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## 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  
January 30, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States joins the European Union and all of its aligned countries in support of Ukrainian statement on this issue that has come before the Permanent Council once again this evening.

Russia's continued aggression in eastern Ukraine and repeated contraventions of Helsinki Final Act principles in other parts of Europe are the single greatest threat to peace, security, and stability in the OSCE region. Ending Russia's ongoing aggression and ensuring its full implementation of the *Final Act* remain the number one priority of the United States. This ongoing aggression by the Russian Federation undermines the fundamental documents and principles of the OSCE itself.

To find a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to this conflict, it is imperative that all of us support the key mechanisms that will help us achieve that goal. The work of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission helps provide the factual basis that informs the negotiations within the *Trilateral Contact Group (TCG)* and the *Normandy Quartet*. The *Trilateral Contact Group* met again yesterday, and we encourage its members to continue their work toward pragmatic solutions, as difficult as those meetings may be.

They have our support, and so does the SMM. As the United States and others have done in recent weeks, we encourage all participating States to contribute to the SMM's funding *via* voluntary contributions. We must provide the SMM the resources it requires to fulfill its mandate. Any contributions that are made by member countries are a political statement; lack of funding is, likewise, a political statement.

For the past few months in particular, our Russian colleagues have asserted that the members of this Council are somehow confused about what is happening in eastern Ukraine. They allege that we ignore the “real facts.” They present a picture far removed from the reality on the ground. Russia claims that the conflict that Moscow started and sustains by sending its forces and materiel across the border into Ukraine is an “internal” one, an internal conflict. On one point I think we can agree: the members of this Council engage in two vastly separate discussions regarding the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Whereas the overwhelming majority of the participating States here have a clear, consistent, and common understanding of the situation in eastern Ukraine, Russia instead remains engrossed in a completely divergent chronicle.

Russia asserts that the criticisms we levy against them in this Council could be damaging to the political process laid out in the *Normandy Quartet* and the *Trilateral Contact Group*. To the contrary, the United States supports the efforts of the *Normandy Quartet* and the *Trilateral Contact Group*.

We recognize that it is within the framework of these bodies that true progress toward a permanent ceasefire can be made. We applaud the recent positive developments, including disengagement in three areas, the December prisoner exchange, the December 9 *Normandy Quartet* summit in Paris, and the subsequent agreements to identify new disengagement areas and crossing points.

We recognize that this process is complex and is going to take time and political will. We cannot accept, however, Russia’s distortion of the truth. Progress in the *Trilateral Contact Group* and the *Normandy Quartet* does not alter the fact that the situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine remains dangerous and volatile, as was previously stated.

In recent weeks, the Special Monitoring Mission’s reports have described a worrying deterioration of already fragile ceasefire conditions. The Monitoring Mission this week reported 3,650 ceasefire violations. Some ceasefire! Civilians continue to be injured by shelling or explosive devices. The Monitors’ movement was restricted on 35 occasions, all in areas controlled by Russia-led forces. Again this week, there were multiple instances of small-arms fire, or jamming, directed at the Mission’s UAV assets.

We call upon Russia to direct the forces it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside in eastern Ukraine to abide by commitments Russia made at the Paris summit: implement a comprehensive ceasefire, cease the obstruction of the Monitoring Mission, and afford Monitors the freedom they need to fulfill the Mission’s mandate. We call on both sides to refrain from any attempts to interfere with or damage the Mission’s valuable UAV assets paid for by the participating States of this Permanent Council.

Mr. Chairman, Russia maintains a chokehold on speech and expression in occupied Crimea—an integral part of Ukraine. We report regularly at the Permanent Council about the over 80 individuals who have been detained, tried, and imprisoned for speaking the truth about the situation in Russia-occupied Crimea. Their plight is only a small part of the bigger, bleak picture. Many of the names are by now familiar to us—individuals like human rights defender Emir Usein Kuku, Crimean Solidarity movement leader Server Mustafayev, and blogger Nariman Memedeminov—but many others suffer in obscurity.

In spite of the dangers they face, these brave activists—and others like them—have risked their liberty, health, even their lives, to bring the truth about Russia’s occupation to light. We are troubled by reports that Crimean Tatar blogger Rustem Shaikhaliyev and two of his co-defendants have been in punitive psychiatric detention in Russia’s Rostov region since at least January 16. Several other Crimean Tatars who have been imprisoned for their political views are reportedly being denied medical care for severe health problems.

We are concerned by reports that Crimean Solidarity activist Jamil Gafarov was denied critical medication and other treatment for his heart and kidney conditions by Simferopol prison authorities since late October, resulting in his hospitalization on January 28. We call on prison authorities in Russia’s Rostov region to allow Crimean Solidarity activist Server Zakiryaev to receive proper medical testing and treatment for tumors detected last week by prison medical staff. Russia should immediately release all of those it has detained in retaliation for their political views or peaceful religious practice.

Mr. Chair, 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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