

Request to pray for Crimea, Southern Ukraine
Week from Sunday 2-9 March

1) Crimea – some background



- Scythian kingdom established its last capital in 4 B.C. in Simferopol, present capital of Crimea. The Scythians (Col 3:11) were known in Biblical times for their barbarism.
- Apostle Andrew most probably shared the Gospel near the present day Sevastopol.
- There are 2,2 million people in Crimea with 58.5% of the population Russians, 24.4% Ukrainians and 12.1% (about 300,000 people) Crimean Tatars. Many of the Russian speakers are Russian citizens and want closer ties with Russia. The Crimean Tatars became a nation after the Muslim Golden Hordes conquered the Crimea.
- Russians and Ukrainians are mainly Orthodox Christians and the Crimean Tatars mostly Muslim with few Christians.
- Stalin accused Crimean Tatars of supporting the Nazis and deported all of them on 18 May 1944 to Central Asia. 46% of them died on the way. Their land had been taken over by Russians. They started returning to Crimea in 1989 but the memories of the deportation and hostility to the Russians remain. Crimean Tatars mark 18 May annually with marches.
- On 18 May 1999 an International Day of Prayer for Crimea had been organized with an international prayer team claiming the Crimea for Christ and identificational repentance by Crimean Tatar and Russian Christians. Many believe that God intervened that day in Crimea and prevented violence. Even the Crimean Tatar newspapers could not explain later why the day went so peaceful.
- Crimea was originally part of the Russian Soviet Republic but had been given as a gift in 1954 to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic by Nikita Khrushchev. The Russian Black Sea Fleet however remained based in the Crimean port of Sevastopol.
- In 1994 Russia, the UK and the US signed a memorandum with the Ukrainian government that affirms their commitment to Ukraine's borders, including Crimea.

2) Crimea on 1 March 2014

- A revolution in Ukraine brought a government to power who want closer ties with Europe. However the cause for the revolution was more against a corrupt political and economic system than against Russia although many Ukrainians still remember the atrocities committed during the Russia dominated Soviet Union period. The ousted Ukrainian president and his cronies might have embezzled \$70 billion!
- Russia, fearful of losing its influence in Ukraine, responded with various threats to the changes in Ukraine and gave safety to the pro-Russian ousted president.

- The Crimean parliament dominated by Russian speakers threatened to secede from Ukraine and called for a referendum on the issue on 25 May. They still view the ousted Ukrainian president as their legitimate president and might invite him back.
- Some Russian speakers in Crimea started calling for Crimea to become part of Russia again and occupied various buildings in the capital, Simferopol. However the Crimean Tatars staunchly support the new Ukrainian government and do not want closer ties with Russia.
- Indications are that Russia is involved in stirring up hostilities in Crimea and even possible Russian military personnel active in events.
- Many people in Crimea fear a potential invasion by Russia similar to the 2008 Russian invasion in Georgia. That would result in a serious conflict with the Crimean Tatars and other people in Crimea supporting the new Ukrainian government. The danger is if a Russian citizen in Crimea is shot at or killed. That will give Russia a pretext to protect its citizens in Crimea and potentially occupy the region to protect it from the new Ukrainian government.
- Armoured units from the Russian Black Sea Fleet base near Sevastopol had entered Crimea in order to protect the Russian fleet positions and protect Russian citizens.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday submitted a request to the upper house of parliament asking approval for the use of Russian troops in Ukraine.
- Missionaries and other foreigners in Crimea started leaving the area.

3) Prayer points

- God intervened before in Crimea and can do that again.
- Pray for the new interim Ukrainian president who is a committed Christian and Baptist preacher. He and the rest of the Ukrainian government need tremendous wisdom in the days ahead.
- Pray for the Christians in Crimea that God will protect them but also make them witnesses of reconciliation and peace in the present situation. There are Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar Christians who can model reconciliation between the different groups. Pray that Colossians 3:11 will become a visible reality in the Church.
- Pray for a political, economic and spiritual breakthrough and peace in Crimea. That happened in 1999 when the grievances of the Crimean Tatars had been met the day before the protests could turn violent. Praise God who can do that again!
- Pray that God will change the hearts of the Russians in a context where they feel they are losing influence in a country which they feel is part of greater Russia.
- Pray for wisdom for Russian, European and US leaders in how to deal with the tension in Crimea. The Ukrainian government could ask the UK and US governments to help protect its territory according to the 1994 memorandum. That can create a conflict that will not only affect Crimea but the whole region and potentially the whole of Europe.
- In 1914 Europe had been catapulted into war after an incident on the European periphery. Please pray that the same will not happen again 100 years later.
- Pray that God will be glorified in a situation where satan wants to cause destruction.

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