

# Crimean Tatar Infrastructures of Decolonial Care

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This article employs the framework of critical infrastructure studies to outline the settler-colonial oppression and decolonial resistance in the Crimean Peninsula. It shows how Soviet and Russian colonialism intertwined ongoing landscape destruction with forced displacements and colonial othering. In addition, it outlines the laborious process of decolonial nourishment to define infrastructure beyond settler terms, questioning what counts as such. The text counters Russian colonial understanding of infrastructure that could not comprehend indigenous Crimean Tatar irrigation systems, constructed through intimate relations with soil and water rather than large-scale geoengineering. The Crimean Tatar water infrastructures are considered, in line with other forms of resistance, as ones of decolonial care. They create the possibility of a future which goes against that imposed by the Russian state.

This article is based on historical research conducted for the project ‘Caring for the Shaky Ground’, a web platform (Distributed Cognition Cooperative 2020) launched on 11 April 2020. This project is a bilingual web platform that explores the history and presence of colonial power hierarchies in Crimea, where the settler authorities have repeatedly harassed indigenous Tatars. The Crimean Tatar historian who has generously agreed to review our research was arrested as were his other family members. For reasons of his and his family’s safety, we weren’t supposed to know his name and only came to know it only after the arrest. As we found out on that day, the name of the historian who agreed to be our editor was Seitumer Seitumerov. Before the arrest he co-edited one of the most comprehensive books on Crimea’s monuments (Seitumerov 2016). He was falsely accused of terrorism and has been awaiting a so-called trial in prison since then and could face up to 20 years imprisonment (Crimean Solidarity 2020). Two other people who helped us enormously were Mumine Salieva and Lutfie Zudiyeva, both having experienced arrests by the Russian police, and one

person whose name we do not know for safety reasons. We would like to express gratitude to all of them for their invaluable support and care and we dedicate this text to the Crimean Tatars taken hostage due to the Russian state's Islamophobia.<sup>a</sup>

### Introduction

In our case study, we intend to overview the history of Crimean Tatars – the indigenous people of Crimea – as a history of decolonial construction and colonial dismantling of care infrastructures. Crimean Tatars have been affected by Russian settler colonialism, which combines features of internal and external colonialisms. As a part of external colonization, Russian settlers created war zones to claim the land and recast ‘all things Native’ as ‘natural resources’ (Tuck and Yang 2012: 42). As internal colonization, they inflicted ‘biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, resources, flora and fauna within the domestic borders of imperial nation’ (Tuck and Yang 2012: 43). Crimean Tatars have been situated in the ‘double shadows’ of coloniality. They have been, as we show in this text, subjected to the ‘darker side’ of Russian modernity (Tlostanova 2012: 137). Simultaneously, Crimean Tatars have been rendered invisible by Western thought. Depending on the political spectrum, Western thinkers are always ready to either criticize the ‘second’ world Russia belonged to, or to romanticize its communist past, somehow persistently failing to acknowledge the colonialism at play. To question the central role of the Soviet state, we must propose a temporal framework that would focus on the multiscale histories of colonial oppression and indigenous decolonial resistance.

In 1989, after several years of protests, Crimean Tatars returned to their rightful land having experienced violent deportation 45 years previously, in 1944. Such deportation was a collective punishment, which followed the false accusations against Crimean Tatars as an ethnicity.<sup>b</sup> The return to Crimea was the result of the enduring work of the indigenous activists. In 1965, during the exile of Crimean Tatars, a Crimean Tatar Soviet dissident, Ayşe Seitmuratova, participated in the meeting of representatives of Crimean Tatars with a significant Communist Party official. The official attempted to corner participating activists with a question about who exactly discriminates against Crimean Tatars. Seitmuratova answered: ‘First of all, it is the order of GDC (Governmental Defence Committee) from May 11, which sanctioned the displacement of Crimean Tatars. Secondly, what names do you need? We are offended by the Soviet state itself’ (Bekirova 2018). This statement led to her short-term imprisonment, the length of which was shortened because of the Crimean Tatars protests. After her release, she was one of the Crimean Tatars’ representatives during the meeting with the Soviet General Secretary, Yuri Andropov, the leader of the Soviet Union at the time. This meeting, coupled with several protests, such as the historical demonstration of Crimean Tatars held in the Red Square in 1987, forced the Soviet state to drop the charges against Crimean Tatars as an ethnicity. In 1989, the protests, as well as their legislative labour, forced the Soviet state to accept a Declaration that declared illegal

‘any repressions against peoples, who went through forced, violent displacement’ (Bekirova 2018).

