



## **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 Ambassador James S. Gilmore III  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 16, 2020

More than seven months have now passed since the Normandy Quartet leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France met in Paris on December 9 and agreed on measures aimed at supporting a peaceful resolution of this Russian-manufactured conflict that has claimed the lives of more than 13,000 people.

The implementation of a full and comprehensive ceasefire – which the Normandy leaders agreed to before the end of 2019 is now more than six months overdue. In the interim, the residents of eastern Ukraine have endured thousands of ceasefire violations that have caused dozens of casualties and damaged homes, churches, schools, and critical infrastructure.

The SMM this week reported the death of a woman in Zaitseve, bringing the total number reported by the Mission this year to 55 civilian casualties, including eight fatalities. This is simply unacceptable. We are deeply concerned by the July 14 killing of a Ukrainian medic, also in Zaitseve, who was shot by Russia-led forces while attempting to retrieve a fallen fellow soldier. This incident was reported today in some detail, and raised by Ukraine and also by Canada and others. The cause of all casualties in eastern Ukraine, military and civilian, can be traced to Russia's failure to instruct the forces it arms, trains, finances, leads, and fights alongside to implement a comprehensive ceasefire, as agreed at the December 9 Normandy summit.

As Ambassador Cevik stated last week, it is time for Russia to turn its political commitments into action. We were pleased to hear that Ukraine and Russia made some progress toward demining in the most recent meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, but there is still a long way to go toward agreement on such key deliverables as new Disengagement Areas and new Entry Exit Crossing points, based on humanitarian criteria.

Russia's continuing restrictions on SMM monitors crossing the Line of Contact, or even travelling between the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics, are a cynical exploitation of this global health emergency that we are all dealing with, aimed solely at obstructing the monitors' work and concealing Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine. Ambassador Cevik instituted stringent protocols to protect the monitors and the communities in which they work, and these measures have been reported to be 100

percent successful. We commend SMM's leadership for its continued diligence and the assurance it can give to the communities in the non-government occupied areas.

In the past week alone, the SMM reported 15 instances of movement restrictions, nearly all of which occurred in Russia-controlled territory, as well as daily denials of SMM monitors to cross the Line of Contact. Continued interference with UAVs and the willful damage and destruction of SMM cameras in Russia-held territory is another component of the Russian government's multi-pronged effort to weaken the mission's overall monitoring capacity. I would remind you all that Russia is a member of the OSCE, the SMM operates on their behalf also.

It is time for Russia to match the political will demonstrated by Ukraine and cease its efforts to hamper progress in peace negotiations and on the ground in eastern Ukraine. Instead, we only see Russia engaging in obstruction. It is time to bring down the curtain on this "theater of the absurd," to borrow a phrase from our Russian colleagues.

Only when Russia upholds its Minsk commitments can we hope to see a lasting peace and an end to human suffering in eastern Ukraine and we can move beyond this misfortune and misadventure of foreign policy that we have seen in the east.

We remain deeply concerned by the situation in Crimea. Russian occupation authorities continue to subject Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainian citizens to harassment, arrest, disappearances, detention, and imprisonment. More than 80 political prisoners from Crimea are held by Russia. Last week, we called your attention to the latest wave of armed searches in Crimea, in which Russia conducted 11 searches and arrested seven men. These cases add to the rising number of Ukrainian citizens held by Russia subject to lengthy prison sentences and deplorable living conditions in detention centers in Russia and Russia-run detention centers in Crimea.

Why is all this activity going on in Crimea? Is it maybe the case that Russian efforts to illegally consolidate Crimea are not going quite as well as have been implied? We recall the bad history of the Stalin period and the former communist regime, that actually deported Crimean Tatars away from their homeland in order to bring about this consolidation; but the Russian government has left behind that regime, and looks toward the future with more optimism than the old Joseph Stalin days. We call upon Russia to continue to deliver on that promise for the Russian people.

We call your attention to testimony by Muslim Aliyev, a Crimean Tatar who was sentenced to 19 years in prison on "extremism" charges for his Muslim faith and opposition to Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. Aliyev is reportedly being held in a basement of the Taganrog detention center. He told his attorney that when Ukraine's Consul General visited, his living conditions were somewhat normal, but after the Consul General left, he was placed in a different cell and his living conditions worsened, which he views as an attempt to put pressure on him after he refused to vote in Russia's plebiscite. This statement today reminds people that the world is watching. These behaviors do not simply disappear when they are outside of the spotlight, but that the spotlight remains on Russian behavior in this occupied territory.

We call on Russia to immediately release all Ukrainian citizens it unjustly holds. We once again condemn the Kremlin's flagrant disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial

integrity demonstrated by holding a “vote” for Russia’s plebiscite on Ukraine’s soil. It is time for Russia to end its occupation of Crimea and withdraw its forces and materiel from eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

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, because of the impact that it has on European security and the discussions we have here at the OSCE and the principles of the Final Act. 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 Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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