

Identifier	Created	Classification	Origin
06KIEV558	2006-02-10 14:40:00	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Kyiv

Cable title: **UKRAINE: MAJOR REFUGEE NGO ON CHECHENS, UZBEKS**

Tags: [NOTAG](#) [UP](#)

[Show metadata](#)

 [how-to read a cable](#)

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIEV 000558

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL. 02/10/2016

TAGS:

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: MAJOR REFUGEE NGO ON CHECHENS, UZBEKS

REF: 05 KIEV 4971

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Two senior interlocutors from a major refugee-assistance NGO, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), told us February 1 that Ukrainian authorities were continuing to refool Chechen asylum seekers in violation of international law. Our HIAS contacts warned of a surge in the number of Uzbeks illegally entering and living in Ukraine; HIAS was quietly working with "hundreds" of them to file asylum claims. Uzbek "illegals," some of whom allegedly witnessed the May 2005 Andijon massacre, were reluctant to have any contact with Ukrainian authorities, justifiably fearing that they could be arrested, refooled, and subjected to cruel and unusual punishment by Uzbek security forces. According to the HIAS officials, Uzbek refugees have largely clustered in and around the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, where unscrupulous local cops have targeted them for shakedowns. HIAS was working with IOM and the State Committee on Nationalities and Migration (SCNM) to establish a toll-free call center in Kiev, staffed by multi-lingual HIAS employees, many of them former asylum seekers, that could provide interpretation services to Ukraine's law enforcement community. End summary.

Ukraine Continuing To Refoul Chechens to Russia

2. (SBU) During a February 1 meeting in Kiev, the director of HIAS' Russia/Ukraine programs, Leonard Terlitsky, and the director of the HIAS Kiev office, Alexander Galkin, told us that Ukrainian authorities were continuing to refool Chechen asylum seekers, in violation of international law (reftel). Since the beginning of 2006, HIAS had confirmed that seven Chechens had been refooled to Russia in three small groups; in one egregious case, border guards refooled a Chechen family over the protests of a HIAS lawyer who was helping them fill out asylum claims, our interlocutors asserted. Echoing what we have been told by UNHCR officials here, Terlitsky said that the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) has a standing, but unwritten, order to send Chechens back to



Russia, adding that SBGS Chairman Mykola Lytvyn (note: brother of Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn) clearly "worried more about offending Moscow" than meeting Ukraine's obligations under international law.

#### Number of Uzbeks Growing

3. (C) A matter of more urgent concern, Terlitsky and Galkin said, was the reported surge in the number of Uzbeks illegally entering and living in Ukraine. Trusted contacts in the Uzbek community had told HIAS Kiev that there were now at least 3,000 such Uzbek "illegals," largely clustered in Kharkiv. The majority were from the Fergana valley; some had allegedly witnessed, and fled Uzbekistan in the wake of, the May 2005 Andijon massacre. Terlitsky and Galkin related that HIAS was quietly working with "several hundred" Uzbeks to prepare asylum claims. Generally speaking, the Uzbeks accepted the help only reluctantly, justifiably fearing that contact with Ukrainian authorities could lead to arrest, refoulement, and certain mistreatment -- if not worse -- back in Uzbekistan. Our contacts asserted that, in keeping with Karimov tradition, the Uzbek Embassy in Kiev continued to send out "security officers" to hunt down Uzbek illegals and, with alleged assistance from sympathetic elements within the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), send them home against their will.

#### The ATM Effect

4. (SBU) Terlitsky said he was appalled to report that corrupt cops in Kharkiv were increasingly preying on the Uzbek community, shaking down illegals in exchange for not sending them back to Uzbekistan. The average cop on the street, Terlitsky asserted, had figured out that Uzbeks were "really scared" and were "willing to pay significant cash bribes" to avoid being detained and sent home.

#### Call Center: Bengali to Bantu

5. (U) Ending on a positive note, our contacts reported that HIAS was working with IOM and the State Committee on Nationalities and Migration (SCNM) to establish a toll-free call center in Kiev, staffed by multi-lingual HIAS employees (many of them former asylum seekers), that could provide interpretation services to Ukraine's law enforcement community. Often, our contacts explained, police officers and/or border guards could not communicate with illegal border-crossers they detained. The call center, Terlitsky said, would be staffed by people who spoke everything from "Bantu to Bengali" and would at least "help the authorities communicate" with potential asylum seekers.

#### Comment

6. (C) Ambassador has raised the refoulement of Chechens with the Ukrainian Government and has received mixed signals in return. SBGS Chairman Lytvyn denied that Chechens had been refouled and characterized Chechens in Ukraine as illegal job-seekers. In contrast, SCNM Chairman Serhiy Rudyk acknowledged that Chechens had been refouled and that refoulement was a violation of international law -- but he also said he lacked the authority to make the SBGS stop doing it.

HERBST

Website pages 