

**IGOR BUTMAN IS JAZZING UP WAR IN UKRAINE**

***Collaboration in Crimes against Humanity***

In March 2014 Igor Butman joined a host of other Russian cultural figures in signing an open letter in support of President Putin’s policies on Crimea and Ukraine, advocating the annexation of Crimea by Russia. (The letter is available at the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation: <https://www.mkrf.ru/press/news/deyateli-kultury-rossii-v-podderzhku-pozitsii-prezidenta-po-ukraine-i-krymu20171009103201/?fbclid=IwAR3iO-ohZ8wpX4DyVX8EHDwqGUV4YhbslosyuZJB0LDHsf5dtrjwl9U_gBk>. The English translation is available here: <http://russianartists4war.com/letter/>. Mr. Butman’s signature is number 63).

The invasion of Ukraine and occupation of Crimea have since resulted in more than 13 thousand dead, including 298 passengers of the Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 murdered by a Russian BUK missile, hundreds of thousands injured and millions displaced. However, in almost six years since and despite mounting human and infrastructure costs, Igor Butman continues to be an active and devoted supporter of Vladimir Putin’s presidency and global policies.

Although he became a naturalized United States citizen, Igor Butman remains an official confidante of Vladimir Putin as a member of the Supreme Council of the leading Russian party Yedinaya Rossiya (United Russia), notorious for its endorsement of Russia's anti-gay law; the law prohibiting international adoption of Russian children (resulting in thousands of orphans aging out of the system to be released to fend for themselves on the streets); and numerous other laws contrary to international norms of human rights and freedom of expression.

Even though he is obviously involved in politics, Mr. Butman signed the letter not as a politician, but as a musician. This involvement of artistic intelligentsia in the political actions of the government is clearly intended to whitewash the military invasion of Ukraine in the eyes of Russian society. This type of propaganda campaign via "collective open letters" has a long tradition in Russia and is rooted in the USSR and Stalinism.

**We find this involvement of arts into politics, especially to support war, aggression and a large-scale devastation absolutely unacceptable in the modern civilized world.**

Although he signed the letter willfully and voluntarily, Mr. Butman has no desire to appear to his Western audience as an official supporter of annexation of Crimea and a war promoter. To the contrary, he hypocritically portrays himself as a messenger of peace through jazz music. As a personal confidante of President Putin, Mr. Butman conveniently draws the line between his political support for the authoritarian regime and playing music that for almost a century has been a symbol of freedom of expression.

In accordance with EU and US sanctions that prohibit conducting business in illegally occupied territories, the U.S. Department of State advised Butman that he, as a U.S. citizen, should not perform in Russian-occupied Crimea. Butman ignored the advice and performed there, effectively providing smokescreen for the ongoing oppression, imprisonment and murder of Ukrainian people in Crimea – particularly those who are Crimean Tatar – by dominant Russian forces.

As of November 14th 2016, the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, has recognized Putin's policies in Ukraine and Crimea as crimes. In light of this development, Igor Butman is on-record as a supporter of war crimes. In the West, Butman is successfully employed to establish “soft power” through cultural influence to promote Vladimir Putin's image (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/06/arts/russia-oligarchs-arts.html?fbclid=IwAR21FQKhdTsVUbo3L03C3Ph8_jmdvoMBUosAaoipX1HtqVWRTDk8hHh-ZiY>).

Mr. Butman is entitled to his own political views. But it is an outrage for him to use his artistic reputation to praise and whitewash Kremlin’s invasion of Ukraine.

Our protests, held internationally, are ethical rather than political. They are intended to inform the international community of the hypocrisy, cynicism, and perfidy of the signatories of that despicable letter, which gives sanctimonious approval to actions which have deliberately inflicted thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of injuries, and displaced millions of people and violated the human rights of tens of millions.