



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Political Counselor Elisabeth Rosenstock-Siller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Saturday will mark five hundred days of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. Five hundred days since the Russian Federation turned its back on the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, rejecting the Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue to choose war over diplomacy. Five hundred days of the people of Ukraine being terrorized by large-scale missile attacks, with many forced into an Orwellian "filtration" system and subjected to torture and ill-treatment, disappearance, and other unconscionable treatment by members of Russia's forces. Five hundred days of irresponsible rhetoric and behavior risking nuclear safety and security.

Recent reports chronicle the latest alarming consequences of Russia's seizure and militarization of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant in Russia-occupied territory. Over these five hundred days, Russia has shocked the world with its treatment of plant staff and reckless disregard for nuclear safety. News reports Russia has mined the plant and is planning a "false flag" incident are deeply concerning, and the militarization of the site continues to jeopardize the nuclear safety and security of the reactors, and the ability of plant personnel to respond to incidents or accidents. Russia must withdraw from the plant immediately and return it to Ukrainian control safely.

Over the last five hundred days, we have witnessed the staggering human cost of Russia's war. Just hours ago, Russia's cruise missiles killed four and injured 32 in an attack on Lviv. Last week alone, 13 people, including three children, were killed by Russia's missiles that hit a popular shopping center and restaurant frequented by journalists, volunteers, and families in Kramatorsk. More than 60 people were injured. Earlier in the month, Russia's missiles killed six people and wounded 30 when they struck a residential building in Kryvyi Rih. Three people were also killed in Kyiv from falling debris from 20 missiles that Ukraine reportedly intercepted. These are just a few of the many attacks the Russian Federation relentlessly conducted against Ukraine in June.

A report released last week from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights gives additional insight into the on-the-ground violence Russia's forces committed in areas of Ukraine they have controlled or occupied since February 2022. According to the report, Russia's forces perpetrated at least 864 cases of detention in occupied Ukraine through "filtration," although local organizations report this figure to be much higher. In the documented cases, over 91 percent of civilian detainees held by Russia described being subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence. The report also documents how Russia's forces executed at least 77 detained civilians and used mass detentions to intimidate populations into cooperating with occupation forces. We all know these numbers are likely just the tip of the iceberg, which is why Russia provided no access to OHCHR, despite OHCHR's repeated requests and in contrast to Ukraine's full cooperation.

The brutality, the pace, and the scope of Russia's violence over the last five hundred days can make it challenging to comprehend the individual human tragedy that each loss of life represents.

So today, I would like to talk about the lives of Yuliya, Anna, Tihran, and Mykyta. Yuliya and Anna Aksenchenko were twin 14-year-old sisters who had recently graduated from eighth grade. Like many teenagers, even those living through a war, they wanted to be out in the world living life. This brought them to a popular pizzeria in the center of Kramatorsk on Sunday night. Instead of a simple night out grabbing pizza with friends and then heading home to their parents, both Yuliya and Anna were killed when Russia's Iskander missile struck the restaurant. Separately, we have previously talked about Tihran Ohannisian and Mykyta Khanhanov, 16-year-old boys living in the temporarily occupied city of Berdiansk. Since September, Tihran and Mykyta were intermittently detained, interrogated, and tormented by Russia's forces for allegedly planning to sabotage the railway system. Tihran was reportedly taken from his home, held incommunicado for five days, and tortured. It saddens me to report both Tihran and Mykyta were shot to death on June 24 in occupied Ukraine. Five hundred days of Russia's war created the violent context for these four children to die.

Mr. Chair, over the last five hundred days, we have also witnessed Russia's weaknesses exposed. Sixteen months ago, Russia's forces were on the doorstep of Kyiv, thinking they'd take the city in a matter of days, thinking they would erase Ukraine from the map as an independent country. We all see this for the hubris it was. Now, as we saw a little over a week ago, Russia has faced its own instability. As President Biden and other world leaders have made clear, this is an internal Russian matter, but it too was a consequence of this misguided war. The OSCE's concept of indivisible security recognizes that the insecurity *in* or *of* one participating State can affect the well-being of all. This kind of insecurity was on full display when Wagner forces marched towards Moscow. It should cause us all concern.

In sharp contrast to the division and infighting in Russia, over the last five hundred days we have witnessed Ukraine's resilience, determination, and heroism. It is these qualities that empowered Ukraine to win back over fifty percent of the land Russia seized in the early days of its full-scale invasion. It is these qualities that empowered Ukraine to liberate more territory over the past four weeks in its counteroffensive than Russia was able to capture during the entirety of its winter-spring offensive. And it is these qualities that will lead to Ukraine's victory.

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