

## **Do not legitimise the occupation: civil society appeals to the Lasar Segall Museum in Brazil**

Ukrainian and international civil society organizations learned through open sources of the intention to establish a partnership between the Lasar Segall Museum (São Paulo, Brazil) and the so-called “Russian Gallery of Arts” (“Российская галерея искусств”) – a museum institution established by a [directive of the Government of the Russian Federation](#) on the temporarily occupied territory of the Crimean Peninsula, in the city of Sevastopol.

This initiative raises serious concern as it may constitute a direct challenge to the norms of international law, particularly the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the non-recognition of unlawful territorial acquisitions. As reaffirmed in numerous United Nations General Assembly resolutions – including [Resolution ES-11\\_1 of 2022](#), which was supported by Brazil – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea remains an integral part of Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. [President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has also publicly reiterated Brazil’s support](#) for Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

Engagement with institutions, established and operated by the Russian Federation as the occupying power, is inconsistent with international humanitarian law and with universally recognized standards in the field of cultural heritage and museology. Such cooperation risks contributing to the de facto recognition of the occupying authorities, facilitates the legitimization of violations of international law, and may be interpreted as contravening the principle of non-recognition of territorial gains acquired through the threat or use of force.

Since the onset of the occupation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian Federation has actively pursued a cultural policy on the occupied territory aimed not at preserving heritage, but at ideologically reconfiguring it in a manner beneficial to the occupying power. Museum institutions operating under occupation have engaged in unlawful and destructive archaeological excavations at more than 1100 sites, [including the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora](#). Approximately [14 million cultural properties](#) have been removed, many of which, including works by Ukrainian artists, have been transferred to museums within the Russian Federation, where they are used to [promote narratives](#) that [justify the occupation](#) and [deny the cultural identity](#) of both Ukraine and the Crimean Tatar people.

Any form of international cooperation with such entities, even indirect, may therefore be regarded as a breach of the principle of due diligence in international partnerships and may inadvertently support the policies of occupation, undermine cultural rights, and distort historical truth. Such actions may also be inconsistent with Mexico’s international obligations as a UN Member State committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for international law.

We firmly believe that the Lasar Segall Museum, as part of the Brazilian Institute of Museums and operating under the authority of the Ministry of Culture of Brazil, upholds these shared values. On behalf of Ukrainian civil society, we respectfully urge the Museum to

refrain from any form of cooperation with cultural institutions established or controlled by the Russian Federation on the occupied territories of Ukraine, and to abstain from participation in events involving such entities. Such a decision would represent a principled act of solidarity with the international legal order, with affected communities, and with those working to safeguard cultural heritage under conditions of armed conflict.

- 1) NGO “Crimean Process”
- 2) NGO “Regional Center for Human Rights”
- 3) Human Rights Centre ZMINA
- 4) NGO “Media Initiative for Human Rights”
- 5) International Partnership for Human Rights
- 6) NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin”
- 7) NGO “Crimean Human Rights Group”
- 8) Public Union “Human Rights House Crimea”
- 9) Ukrainian Legal Advisory Group
- 10) Human Rights Educational House – Chernihiv
- 11) NGO “Crimea SOS”

