



United States Mission to the OSCE

International Day on the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

As delivered by Daniel Wartko, Chief Arms Control Delegate
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 22, 2023

As we mark the “International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence” on June 19, we pay tribute to those women, children, and men of Ukraine who are victims of sexual violence committed by members of Russia’s forces. We applaud the survivors for their courage in stepping forward to tell their stories. We also applaud the members of civil society, support services, law enforcement agencies, local government, and international organizations for their tireless work to hold the perpetrators to account. We share their determination and will continue to support their work.

These survivors are not mere statistics – these humans are mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, grandparents, children, friends who were simply sheltering in their homes when Russian Federation soldiers arrived and raped them; or who were forced to stand naked in Russia’s filtration camps; or whose genitals were shocked while they were being interrogated in detention centers. These survivors continue to endure the ongoing trauma of Russia’s unjust war, cruelly compounded by the brutal attacks on their physical and mental well-being. This trauma will continue long after the war ends.

Mr. Chair, we know that Russia is employing sexual violence on a broad scale. Multiple OSCE Moscow Mechanism reports have documented instances of sexual violence by Russia’s troops. In its March 15, 2023 report, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine found that “members of Russian armed forces committed the war crime of rape and sexual violence, which can amount to torture.”

Russia’s civilian officials and each individual soldier who committed such war crimes must be held to account. The OSCE has a crucial role to play in providing survivors of conflict-related sexual violence with support and to document these crimes. We stand with survivors today and every day in our commitment to ensuring their stories are told and justice is upheld.

###