Being ‘a structure, not an event’ (Wolfe 1987: 2), settler colonial oppression did not end with the return of Crimean Tatars to their rightful land. Upon return, Crimean Tatars encountered the consequences of settler destruction of soil and water and the legislative constraints against land reclamation. Our article employs a theoretical framework of critical infrastructure studies to reveal the material histories, present states and futures of colonial oppression and decolonial resistance. As white Russian decolonial researchers, who are not qualified as Crimean historians, in this article we provide a background to the contemporary structures of anti-indigenous oppression and decolonial resistance, rather than a comprehensive overview of the history and culture of Crimean Tatars. We therefore set a temporal framework within the multi-layered history of Russia colonial violence.

### **Infrastructures of Anti-indigenous Oppression**

In the eighth century, Crimean Tatar villages were twice burned by the Russian Field Marshals Lussy and Minikh. The Russian imperial authorities first formulated a climate of anti-indigenous violence in 1687 in a military ultimatum against Turkey. The demand insisted on the ‘dispossession of all Tatars out of Crimea’. This aim was adopted in the official ‘Political Conception of the Russian Empire’ in 1771: ‘those people [Crimean Tatars] must be destroyed with our arms, their lands must be emptied as those people produce zero benefits or value’ (Vozgrin 1996: 16). After the first annexation of Crimea in 1783, Prince Potemkin gave the indigenous lands to the ‘favourites’ of Catherine II to build summer recreational houses known as ‘dachas’ (Vozgrin 1996:17). The serfs brought to the peninsula by the new landowners did not know how to work on unfamiliar ground. The forests were felled for military vessels, the wellsprings, which had been watering the steppe, were dried, and the fertile soil, unbound by the roots of plants either cut or dried out, was dispersed. The initial colonial settlement triggered the collapse of the local ecology, enforcing the displacement further, as the peasants brought to cultivate Crimean land deserted. At the same time, Crimean Tatars had to rent their lands only to abandon them several years later, due to the threat of the famine created by the settlers. The Empress Catherine II expanded thorough colonization of the peninsula, adding knowledge production to settlement politics and sent the natural scientist, Carl Gablitz, to catalogue all the flora in Crimea. As a result, indigenous knowledge was erased and replaced with that of the colonizers (Lazzerini 2019: 305). The active division of water resources and their expropriation by the state, including Lake Sasiq, which became state-owned for salt extraction, created the infrastructure of dispossession in the eighth century (Pavliv 2018).

This infrastructure of dispossession resulted in violent displacement and the shortage of resources. Hence, another famine followed the settlers’ invasion after The Crimean War (1853–1856). While the indigenous people had to leave their lands,

Russian settlers tripled the peninsula population. In the 1890s, the Russian imperial state took control over Waqf lands. Waqf were parcels of land that were self-governed and used by mosques, kuttabs (Islamic primary schools) and madrasas (Islamic religious schools). According to Sharia law, those lands could not be confiscated or divided (Vozgrin 1992: 349).

During the Second World War, on 18 May 1944, one of the most extensive deportations of Crimean Tatars followed the previous displacements. People were put in overcrowded trains and were relocated to different territories, predominantly in Central Asia and other parts of the Soviet Empire that were considered a periphery. The process of deportation is recognized as a genocide of Crimean Tatars (Williams 2016; Bekirova 2017). Many of those who were displaced,<sup>c</sup> suffocated and died in trains that were not meant to transport people. People were trying to get some air and helping the most vulnerable to the open windows. During the 1944 deportations, those who died were thrown out of the wagons into the mud. As Brian Glyn Williams describes it, officers passing along carriages were asking: ‘Any bodies?’ (2016: 101). Writer Grigory Alexandrov, referring to a Crimean Tatar woman, who lost her mind from grief after the deaths of her five children and husband, wrote: ‘During the year of exile everything was messed up: children lost their lives every hour and their mothers and fathers had to dig them graves’ (Alexandrov 1988).

It is an emblematic trait of a colonial regime to perceive indigenous people as bodies equated to non-human animals; and plants, soil and water only as sources for extraction (Tuck and Yang 2012). Railroads and, for instance, the residences of the Russian elite created a base that allowed settlers to operate without thinking of the harm they were inflicting upon indigenous people and local ecology. This infrastructure imposes violence in its construction and maintenance while being legitimized as a technical issue existing outside of persistent colonial violence. In other words, it exists as what Anne Spice calls ‘infrastructures of invasion’ (Spice 2018: 45). She states that settler-colonial infrastructures in Canada naturalized colonial domination and dispossession through ‘cementing settler ontologies’ (Spice 2018: 45).

