

Far-right marches in Kiev as report documents crimes by Ukraine's paramilitary forces

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The far-right organization Right Sector demonstrated in Kiev on Friday under the banner of “The March of the Volunteers in Honor of Prince Svyatoslav the Brave,” a reference to the 10th century military conqueror who sought to expand Kiev’s control over the east and a hero of Ukrainian nationalists. Traffic was shut down in the center of the capital city in order to make way for the event.

A solidarity march was held in Zaporizhia, a southeastern city along the banks of the Dnieper and the sixth largest in the country. Various paramilitary groups are participating in both demonstrations, which they claim will “honor the memory of glorious ancestors and show the continuity of the struggle for a great Ukraine.”

Right Sector is demanding that Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko end the ceasefire with pro-Russian separatists in the country’s southeast. The group is calling for an aggressive renewal of the war, which has continued at a low level for months despite the signing of peace accords in Minsk in February. It also wants an end to all inter-governmental relations with Russia.

Right Sector is notorious for its neo-fascist ideology and the savage role that it played in the US-backed uprising last year that drove Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich from power. Its leader, Dmytro Yarosh, won office in the country’s parliament last year. In April 2015, he was appointed an advisor to the military, which is currently receiving training and “non-lethal” support from the US and other NATO states. In early June, Right Sector violently attacked and dispersed a gay pride parade in Kiev, denouncing homosexuality as being at odds with the bible.

In order to mount the offensive against Russia, Right

Sector is insisting that Kiev provide all volunteer battalions with “weapons, appropriate rights, and social welfare benefits.” Should Poroshenko not concede to its demands and “not begin to adequately respond to threats to Ukrainian statehood,” the organization declared, “[the government] will fall very quickly.” The Kiev regime, which came to power with the aid of these forces and has promoted them into the highest levels of the state, is dependent on their continued loyalty for its own survival and to carry out the massively unpopular austerity measures demanded by international lenders.

Just prior to the Right Sector march, news broke of an internal Ukrainian military report documenting criminal activity and brutal acts being carried out in the southeast by paramilitary battalions led by Right Sector allies and supported by the state. The forces are operating in those regions of the Donbass that are under Kiev’s control.

CyberBerkut, a hacking organization sympathetic to the Russian government, published an internal document last week produced by Ukraine’s Southern Region Military Prosecutor Pavel Bogutsky. According to the organization, it contains evidence of the fact that these volunteer detachments “have turned into organized crime groups, robbing and killing their own people.”

“In the course of their punitive operations, they have become so accustomed to impunity and all-permissiveness that they feel themselves to be above the law and outside [any] moral code,” they add. A registry of crimes subject to pre-trial investigation includes 200 “illegal actions by territorial defense battalions and other military units involved in the Anti-

Terrorist Operation in the Lugansk Region,” including armed assault, robbery, kidnapping and murder.

The country’s National Guard claims that it has nearly lost control of the situation, as the battalions do not heed their orders. However, the Ukrainian Security Services are also implicated in the work of these marauding bands, according to the document analyzed by CyberBerkut. “Whether by their own initiative or under secret instructions, they kidnap people viewed as objectionable to the regime [in Kiev]. Relevant appeals by citizens have been made to Deputy Southern Region Military Prosecutor K. Ignatov.”

These latest revelations underscore previous exposures made in 2014. In September of last year, Amnesty International issued a report on the crimes of the Aidar Volunteer Battalion, a pro-Kiev militia. At the time, the media described their actions as “ISIS style.”

Stories also continue to emerge of disarray in Ukraine’s regular military forces. The UK’s *Daily Mail* carried a news story on June 30 about widespread alcoholism in the army, which according to one journalist has reached “epidemic” proportions. The situation has become so severe that troops are crowded into open air metal cages to sober up. In one recent incident, officials seized 150 liters of alcohol from a barracks.

This follows evidence of extensive popular opposition to Kiev’s call-up, which was issued earlier this year as part of the fighting in the southeast. From the standpoint of the central government, the ceasefire agreed in February was partly driven by the state of general demoralization and disarray in the Ukrainian military.

All of these events are further evidence of the fact that there was absolutely nothing democratic about the so-called “Maidan revolution” carried out in Ukraine last year. The government installed in Kiev presides over a deeply hostile population throughout the country. It sustains itself with the aid of its western backers and right-wing terror.

In another manifestation of the gulf separating the government from broad layers of the population, support for Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who is overseeing the implementation of deeply unpopular austerity measures, has fallen dramatically since parliamentary elections last year. Yatsenyuk’s

People’s Front party saw its popularity rating decline from 22 percent in October 2014 to 1.6 percent as of June this year. The prime minister himself has seen his standing in the polls drop from 36 percent in October 2014 to 24 percent as of March 2015.

Accusations of financial wrongdoing surround his administration. In April, Yatsenyuk dismissed the head of Ukraine’s State Financial Inspector, Mykola Gordienko, who accused him of corrupt dealings totaling 7.6 billion hryvnia (\$359.4 million).



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