



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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As we approach the end of the year, I want to reflect on what the Chair's motto means for the people of Ukraine. Our Chair-in-Office, Foreign Minister Osmani, was right in adopting the motto "It's About People." This organization's work *is* about helping people to live better lives, whether it be by preventing the trafficking of human beings, protecting the rights of national minorities, or supporting post-conflict reconciliation.

That is why it is so jarring when we witness one participating State, Russia, stop treating people as human beings. It is one thing to speak about disrespect for principles of international law embodied in the UN Charter or the Helsinki Final Act pertaining to the behavior of states. But it should be and indeed must be shocking for all of us to consider the systematic mistreatment of human beings. Or, as the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine recently described it, the "profound disregard towards human dignity."

So today, I would like to again describe what's at stake for those still living in the parts of Ukraine under Russia's occupation, including those facing torture and gender-based violence. I will caution you that what I am about to describe from the Commission's report is deeply disturbing. It is difficult to recount, and it will be difficult to hear. But we owe it to those who have endured these atrocities to bear witness to these crimes and not shrink from confronting this appalling reality simply because it makes us uncomfortable.

In its report released on October 20, the Commission of Inquiry detailed how torture carried out by Russia's forces in Ukraine has been "widespread and systematic." Torture that has led to long-term physical and psychological trauma for both victims and their loved ones.

Again, to truly grasp the impact this war is having on people, we have to describe the experiences of individual human beings. According to the Commission's report, one person who suffered at the hands of Russian Federation torturers said "every time I answered that I didn't know or didn't remember something, they gave me electric shocks. [...] I don't know how long it lasted. It felt like an eternity." The victim described not being able to walk properly for days afterwards and suffering severe, long-term anxiety. Compounding this cruelty, her Russian captors locked the victim's husband in the neighboring cell to make him *listen* while they tortured her. When describing this experience, he said "I will *never* forget her screaming [in] pain."

The Commission also detailed how Russian Federation forces raped Ukrainians as part of their torture methods. Rape victims included a pregnant 16-year-old, and an 83-year-old woman, among others. Such disregard for humanity is hard to fathom. Men have been raped and threatened with genital mutilation. Some victims reported rapes at gunpoint and rapes carried out under the threat of death. In some instances, rapes were endured to protect loved ones held hostage by Russia's forces.

In one case, and I want to directly cite the report here, "three Russian soldiers came to the house of a married couple who had stayed behind to look after [their] grandmother. They beat the 52-year-old man and all three perpetrators raped the 50-year-old woman in turns. The couple reported the rape to the Russian armed forces commander. Neighbors recounted that after this, three different soldiers looking for the woman who reported the rape, went to the couple's house and shot dead both of them."

In a separate case, a 75-year-old woman was sheltering alone in her home. When Russia's forces arrived, one soldier forced his way into her home, hit her on her face, chest, and ribs, and strangled her as he was interrogating her. He ordered her to undress and when she refused, he ripped off her clothing. He then proceeded to cut her abdomen and raped her several times. In addition to the consequences of the rapes, she suffered several broken ribs and teeth.

The savagery detailed in the Commission of Inquiry's report should have no place in our world. It is the antithesis of what this organization stands for and what we try to do to help people live better lives.

By expelling Russia's forces from over half the land that was seized since February 2022, Ukraine's defenders have allowed us to learn the truth about the atrocities committed by Russia's occupying forces. Yet violence like this continues to this day in the areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia's forces. On October 27, Russian soldiers reportedly used machine guns with silencers to massacre a family of nine, including two small children, while they slept. All because the family refused to be forced out of their home.

This culture of violence and oppression also finds expression back in Russia. On October 29, the world watched as an anti-Jewish mob stormed an airport in the Russian Federation, searching for Jewish people arriving on an airplane from Israel. This act of hate, bigotry, and intimidation has been compared by some to pogroms from past centuries. Those who speak out against Russia's war and violence, like Vladimir Kara-Murza, continue to be targeted, threatened, and imprisoned.

Mr. Chair, since we all work in an organization designed to help people, it's clear we must continue to do our utmost to hold the Russian Federation accountable for its assault on human dignity. At the same time, we must keep looking for new ways to support the people of Ukraine to overcome the traumas Russia's war has inflicted upon them.

On November 1st of last year, we did just that when the OSCE launched its Support Program for Ukraine, or SPU. Since then, 30 participating States have rallied to support Ukraine through this initiative. It's delivering *real results* for Ukraine. The SPU is starting to help the children of Ukraine, and their families, deal with psychological trauma caused by the war. It's empowering Ukraine to more effectively tackle demining challenges caused by

Russia's war. It's training a new generation in Ukraine to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and protect their human rights.

I'm proud that the United States is such a strong supporter of Ukraine and the SPU. We'll continue to do what we can to help Ukraine defend its land and its people. That's what this organization was created to do.

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