Such settler-colonial infrastructures take various forms, one of the most telling being the summer camps and resorts. These infrastructures are equated in the minds of white<sup>d</sup> Soviet and Russian citizens with childhood nostalgia. An emblematic example is the Artek pioneer camp. Situated near the Artek river on land stolen in the nineteenth century, it became a symbol of idealized Soviet pioneer children, which retained a cult-like importance for Russian settlers. Built on the indigenous land, acquired through violence and dispossession, the Artek pioneer camp and other resorts work as a facade of joy, behind which the Crimean Tatar land is kept hidden. When Crimean Tatars managed to reclaim the right to return to their land in 1989, these resorts were cited by Russian authorities as one of the reasons for a shortage of soil (Bekirova and Gromenko 2018). With all the extensive settler infrastructure, still aestheticized through Soviet postcards, it was stated that there was nothing for Crimean Tatars to claim back. Even though they could come to Crimea, Crimean Tatars could not return to their ‘küçük vatan’ (the native land). In the

official language, this return was impossible due to the absence of land for residential buildings (Williams 2016). The settler-colonial infrastructure masked the political issue as a technical constraint.

Indeed, the resorts changed the landscape drastically. Crimean Tatars, who returned to the region after their long exile, recall a stark contrast between their memories and what they now saw. Resorts were part of a broader range of land transformation brought by the Soviet settlers, which Russian historian Valery Vozgrin (1992: 23) ironically calls ‘first-generation Crimeans’. However, these post-1944 Soviet settlers did not know about cultivating the land. The tobacco fields and vineyards planted by Crimean Tatars were abandoned and the death of plants escalated the transformations of the local ecosystem. Since the most recent Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian state has continued to inflict this practice of dispossession. Once again, it is performed by creating an unliveable environment and forced deportation, referred to as ‘hybrid’ by Crimean Tatars. As Mumine Salieva describes:

Thus, today, statistically, trouble has entered every third Crimean Tatar house. Therefore, we are describing it as the repression of an entire population. Many believe that this is nothing more than hybrid deportation. In 1944, called criminals, the Crimean Tatars were taken out of the Crimea. Today, similarly, having labelled ‘criminals’, calling them terrorists, extremists, separatists, people are put into police wagons and taken to Russian prisons. (Salieva 2020a)

These most recent deportations have been conducted as part of the mass imprisonment of indigenous people through accusations of terrorism. Evidence in these cases can reach levels of absurdity, including claims that certain words from the Crimean-Tatar language (such as ‘sohbet,’ ‘subet’ translated as ‘speaking’) constitute evidence of terrorism (Kurbedinov in Polikhovich 2019). A terrorism charge leads to a conviction with imprisonment of up to eight to 28 years. It also means deportation to Russia, as the Crimean Tatars are prosecuted in Russian courts and imprisoned on Russian land. The danger of mass incarceration has made some Crimean Tatars flee Crimea once again, even though the majority have decided to stay. Lawyer Emil Kurbedinov describes how contemporary political repressions are part of ongoing colonial violence:

Since I was a child, I have heard stories of our elders about how our people were called ‘traitors,’ how long the national liberation movement has been fighting to return to its motherland, and now we are called a new name – ‘terrorists’. (Kurbedinov in Polikhovich 2019)

This brief historical overview of settler-colonial infrastructure allows us to observe how Crimean soil and water are influenced by, and influence, the existence of Crimean Tatars and Russian settler colonialism.

### **Caring for the Water**

Crimean-Tatar irrigation systems in the eighteenth century in the mountainous regions of Crimea consisted of searching for water sources and then directing water

towards fields, gardens, cities and vineyards. Such a non-intrusive approach to irrigation lies in stark contrast with the Soviet practices we describe below. The water was nurtured by Crimean Tatars rather than controlled, as it was by Russian settlers. In materials from 1932, these practices are described by Repnikov and Shmidt (1932) as ‘care’. The Crimean Tatars’ careful approach to water is pointed out in almost all sources that mention their water infrastructures. Crimean Tatars created these water infrastructures through various practices, including digging a small canal that guides the flow from a mountain river to one’s house or a mill. This canal could then be used by other people who would dig their water branches in the directions they needed, creating a network. This decentralized approach to water meant that water was part of the complex infrastructure of collective responsibility; and this collective responsibility for the water network brings us to the notion of caring infrastructure. According to Alam and Houston:

Approaching caring as the multitude of relationships within Country, rather than caring for Country, more grounded form[s] of multispecies responsibilities emerge to produce radically different forms of relational and participatory infrastructure. (Alam and Houston 2020: 4)

Infrastructural studies’ focus on maintenance and care allows us to see care as a recursive process, thus caring for the water infrastructures also implies, in the long term, caring for the people who maintain them.

