



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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Over the last week, we've continued to bear witness to the Russian Federation's brutal attacks against Ukraine, its civilians, and its food and agriculture infrastructure. Since this body last met to discuss Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, we've seen Russia attack Ukraine's port infrastructure on the Danube. Overnight, Russia launched over 40 missiles and drones at targets across Ukraine. One missile hit port infrastructure in Odessa, killing one. We also learned yesterday that the International Atomic Energy Agency has found land mines at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant which is currently under Russia's temporary control. I want to repeat that. Land mines at a nuclear power plant.

However, today, I want to focus on the suffering Russia is inflicting on Ukraine's civilians. Russia's brutal war threatens their lives, their freedom, and their country's existence. I would like to tell you about Viktoria, Olena, and Anya, and how Russia's war put them and their families through hell.

According to reports, elementary school teacher Viktoria Andrusha was taken by Russia's forces after they ransacked her parents' home in Chernihiv oblast. Her captors transferred her from Ukraine to a prison in Russia, where she was punched and beaten with batons of metal, wood, and rubber. She was told Ukraine had fallen and she would die alone in prison. She was told that her family had forgotten her, and that her Ukrainian language was useless. She was told her captors would slash her with knives until she was unrecognizable. Propaganda blasted on a television above her, and she was forced to memorize Russia's national anthem and other Russian songs. After six months of this treatment, Viktoria was removed from the prison and exchanged alongside others for three Russian soldiers. While Viktoria has been freed, Russia continues to detain an estimated thousands of Ukrainian civilians.

Fifty-year-old Olena Yahupova, a civil administrator married to a Ukrainian soldier, was detained by Russia's forces in Zaporizhzhya. They taped a plastic bag over her face, beat her on the head, and tightened a cable around her neck, demanding that she provide information about her husband. They dragged her around town and attempted to make her identify pro-Ukraine locals. Olena was trotted out before cameras twice: first when she gave a forced statement to a news channel from Russia with a gun to her head, and a second time when she was filmed walking toward Ukrainian territory as supposed proof that Russia was releasing civilians in its custody. Olena's few seconds of freedom were a lie, a lie that ended as her captors returned her to her cell, which she left only to dig trenches alongside other Ukrainian

civilians, sometimes for as long as 24 hours at a time. Though Olena eventually escaped, hundreds of others remain on the front lines in Russia-occupied territory, forced to dig trenches or mass graves as part of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Anya, a 14-year-old girl, was living in a convalescent center in Donetsk when Russia's forces occupied the area. When explosions blew out the building's windows and doors, Anya and other children were forced to take shelter in a basement where she comforted the younger children by reading them fairy tales. A Ukrainian volunteer eventually found the children and placed them in an ambulance headed to Zaporizhzhya. Tragically, the vehicle was intercepted at a checkpoint and rerouted to Russia-occupied Donetsk. Anya was told she was to "take rest" in an institution near Moscow for three weeks. Instead of a short-term stay, Anya was forced to live with a foster family in Russia. She was also coerced into participating in a weekly class called Conversations About Important Things, which attempted to condition Ukrainian children to be proud of Russia. The last time Anya was able to contact the outside world, she said she ached to go back to Ukraine. Regarding being moved into Russia, she said, "I didn't want to go. But nobody asked me." In Ukraine, Anya's mother, Oksana, continues to this day to desperately search for information on where her daughter is being held in Russia.

Dear colleagues, the United States is acting to hold to account the individuals and the entities that are helping equip and finance the Kremlin's cruel war against Ukraine. Last week, the United States imposed sanctions on nearly 120 additional individuals and entities. Our actions, these actions, will further degrade Russia's capability and capacity to prosecute its war. These sanctions will restrict Russia from accessing critical materials, inhibit its future energy production and exports, curtail its use of the international financial system, and crack down on those complicit in sanctions evasion and circumvention. We're also continuing to work with the international community to hold to account those who order and carry out war crimes. This is why the White House announced we will share evidence of these crimes with the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, as Vaclav Havel once said, "the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and human responsibility." As many leave Vienna for the summer recess, I ask you all to reflect on how the people of Ukraine are given no rest from Russia's war. They are given no reprieve from its terror, no reprieve from violence, and from pain. It is our responsibility to use this time to think about what more we can do to support the people of Ukraine and to hold the Russian Federation to account

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