



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims
of Enforced Disappearances

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1334th meeting of the Permanent Council,

02 September 2021

Madam Chairperson,

On August 30, the world observes the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. Enforced disappearance is a serious crime and, in certain circumstances defined in international law, a crime against humanity. It results in a deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.

On this occasion we wish to draw attention of the Permanent Council to the problem of enforced disappearances in the Russia-occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and parts of Donbas.

One of the first victims in Crimea was Rishat Ametov, who on 3 March 2014 went out into the main square of Simferopol to protest against Russian invasion of the peninsula. He was kidnapped in broad daylight and his body with signs of torture was found on the outskirts of Simferopol ten days later.

Overall, under the Russian occupation since 2014, there have been at least 44 victims of enforced disappearances in the temporarily occupied Crimea and Sevastopol. 6 of them were later found dead, 19 were released, 3 abductees were unlawfully convicted, and 1 person was extradited by Russian occupation administration. The fate of 15 persons is still unknown. The vast majority of these people are pro-Ukrainian activists who openly opposed the Russian occupation.

In the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, 258 people, including 67 servicemen and reservists, are considered missing according to the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights.

Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, provides procedural guidance in 112 criminal proceedings on 173 cases of enforced disappearance, illegal imprisonment and kidnapping.

In the vast majority of cases, the investigation established facts testifying to the involvement of the Russian occupation administration in the enforced disappearances. Numerous cases of intimidation of relatives of disappeared persons and witnesses were also recorded. According to the OHCHR, the Russian occupation administration does not effectively investigate any of the committed crimes.

The facts of enforced disappearances in the occupied Crimea were also brought by Ukraine to the attention of the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the respective interstate claims against the Russian Federation. It is important to note in the context of Russia's responsibility as an occupying power, that the ECHR recognized that Russia established effective control over the territory of Crimea since 27 February 2014.

We call on Russia to provide information on all persons subjected to enforced disappearance and bring to justice those who committed or ordered these crimes.

We demand that the Russian Federation fulfil its obligations as an occupying power in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including with regard to the guarantee of the right to life, liberty and security of persons.

Ukraine also calls upon the OSCE Chairpersonship, institutions and participating States to increase efforts in order to hold Russia to account for its acts of aggression and human rights abuses, and release all Ukrainian citizens it has unlawfully detained.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.