Caring water infrastructures, specifically fountains, played an essential role in the cosmologies of the Crimean Tatars. In Crimea, fountains have embodied a wide variety of functions, located as they were in residential areas, near bazaars, mosques, burial grounds, and the madrasas and kuttabs mentioned above. They were not only used to obtain drinking water but also for rituals that required ablution. Crimean Tatars performed these rituals in mosques and during Quran readings and lessons on religion, educational institutions, and commemorations of the dead. Therefore, fountains were integral to sustaining life in a material sense and maintained the life of the culture (Yunusova 2020).

Çeşme (fountains used for drinking) sometimes determined the names of entire residential areas. Sırlı-Çeşme fountain gave the name to the residential area in Bakhchisarai, where it existed from the eighteenth century until its destruction after the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944. The destruction of fountains was not only the destruction of culture – which it facilitated – but it was also a destruction of a system of distributed reproduction and care. Çeşme were often situated near roads because it was considered a virtue to give water to a traveller. Thus, Çeşme functioned as systems of distributed care that were not directed at specific individuals, but were available to anyone who needed it. Such distributed care was not considered valuable in the paradigm of ‘progress’ introduced by the Russian settlers.

As an integral part of the indigenous cosmologies, fountains were also omnipresent in the narratives of returning to the rightful land and the destruction of the land and culture. Performing on Moscow television in 1989, Crimean Tatar singer Susanna Memetova sang, ‘Why have our fountains been ruined? Why have

our graves been destroyed? . . . I want to come back, but I cannot find my way home' (Williams 2016: 139). Similarly, the fountains were linked with colonial violence in 'The Bakhchisaray Fountain of Tears', a poem written by Turkish poet, Shukru Elchin, in 1981. This poem metaphorically described the consequences of the 1944 deportation: silent birds, blood pouring from the fountains like water, ground cracking from drought. Elchin deliberately referenced Russian poet Alexander Pushkin's 'The Fountain of Bakhchisaray'. Pushkin's poem, published in 1823, embodies two settler stereotypes, portraying male Crimean Tatars as dangerous outsiders and female ones as seductive beauties. In contrast, Elchin's poem described the deportation as mass murders and the destruction of the environment. Crimean Tatar activist Mustafa Dzhemilev distributed the poem in Turkish in 1983. The poet engaging in the environmental consequences of colonial violence was an example of decolonial resistance. This resistance was indeed recognized by the Soviet state, which repeatedly prosecuted Mustafa Jemilev, with the allegations in the trial in 1983 describing the poem as 'imbued with anti-Sovietism' (The Sixth Process of Mustafa Jemilev 2001: 94).

### **Overflow of Care Control**

Russian settlers have represented Crimean Tatar water infrastructures as 'chaotic' or as 'imperceptible trickles of water' (Zuev 1782). Russian settlers did not pay attention to the water infrastructures they found in the mountains as they did not understand why the water should be collected and nurtured rather than controlled. One example of the settlers' inability to understand the functioning of water infrastructures is that they described the Biyuk-Kasu river as a river that goes upwards. They ascribed anti-natural movement to it as it was impossible for them to grasp multidirectional decentralized flows that resulted from the Tatar's dispersed system of small canals.

From the 1930s expedition, N.P. Repnikov disproved the claims of the Russian and Soviet Empires that had previously stated that there was no water infrastructure in Crimea. He revealed to the Soviet government the Crimean Tatars' irrigation techniques. His extensive descriptions picture an old plumbing system found in the ruins of the medieval town of Eski-Karmen in the southwest of the Crimean Peninsula. It consisted of water-reservoirs cut out of schist rocks, as well as water-pools carved out of marl rocks. Documents of the expedition stated: 'those reservoirs and pools can be re-used, while the stolen parts of the plumbing can be replaced with the new ones, put in the same drains' (Repnikov and Shmit 1930: 76). Yet, instead of conducting local repair and maintenance operations, the Soviet state made a decision to construct a massive infrastructural project that manifested its mastery of the land, the North Crimean canal.

