



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Political Counselor Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We were encouraged this week to see continued progress at Stanytsia-Luhanska, where long-awaited repairs to the bridge continue and a pedestrian bypass has facilitated safer access. For civilians who have endured years of difficult crossings, these recent developments represent real progress that could ease the burdens they have shouldered during this multi-year conflict fomented by the Russian Federation.

The United States is cautiously optimistic that renewed disengagement in Zolote and Petrivske can follow the progress in Stanytsia-Luhanska. As such, we hope to see steps that guarantee the safe withdrawal of forces and materiel from these areas and call on the Russian Federation to exert discipline over the armed groups under its control. Only when *both* sides have demonstrated their commitment to a sustained reduction of violence can we expect to see improvements on the ground.

The situation in Donbas remains volatile. Just this week, civilians, including children, were injured by hand grenades and landmines in non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. The Special Monitoring Mission continues to face restrictions on its Monitors' movement. While both sides

have a responsibility to ensure the Monitors' safe and secure access throughout Ukraine, we note that the majority of these restrictions occur in non-government controlled areas.

We call upon Russia and the forces it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside to afford the Monitors the access they need to fulfill the Mission's mandate.

This week also saw multiple instances of signal interference and small arms fire directed at the Mission's UAV assets. The UAVs are an integral component of the Mission's work and provide critical information that broadens our understanding of developments on the ground. We call upon both sides to refrain from interfering with, or attempting to damage, the Mission's UAV assets.

The United States remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in Crimea. In 2014 when Russia illegally seized Crimea, it contravened all ten of the Helsinki Final Act's founding principles, including the idea that no country should change the borders of another by force. Crimea is part of Ukraine, and Russia's attempts to assert otherwise are rejected by the international community.

Last week, the United States urged other delegations to take a close look at the United Nations Secretary General's "Report on the Situation of Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine." The report confirms matters repeatedly raised at this Council for the past five years: Russian occupiers in Crimea engage in abuses with impunity, and the Russian Federation refuses to answer for these abuses.

In his report, the UN Secretary General calls on Russia to 1) "uphold its obligations under international human rights law in Crimea and... international humanitarian law," 2) "ensure ... access of international human rights monitoring missions and human rights non-governmental organizations to Crimea," and 3) "ensure unimpeded freedom of movement between Crimea and other parts of Ukraine." The UN report highlights what it describes as Russia's ill-treatment, torture, and enforced disappearance of Ukrainians in Crimea, committed with impunity.

It reminds us that at least 11 disappearances remain unresolved, with one activist found dead; there have been 186 raids on Crimean Tatar homes, schools, mosques, and businesses. Security services reportedly use beatings, electric shock, mock executions, and sexual violence to obtain false confessions. The report also highlights allegations of undue restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, as well as restrictions on freedom of thought, conscience, religion and undue restrictions on journalists.

The UN Secretary General calls on Russian authorities “to respect the right to peaceful assembly and to lift restrictions imposed on the Crimean Tatar community, including the ban on the Mejlis, in order to preserve its representative institutions.” The report highlights what it describes as illegal restrictions on linguistic rights, forced conscription of more than 18,000 Ukrainian citizens into Russia’s armed forces, and forced deportation of Crimean residents.

The international community must bear witness and document Russia’s daily abuses in occupied Crimea. The United States joins the calls for access for independent, international organizations to monitor the human rights situation there. We call on Russian authorities to grant immediate access to Crimea to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, ODIHR, and other OSCE bodies, as well as the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and other international mechanisms that seek to monitor the situation on the ground in Crimea. Russia’s assurances that “all is well” in Crimea are not credible, nor is its pledge to respect human rights there. The report of the UN Secretary General makes clear that the international community is not deceived by the Kremlin’s false assurances. The United States and other members of the international community will not let developments in other parts of the globe deter our attention and focus from what is going on in Crimea.

The United States will stand with the people of Ukraine as they build a strong and successful democracy – one that sees all of its territory, including Crimea, fully restored.

Mr. Chairperson, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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