



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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As I am taking the floor for the first time today I'd like to briefly read President Biden's statement on the attempted assassination of Slovakia's Prime Minister. He said: "I am alarmed to hear reports of an attack on Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. Jill and I are praying for a swift recovery, and our thoughts are with his family and the people of Slovakia. We condemn this horrific act of violence. Our Embassy is in close touch with the government of Slovakia and ready to assist."

Russia's ground attacks in the Kharkiv region in this past week are a plain reminder of what its war is fundamentally about: a territorial pursuit with average Ukrainians paying the costs. These operations, which Ukraine is valiantly withstanding, come after weeks of strikes meant to cripple Ukrainian cities and Kharkiv in particular.

On the night of May 7th, Russia fired more than 70 missiles and drones in its relentless large-scale barrage against Ukraine's critical infrastructure. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, Russia used these weapons to target the country's power system, striking energy generation and transmission facilities in six oblasts throughout the country.

The May 7 attacks were the fifth such bombardment in two months. Here's what Amnesty International had to say about them, "in what may be cumulatively one of Russia's most destructive series of strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, several power facilities were attacked, resulting in further suffering and disruption to Ukrainian civilians. Deliberately attacking civilian infrastructure, such as power stations and electricity supplies, and causing overwhelming harm to civilians is a violation of international humanitarian law." This is all part of an escalation by the Kremlin to wield energy as a weapon.

As in previous assaults, Russia tried to permanently damage Ukraine's infrastructure, hitting difficult-to-repair gas storage facilities and power generation assets. Ukraine's main private energy operator confirmed three thermal power plants were seriously damaged. State grid operator Ukrenergo warned of rolling emergency blackouts as a result of the May 7th strikes.

This salvo is a stark reminder of what President Putin seeks to achieve through force – to break the spirit of the Ukrainian people. These attacks on Ukraine's electricity generation capacity follow two winters in which Russia sought to weaponize winter to freeze Ukraine into submission. Now, Russia appears to be trying to paralyze the country through the deprivation of basic necessities year-round. Take a moment to think about what this means

for the people of Ukraine. No running water. No sanitation. No access to essential medical services.

In Kharkiv, one of Russia's strikes on the local energy supply crippled the city's air raid siren, a wartime necessity to protect civilians. The mayor of Kharkiv said Russia was trying to make Kharkiv "uninhabitable."

Yet, the residents of Kharkiv and civilians across Ukraine show their undaunted determination to carry on with life despite the destruction and the precautionary nationwide blackouts to conserve energy. Ordinary citizens and businesses, from cafes to hairdressers to factories, are finding ways to survive this siege, proving the remarkable resilience of the Ukrainian people.

Madam Chair, Russia knows that Ukraine's energy system will be a cornerstone of the country's economic recovery. The World Bank has estimated Russia's attacks have caused over 135 billion dollars in damage. Russia's latest attacks will only add to this bill, not to mention the associated human costs. Just think about that. This is why it is so urgent that we continue to discuss this aspect of the war here at the OSCE. We cannot, and will not, let Russia avoid accountability for these attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

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