The North Crimean canal was built in 1961–1971 during Soviet 'industrialization'. At this time, what counted as important for the future was man's total control of the land. The project was legitimized by the drought caused by the displacement of the indigenous people and their knowledge of appropriate local irrigation systems.

Antonina Lisovskaya, one of the Russian officials, described the situation: ‘the only things that grew on the peninsula were sagebrush and camelthorns’ (Vgorode 2014). The results of Repnikov’s expedition were entirely ignored in preparation for constructing the North Crimean Canal, bringing about the suffering of workers and accelerating the ecological crisis.

Not only did this lead to further displacements of the indigenous population, but the North Crimean Channel created what Michelle Murphy describes as ‘latency’: the capacity of infrastructure to alter not only the present but also the future by creating long-running effects. She writes: ‘Latency names how the past becomes reactivated. Through latency, the future is already altered’ (Murphy 2013). When the North Crimean Canal was in operation, 85% of the water in the Crimean Peninsula came from mainland Ukraine. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Ukrainian authorities blocked the water flow. Most water reservoirs were supplied from the North Crimean Canal, and now most of them are running low (Klimenko 2020). It is no longer possible for the local settler authorities to solve the problem. The ongoing displacement of the Crimean Tatars, the destruction of the local environment, and Russian military invasion currently result in a high probability of drought, subsequent food shortages and detriment.

Another dimension of water scarcity, caused by the Ukrainian response to the Russian colonial invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, is the shortage of water for industrial production. For this reason, the chemical plant ‘Crimean Titan’ switched from taking water from the Crimean Canal to the springs near Armyansk. The water was not fit for industrial usage, which has resulted in poisonous emissions, forcing the local inhabitants to inhale toxic air and suffer from skin burns (Burdyaga 2018). Thus, the Crimean Canal, constructed by the Russians during the Soviet period as the only source of water on the peninsula, has caused the shortage of water after being cut off as a response to the 2014 Russian invasion.

Since 2014, Russian authorities have sought even more control over water resources. In the 1990s, when Crimean Tatars were returning to their rightful lands, they had to build basic infrastructures since none were present. For example, in the village of Krasnoznamenka, located in the area where Crimean Tatars have lived historically, pipes brought water from the springs to the houses. Since people built water infrastructures themselves, they only paid for the seasonal maintenance of the pipes (Reznikova 2020). The creation and maintenance of the infrastructures were conditioned by mutual care inside the community, rooted in the Crimean Tatar language as ‘hashar’ (Suleimanov 2018). However, last year, Russian settler authorities claimed that the water was their property and cut the pipes off (Reznikova 2020).

Following the description of water infrastructures that we have provided, we argue that the care infrastructures of Crimean Tatars aim for equal distribution of power. In contrast, for the settler rule, care takes the form of control and centralization of resources. This tendency is addressed by Ashraful Alam and Donna Houston in their criticism of how contemporary NGOs perceive their role

as channelling care in situations of drastic power imbalance. It allows us to think of the history of settler water infrastructure in Crimea as the history of tightening control in opposition to the decolonial practice of nurturing (Alam and Houston 2020). This is consistent with an argument that infrastructures perform political work, and the political role of colonial infrastructures is to jam ‘regulations, constraints, and limits’ (Khalili 2017: 98). The colonial discourse that poses a question ‘who controls the water?’ can also be dissected as ‘who does the future belong to?’ and ‘What counts as future?’ (Ballesterio 2019: 26). The water infrastructure determines who gets to live and who dies in the most literal sense possible, simultaneously determining what counts as ‘future’. We claim that the communal maintenance of indigenous water infrastructures has resulted in a more responsible approach to water resources and facilitates an inclusive future that can accommodate everyone equally. Both the eighteenth-century practices and the more recent ones have ‘remade worlds’ (Ballesterio 2019: 41) through non-destructive approaches to resource management. In contrast, the settler practices were aimed at creating monolithic infrastructures for maximizing profit and control at the expense of the Crimean Tatars and their world.

