ukrainian Society of the Roma National Minority till 2020, *UNESCO Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/implementation-action-plan> (accessed 20 April 2021).

that more impetus is needed from government authorities to make all these measures effective and truly conducive to reducing this situation and upholding human rights in Ukraine.

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[https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1015022#:~:text=UN%20experts%20urge%20Ukraine%20to%20stop%20systematic%20persecution%20of%20Roma%20minority,-UN%20Photo%2FManuel&text=%E2%80%9CWe%20unequivocally%20condemn%20these%20heinous,for%20Human%20Rights%20\(OHCHR\).](https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1015022#:~:text=UN%20experts%20urge%20Ukraine%20to%20stop%20systematic%20persecution%20of%20Roma%20minority,-UN%20Photo%2FManuel&text=%E2%80%9CWe%20unequivocally%20condemn%20these%20heinous,for%20Human%20Rights%20(OHCHR).)
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<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/56000/pol100012008es.pdf>
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