

Crimean Tatars at the Turkish Festival, 2016

An Illustrated Report

The International Committee for Crimea (ICC) was invited to participate in the Turkish Festival, an annual event held in downtown Washington, DC. Organized by the American Turkish Association of District of Columbia (ATA-DC), the Festival is considered the best ethnic event in DC and draws thousands of people. We gladly accepted the invitation and joined forces with another nonprofit in the DC area, United Help Ukraine (UHU). Ismail Shahtakhtinski, Esq., an attorney and a board member of both ATA-DC and UHU, was our sponsor.



1. Inci, Ismail, Tamara, Tonya and Zamira at Festival tent

The annual Turkish Festival takes place on Freedom Plaza, Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, between 12th and 14th Streets, 2 blocks east of the White House. The area is closed to the traffic by the DC Metropolitan Police, which provides safety and crowd control. This year's Festival was held on 25 September 2016, from 11 am to 7 pm.

Our designated tent was near 13th Street, featuring a variety of cultural items: books relating to Crimean Tatars; Jamala's award-

winning song "1944" (audio CD); Christina Paschyn's award winning documentary, "A Struggle for Home: Crimean Tatars" (DVD); embroidered hats by Ayse Osmanova, well-known embroiderer from Crimea; ceramics by Rustem Skibin, a well-known artisan from Crimea; an assortment of embroidered items, jewelry and souvenirs from Ukraine; and ICC and UHU brochures and various handouts.

International Committee for Crimea was also instrumental in getting a Crimean Tatar folklore group invited to the Festival. Kırım Efsanesi (Legend of Crimea), a folk dance group, under the direction of Dinara Faizova-Arslanova, is part of the American Association of Crimean Turks in Brooklyn, New York. A group of 16 dancers came by bus, accompanied by their relatives and members of the Association. Mubeyyin Altan and his wife Lemis were also among the visitors from New York. A veteran Crimean Tatar activist, Mubeyyin is a former president of the ICC and currently on the ICC Board of Directors. Kırım Efsanesi



2. Folklore group Kırım Efsanesi at Turkish Festival



3. Crimean dancers visit ICC's tent. (M. Altan on left)

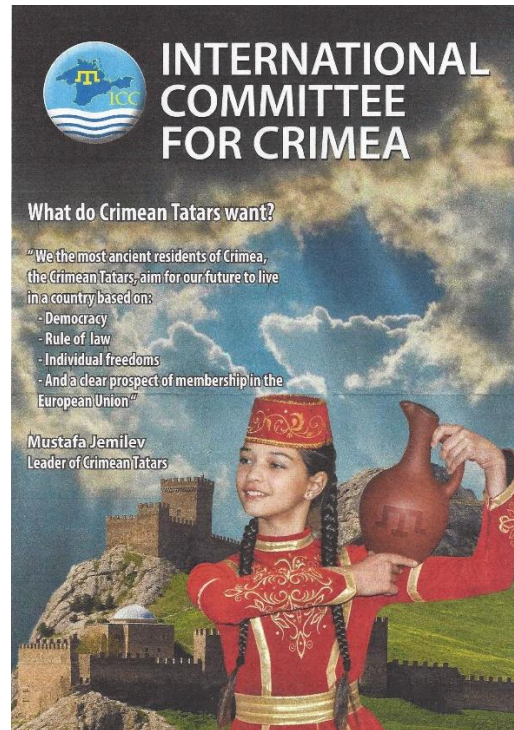
was a big hit at the Festival. We were all very proud of their performance and pleased to have the members of Crimean Tatar association here in DC. Unlike the ICC, the UHU is an organization with many volunteers, as there is a sizable Ukrainian American community in the area. Without their assistance in setting up the displays in the tent, it would have been very difficult for me to undertake the task. The long hours of preparing for the Festival and



4. Crimean dancers performing at Festival

being on Festival site (9:30 am to 7:30 pm) proved to be very tiring. I am grateful to UHU volunteers for their assistance, and the ICC volunteers, Zamira Seyfullah, a school teacher in McLean, VA, and Briggs Burton of the Victims of Communism Memorial

Foundation, Washington, DC, who worked on shifts. Acknowledgment is also due to Ismail Bey for making it possible for the ICC and UHU to participate in the Turkish Festival.



5. ICC's poster

On the whole, ICC's participation at the Festival was well worth the effort, a good experience in fundraising. More importantly, we had a chance to talk to many people about Crimean Tatars and distribute related information. We were dealing with a wide spectrum of audience, from individuals who knew very little about Crimean Tatars to those who asked more specific questions about the current developments in Crimea today. It was a good venue for advocacy.

Inci Bowman, ICC President

2 October 2016

NOTES

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For additional photos, see:

www.facebook.com/internationalcommitteecrimea/

ICC Poster design : Irfan Ongar

The video of Kırım Efsanesi's performance is on YouTube: "Crimean Tatars Dance @ Turkish Festival in Washington, DC" or <https://youtu.be/Y5xO72jBEbE>