



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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On June 19th, we will mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Together, we hope to raise awareness of the need to end conflict-related sexual violence, honor victims and survivors, and pay tribute to those who have devoted their lives to ending these crimes. Russia's brutal prosecution of its war against Ukraine demands our attention.

We continue to see credible reports depicting the horrors Russia inflicts on Ukrainians living in occupied territories and on those it has detained. These reports document rape and other acts of sexual violence against Ukrainian civilians and soldiers by Russian forces. These horrific acts are not random or spontaneous. They are part of the Kremlin's widespread and systematic attacks against Ukraine's population.

Russia's use of conflict-related sexual violence spares no one. There is credible evidence that Russia's soldiers perpetrate these heinous acts in parts of Ukraine they occupy against women and girls, and also against men and boys held in detention settings.

Incidents of sexual violence against women and girls by Russia's forces are too numerous to catalog. A 2024 report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights recounted many, all of them shocking. One details the experience of a married couple in Kherson Province in September 2022. Three Russian soldiers came to their home and forced a 52-year-old woman to follow them to a nearby house. There, they beat and tortured her. Then two of the soldiers raped her in turns. According to the victim, this lasted for hours.

Russia's forces also perpetrate sexual violence against the prisoners of war they hold. The UN High Commissioner's Office reported on March 26 that 39 of 60 recently released Ukrainian POWs disclosed they had been subjected to sexual violence during their internment. This included attempted rape, threats of rape and castration, beatings or electric shocks to genitals, and repeated forced nudity.

One POW described to the UN High Commissioner's Office how Russian officials forced him to undress, applied electric shock to his genitals, and then threatened to rape him with a police baton and to cut off his testicles.

These are not idle threats. In July 2022, a video was posted to a pro-Russian Telegram page showing a man in a Russian uniform using a blade to castrate another man in a Ukrainian military uniform. The victim was pinned down with his hands tied behind his back.

Madam Chair, rape and conflict-related sexual violence must not be used as a tactic of war. They are, in fact, prohibited by the universally ratified Geneva Conventions. They may constitute war crimes. Geneva Convention signatories, including Russia, are responsible for preventing and responding to violations committed by their forces. They must ensure compliance through their chain of command.

This year, as we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we condemn the Kremlin and its forces for inflicting widespread and systematic sexual violence on Ukrainians under its control. This cannot stand. We must act.

The United States supports Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General through the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group to ensure justice and accountability for atrocity crimes. We will also continue to support international investigations into these crimes. We encourage the OSCE to address this issue with tailored efforts through the Support Program for Ukraine.

We must all continue to support comprehensive, victim-centered justice for people affected by Russia's atrocities. This effort will take time and require continued coordination, but we remain dedicated. And we must keep the needs of victims and survivors front of mind as we continue our collective efforts.

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