



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

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

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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Thirty-three years ago this week, participating States assembled to sign the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. They declared the era of confrontation and division of Europe had ended. They hailed a continent that was liberating itself from the legacy of the past.

Yet, instead of celebrating this anniversary, we witness the Russian Federation – with the complicity of Belarus – showing utter contempt for the spirit and letter of the Charter through its war of aggression against Ukraine. Unlike in 1990, Russia's current leaders see a Europe whole free and at peace not as a goal, but rather as a threat to the Kremlin's revanchist political ambitions.

Russia's war against Ukraine not only contravenes the Charter of Paris, it also runs completely counter to the aspirations and expectations of the people of Europe.

Instead of advancing prosperity through economic liberty, today we see Russia destroying Ukraine's farmland and attacking its agricultural infrastructure and ports, impeding Black Sea shipping, and exacerbating global food insecurity. We also witness Russia weaponizing winter in its attempt to leave Ukraine cold, dark, and without water. In attacks conducted on November 16, 17, and 18, Russia sent waves of drones to strike energy infrastructure sites and an oil depot in the Odesa and Chernihiv oblasts, according to Ukrainian military sources. One of the attacks cut power to more than 400 towns and villages across the country. Ukraine also reports Russia could be stockpiling missiles for additional winter assaults on energy infrastructure. What would the signatories of the Charter of Paris have said about such appalling behavior.

Instead of seeking equal security for all our countries, Russia is trying to tear up the rulebook that has made all of us more secure as it attempts to redraw borders by force. Russia has for years undermined the European security architecture meant to prevent conflict and is now making war on another OSCE participating State. Russia's occupation of some parts of Ukraine's territory has lasted nearly ten years, and those areas Ukraine has liberated continue to suffer under Russia's relentless shelling, missiles, and drone strikes.

Instead of protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms – what the Charter of Paris rightly calls “the first responsibility of government” – Russia engages in a crushing crackdown at home and its forces in Ukraine continue to commit unconscionable atrocities and abuses.

Since we last met, we have learned more details of Russia's abhorrent taking of children from Ukraine's territory to Belarus and Belarus's participation in this scheme.

On November 16, Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab published findings outlining the Russian Federation's systematic removal of children from Ukraine to Belarus. The research shows Russia transported more than 2,400 children between the ages of six and 17 from Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine to Russia and onwards to 13 facilities in Belarus. The report concludes that in Belarus, authorities put many of these children through political and cultural re-education – and even military training – to serve the political interests of Belarus and Russia.

According to the findings in the report, the highest levels of both governments coordinate these removals, and each country's security forces and Belarusian ultranationalist militant groups facilitate these activities. Further, the report details how officials involved target children from vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, children from low-income families, children with military parents, and purported orphans, all potentially without the consent of their families or a clear path to return home. This relocation operation exists alongside a broader campaign against Ukraine's civilians directed by Russia. Russia has deported thousands of Ukraine's civilians to Russia, including children who have been forcibly separated from their families.

Mr. Chair, these revelations are only the latest examples of how Russia has turned its back on the Charter's hopeful vision for a new Europe, which we all pledged back then to build. We will not be dragged back to a Europe cruelly divided by force and fear however. We cannot accept neocolonial demands for a sphere of influence and subjugation. We reject Russia's dark vision for the OSCE region where an aggressor can dictate the actions of its sovereign neighbors under the guise of "indivisibility of security." We are steadfast in our commitment to the values of the Charter of Paris. They are as relevant today as the day we signed on to them, especially as independent, democratic Ukraine fights to defend its territory and its people and to secure its chosen future of integration with Europe.

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