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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 30, 2023

This Saturday marks one year since we first began to understand the extent of the mass killings, rapes, and torture that members of Russia's armed forces committed last year in Bucha. To quote the July Moscow Mechanism report, "a series of torture chambers separated by concrete walls were discovered in a summer camp in Bucha...The tableaux suggested to Ukrainian investigators that prisoners were tortured here: tied to the bedsprings and interrogated; strapped to the plank and waterboarded. In that chamber, five dead men dressed in civilian clothes were discovered. They were covered with burns, bruises, and lacerations. Also, in Zabuchchya, a village in the Bucha district, 18 mutilated bodies of murdered men, women, and children were discovered in a basement: some had their ears cut off, while others had their teeth pulled out." Colleagues, over 400 murdered civilians were eventually discovered in Bucha.

Russian Federation forces have not only brutalized Ukraine's civilians. Russia's forces have caused incalculable damage and destruction to sites recognized internationally as the country's 'unambiguously Ukrainian cultural touchstones.' And we have to ask ourselves, why? Given the reported shortage of Russian munitions one must ask why Russian forces have destroyed so many cultural sites with zero military value. We have seen hundreds of confirmed incidents of physical damage to these sites and potential damage to many more. Monitoring by the Conflict Observatory program notes potential damage to nearly 700 monuments and memorials, over 200 museums, archives, and libraries, as well as 500 religious sites, including places of worship and cemeteries.

Russia's efforts to suppress and deny Ukraine's culture is also evident in Moscow's efforts to "russify" Ukraine's children. Schools in those parts of Ukraine still under Russia's control are forced to adopt a Kremlin-designed curriculum which demonizes Ukraine, indoctrinates children to welcome Russia's attempted annexation of parts of their country, and attempts to impose a Russian national identity, often against their will. Russia's puppet authorities have stripped all textbooks of the symbols of Ukraine's statehood within those schools they control. The Kremlin has also resorted to bringing teachers from Russia into occupied areas of Ukraine to fill the void created by the exodus of Ukrainian teachers who have refused to force Russia's lies onto their students. Marina, a Russian-language schoolteacher, explained her refusal to teach this new so-called curriculum, saying, "I realized that to cooperate, I would definitely have to tell kids that Ukraine doesn't exist, that the Ukrainian language is small and nothing compared to the Russian language."

Mr. Chair, for over a year, we have had to watch the Russian Federation carry out brutal attacks on the people of Ukraine, indeed on Ukrainian identity itself. We have witnessed the Russian Federation's fixation on undermining democratic Ukraine's independence through the reeducation of its children. And we have seen how the Russian Federation has worked to deport or transfer thousands of Ukraine's children into a network of camps located in parts of Ukraine that Russia occupies as well as across all of Russia, reportedly manipulating personal identifying data to ensure these children can't find their way back to family members or legal guardians in Ukraine.

As Tetiana Pylypchuk, Director of the Kharkiv Literary Museum, put it, they are "killing the custodians of this memory, us, Ukrainians. It seems that this isn't working for them. That's why they bury books in occupied territories, in practical terms burying our voices and our narratives. All Russian war crimes in Ukraine are crimes against culture. They want to kill us, first of all, as the hosts of Ukrainian culture, not as enemies that threaten their existence." These crimes must be fully investigated and prosecuted along with all the other crimes, and indeed the crimes against humanity that have been committed by Russia's forces. And just as we did in Nuremberg in the last century, the United States fully support the development of an international tribunal dedicated to prosecuting the crime of aggression against Ukraine. Colleagues, we need to continue our efforts here to expose the Russian Federation's actions in Ukraine, especially with respect to Ukraine's children. We all need to do more to meet Ukraine's urgent needs created by Russia's war of aggression. We must meet this moment.

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