

GRNH: Flash Point East Ukraine. War and the Human Rights Question

Global Research News Hour Episode 84

By [Michael Welch](#), [Roger Annis](#), and [Prof. James Petras](#)

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Region: [Canada](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#)

"I think the US especially is keen on encircling Russia and overthrowing the Putin regime and bringing back a kind of satellite government they had in the nineties under Yeltsin." - James Petras

It was about one year ago, that the Euromaidan protests sprang up in Ukraine.

Ostensibly triggered by the rejection by President Yanukovych of an Association Agreement with the European Union, the mass movement grew in size and became a force for Ukrainian officials to reckon with.

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Ostensibly triggered by the rejection by President Yanukovych of an Association Agreement with the European Union, the mass movement grew in size and became a force for Ukrainian officials to reckon with.

In the year that followed, the world has seen the overthrow of the elected government, Presidential elections, the return of Crimea to Russia, and a civil war erupt in the East of the country.

In particular, Russia has become the target of sanctions, having been seen as flouting international law.

The G-20 summit in Brisbane at which President Putin was shunned by the other leaders, has concluded. A deadly civil war is raging in the Southeast of the country which pits Ukraine forces against rebels protecting the breakaway ethnic Ukraine- Russian Peoples Republic of Donetsk and Lugansk.

This week, the Global Research News Hour attempts to probe, once again the Ukraine

powder-keg with three great interview guests.

First, Roger Annis, writer, anti-war activist and an editor of the New Cold War website will join us to talk about the human rights situation and the distortions he sees in a recent UN report. He will also touch on the subject of whether or not Jews are being targeted by some of the ultra-nationalist factions being utilized by the Ukraine government. He will also comment on Canada's recent vote against a resolution to combat the "glorification of Nazism."

Next, Ukrainians of Ethiopian extraction are facing increased persecution both from the bombs and shelling, and from the beatings and mistreatment they receive from both the "independists" and from Kiev forces. One of these individuals joins us by phone from Donetsk to explain the plight of Ethiopians and Africans generally living in the country at a time of war. (Transcript follows.)

Finally, James Petras, Bartle Professor (Emeritus) of sociology at Binghamton University, New York, provides his perspective on the geopolitical realities of the region, the possibility of an all-out war between NATO and Russia over the Donbass region, and the prospects for the West backing away from the brink.

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The following is a transcription of an interview conducted with Tefera Alemu, a Ukrainian of Ethiopian extraction on the ground in Donetsk.

He and others of Ethiopian and African descent are being beaten and mistreated by both Kiev forces and the "independists." [The Solidarity Committee for Political Prisoners \(SOCEPP\)](#) is campaigning to assist these people by having them resettled in European or North American countries.

This conversation took place on November 4, 2014.

GR: Now I-I-I'm reading a press release from SOCEPP (Solidarity Committee for Ethiopian Political Prisoners) , and they- they're talking about, uh, the, uh, the Ethiopians and their families, uh, are- are being beaten and mistreated by these independistes?

TA: ...by the, by the rebels. It's a common thing, yeah. You know, we cannot... There is no law. It's now like we're living in a banana republic, you know. No law, anybody can hit you. Anybody can take your children, or organ. You don't have nobody to complain to. Only what you try to do is just trying to hiding in the bomb shelling camp underground. It's a real problem, yeh.

GR: ...It would have started, uh, in, uh, you know, a few months ago when this civil war broke out.

TA: No, it is when the war break out a lot of problems starting. Initially before the war everything is-is okay.

GR: Okay.

TA: Even usually talking about it written in it's not like that you know, the way we are living. But, after the war breaking, you know, different kind of group of people came in, and can, you cannot call them a normal people because, all junkies, and all the group of oh, bandits, and people with uniform. You don't know. You can't even see their faces because everybody always wearing mask. You don't know who is the one talking with you. Everybody with guns, with...off to march and all this kind of..knife and some of that thing. Is very, very scared. Yeah....You don't know who can come for you at any time. Too risky.

GR: ...A few more details about uh, like, actual incidents uh,... The Kiev forces? Are they, uh... I mean, people being beaten? Assaulted?

TA: No, you know, beating people is a common thing now because there's no, there's no law regulating. You know, and when you become a foreigner you are not... can be more problem. Even the children cannot go to school no more. We are all hide in house. Everybody's just hi-hiding underground. No more school. No more eating system. And the weather is becoming cold. You know, it isn't easy when your children are crying "Daddy, what's next?" Such they are thinking. And nobody wants the children to die in this situation, because bombing every time, it's just getting to bombing, shelling. You know. And, And it's not a common thing for children to be any of these other of shooting guns every minute, every second.

GR: Yeah.

TA: No electricity, which is the most worst situation. Sometimes we cannot even charge even the common telephone. We need to go out find someone. Maybe through the soldiers. You have a normal one, they'll take "give me your phone I will charge it for you...I will bring it up for you."

GR: I was kind of under the impression that uh, some of these ultra-nationalists are-are-are committing, you know, really serious, uh, atrocities against uh, people in your population. ..Are you a witness to any of that?

TA: Sure.

GR: Yeah?

TA: Even to me I can tell you I lost my telephone, because someone just beat me and took away my telephone because he's telling me these things belong to the white people, is not belong to the people from Africa. You see? But who am I going to complain to? Even when my children are asking me "Oh Dad, what's happened to you? What's happened to you?" I can't tell them a group of uniformed people or people with (inaudible) attacking me. I can't tell them. I just need to just (inaudible). There's no more book. There's no more law enforcement (inaudible). Just a banana republic. Everybody is going off. Everybody with gun is who have power. If you don't have gun you have nobody. And no more, any international organization is now breaking the end anymore.