### **Means of Future Making**

Care infrastructures that create alternative futures are not limited to nurturing water resources. One of the examples of such infrastructures is the organization ‘Crimean Solidarity’. Constructed and maintained under the settler-colonial rule, Crimean Solidarity aims to ‘create difference’ in a situation of omnipresent suffocation and control. Formed by a core group of 15 people on 9 April 2016, Crimean Solidarity’s primary goals have been to provide information about the political repressions on the peninsula and create networks of support for political prisoners and their families. During her public talk facilitated through the Caring for the Shaky Ground project on 11 April 2020, Crimean Tatar activist, Mumine Salieva, discussed the practices of media activists and journalists:

After all independent media were squeezed out of Crimea [...] we were just going to trials. The families of the political prisoners made the streams from the houses in which unlawful searches took place. We thus gave information, which other media could later use. (Salieva 2020b)

By doing that, the media activists, who later organized to form the Crimean Solidarity, created an infrastructure that spanned beyond online spaces, aiming to facilitate a future without political repressions. Mumine herself started an initiative named ‘Crimean Childhood’, which aims to collectively care for the children of political prisoners – a systemic problem in the climate of contemporary political repressions. Furthermore, Mumine pointed out that after her husband’s arrest, she decided to get a law degree to advocate for him.

Engagement with the law is a vital part of the facilitation of the care infrastructures described. Andrea Balletero discusses the slow work of legislative change as a ‘practice of creating difference’ under conditions when there is no possibility of any other world. At the appeal on 11 July 2019, for the Hizb -ut-Tahrir case<sup>e</sup> – under which almost all Crimean Tatars are being prosecuted – Crimean Tatar activist and lawyer Lilja Gemedgi (2019) addressed the judge:

Today, it depends only on you, which society your children would live in as well as the way seven children of Enver Mamutov and four children of Rustem Albitarov, two children of Remzi Memetov and four children of Zevri Abseitov would feel. It only depends on you whether those children would believe in the fairness of Russian justice. It only depends on you, whether those children, their families and the whole Crimean-Tatar community will believe in justice. Taking into consideration that there is no evidence of my client’s guilt, I believe that the sentence of the North-Caucasus court should be cancelled, and my client should be justified.

This making of the future allows the participants of the court hearing to see beyond the absence of the future, imposed by the settler state. It essentially troubles the colonial conditions, allowing life to be sustained despite them. In the anti-indigenous climate created by the necropolitical infrastructure of Russian colonialism, one can see the resistance in the practices of care that maintain life in the area that was meant to become a ‘death-world’. In the disaster that is as anthropogenic as it is white, those who ‘were never meant to survive’ maintain infrastructures that nourish futures incomprehensible for colonial rule. By facilitating alliances between human and non-human, these infrastructures act as living networks of care.

### Competing Interests

The authors declare none.

### Notes

- a. One of the ways in which Islamophobia is manifested is the criminalization of Muslim as ‘terrorists’ by the Russian state. For instance, according to the Crimean Tatar lawyer Lilya Gemedgi, the Russian state incriminated Server Mustafaev’s participation in a mosque meeting, implying his religion to be sufficient reason for his prosecution (Gemedgi 2021).
- b. Despite the persistence of the myth that Crimean Tatars were Nazi collaborators, a multitude of historical evidence overviewed by Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov (1990), Brian Glyn Williams (2016), and Gulnara Bekirova (2017) suggests that there are no grounds for such accusations other than Soviet colonial ambitions. Indeed, ‘Nazi collaborator’ would be used against numerous Soviet racialized subjects to legitimize their forceful dispossession.
- c. We restrain from using the term ‘deportees’ here and further in the text to not limit and equate the identities of Crimean Tatars to the form of violence they experienced.
- d. Here we understand whiteness vis-à-vis Russian settler colonialism. We see whiteness as a set of conditions, which maintain one’s privilege of positionality as ‘neutral’ Soviet/Russian citizens. There are multiple forms of racialization in Russia, as Lana Uzarashvili (2020) says: ‘in Russia people are racialized based on their ethnicity, language, citizenship, migration status, accent, name, surname, appearance, etc.’

- e. The organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir is an Islamic organization, which was established in Palestine in the 1950s. In 2003, it was claimed in Russia to be a terrorist organization and banned. Even though it is uncommon for Crimean Tatars to have any connections to Hizb-ut-Tahrir, they are normally accused of being a part of it upon arrest. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is currently working for the Russian state as a placeholder for all Muslim people undergoing repression regardless of the school of Islam they relate to.

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### About the Authors

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**Sasha and Anna** have co-founded the *Distributed Cognition Cooperative*. By exploring the relationship between material bodies and abstract machines, DCC aims to disentangle the post-Soviet space from the notion that it is a single unified zone instead of a heterogeneous range of socio-economic histories and cultures.