GR: ...The government in-in Kiev... You seem to be appealing for international aid. What uh, has there been any attempts to try...

TA: ...I cannot tell you that the government in charge because the rebels in charge which is the pro-Russian group and to them you cannot say they are the government. No they can say they are government in controversy. They are concentrating on the war against the Ukrainian...military than what happens with individuals to anybody, which is the most disgust(ing) part of it.

GR:While the pro-Russian faction is uh, you know, defending and the Kiev government is bombing there's no one there to help the people.

TA: No way.

GR: Yeah.

TA: You know, it's just unfortunately that this situation came, it's a situation where by you can't complain to nobody, what's happened to you. Even presently on the ground, nobody care about if we have the food to eat or we don't have the food to eat. It's not their problem.

GR: Mm-hm.

TA: You know. Even the, where we get our muddy water to drink, it's not their problem. The only luckily we have is that someone, like my wife, 'cause she's a white and a Ukrainian, sometimes you find a situation to get us the water. And you know, maybe I go for water, something can happen to me. Take a lot of risks too.

GR: Okay.

TA: And I cannot even send the children to go out too far.

GR: Mr. Alemu, could you tell me a, another story about uh, a you know uh, an atrocity or racist incident uh, somebody that you know or-or possibly even yourself that would help people understand uh, you know, just how serious this situation is?

TA: People, there's a lot of situations that involve some students even there are kidnapping. You have uh, even the colones are, we don't know, maybe they are but most of them are from African countries. They kidnapped. They working underground. The washing played for the rebel soldiers and all that things like that...Like now, I don't even force myself to go out because it is very, very risky to go outside here. And...communication is to war, you understand. You cannot even using telephone to confirm you from somewhere. " Hey! Are you okay? Are you alive?" Just maybe you try to contact some people maybe once in a blue moon.

GR: Um, has anybody you know been murdered or raped?

TA: Concerning raping I don't know anything about that, but concerning deaths, yeah. There are many. From Sierra Leone, from different African countries. That..what shall we do?

GR:... It's not just Ethiopians, it's Africans...being...

TA: You know, one thing, generally, yeah but presently I don't even remember (inaudible) .

Of course we cannot get in touch with some people. We don't know if they are alive or not alive. That is a biggest problem. Because there is no way to communicate. It's not like it is before you can go to your friend's house or your countryman's house and you know you can assume. And you call him. Now, we don't have telephone now, we don't have to ask one. Everybody, if you have your mobile phone working you are very lucky. Men took over the mobile phone, then, it's not working. ...I cannot even say exactly how many people are alive presently, and who is not alive presently. It's very difficult. That a bad.

GR: Okay, Mr. Alemu, what about uh, I mean...we're based in Canada. Is there any, I mean uh, Russia is a lot closer an-and it seems as if there might be some sympathy there uh, in terms of people affected by the-the violence from Kiev. Do you, have you thought of uh, i-is there a possibility of potentially escaping to Russia? Or appealing for help from Russia?

TA: ...Russia is another country entirely. I cannot be, I cannot be there. And, if people came in from Russia they don't care about foreigner they care about their own people. I mean, about the Russian people living in this area. That is only who people take care of. But some, you know, I've been living here for a long time. Some white friends, like the Russians, you do have some time, I mean, for example, for giving some food, sometimes. My house is blast already, I can...I have a house, I have a country house. It's no more. I have uh, my new house now I can't take it for granted. It's worth crying but what shall I do? It's a war.

GR: You've lost everything.

TA: Yeah. And I cannot say anything.

GR: So...

TA: I have a car that the rebels carry. And as I phoned you they are telling that the car was already blast. I was "What shall I do?" And I'm not the only one that drives a car. But it happened. Who am I going to complain to?

GR: How...?

TA: Everybody's hurting, everybody's lost a house. Everybody's moving. You understand.

GR: So it, you mean people are losing houses to the bombing, uh or or is anybody

TA: Sure!

GR: Yeah.

TA: Hell, almost everybody is losing their houses, that's why we, some of us, underground in living under the (inaudible). Say we are lucky, because we don't even know what's happening to some people up there. That's why even to get people you can " what are, where are you going to find them?" No way. You cannot move freely in the city. It's not, the war continue.

GR: I-is there any th-, a-any other incidence of uh, you know threats from the uh, the population, the nationalists that that maybe you you you think we should , you could mention that would help us understand a little bit more.

TA: ...If you want to talk about something like that ...someone needs to have a more

(inaudible) commission because most of the people you have in uniform, I told you, they are with cover up their faces. You don't know who is who...you know it's a white guy, but you don't even, you cannot differentiate between the Russian and Ukraine when you are (inaudible). Because of that, difficult information to know. But, only one I know, everybody are war people. And they are continuing with the war ...assignment they are having in these places.

GR: ...What do you want the, the, the international community to do?

TA: I want you guys to do for me, not only for me, my country even some for what have people need the situation you understand. Because, it's just to help us get the children out of this situation. If the children can go out or with our family we can find a solution maybe through the Ukraine government or maybe through Russian government, but if even there's ...the opportunity to talk with the rebel leader, if they can find a way to discuss a method to leave the country and get a resettlement somewhere peaceful, it should be better. Because there's a blockades everywhere. You cannot just go moving away from this city...You need to go through some check-ins, probably check-ins and the terror of maybe you are getting information or you are informants from maybe the Ukraine government, you know what that means? It means they can put you somewhere andyou lose your life. That's why someone just needs to leave as low profile, now. And you know every day since it's getting worse and the weather is changing. I'll bet the best news, if we can get a resettlement, to be the best to do solution.

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