



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

# **Five Years of Illegal Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 28, 2019

On February 27, 2014, Russian troops seized the parliament building in Simferopol, a critical point in Russia's invasion and occupation of Crimea. Three weeks later, Russia held a sham referendum in Crimea in an attempt to justify its aggression. Russia's actions contravened all ten of the Helsinki Final Act's principles, undermined other international principles, including those in the Paris Charter of 1990, and violated international obligations, including the UN Charter.

The position of the United States is clear, Mr. Chair. On July 25, 2018, Secretary Pompeo condemned and rejected Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. The United States will maintain this policy until Russia returns Crimea to Ukrainian control. Allow me to quote Secretary Pompeo:

*Russia, through its 2014 invasion of Ukraine and its attempted annexation of Crimea, sought to undermine a bedrock international principle shared by democratic states: that no country can change the borders of another by force. The states of the world, including Russia, agreed to this principle in the United Nations Charter, pledging to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. This fundamental principle — which was reaffirmed in the Helsinki Final Act — constitutes one of the foundations upon which our shared security and safety rests.*

*As we did in the Welles Declaration in 1940, the United States reaffirms as policy its refusal to recognize the Kremlin's claims of sovereignty over territory seized by force in contravention of international law. In concert with allies, partners, and the international community, the United States rejects Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea and pledges to maintain this policy until Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored.*

*The United States calls on Russia to respect the principles to which it has long claimed to adhere and to end its occupation of Crimea. As democratic states seek to build a free, just, and prosperous world, we must uphold our commitment to the international principle of sovereign equality and respect the territorial integrity of other states. Through its actions, Russia has acted in a manner unworthy of a great nation and has chosen to isolate itself from the international community.*

Mr. Chair, the U.S. Declaration and subsequent support from partners and Allies sent a clear signal of the permanence of the international community's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

For the past five years, the United States has brought to the attention of the Permanent Council reports of Russia's serious abuses in Crimea. Russian occupation forces engage in extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, raids, disappearances, arbitrary detention, physical abuse, torture, deportation, harassment, forced psychiatric hospitalization, and arbitrary prosecution. At a side event on Crimea and eastern Ukraine earlier this week here at the Hofburg, we heard directly from the true heroes of civil society about these very same concerns.

The United States calls on Russia to end its repression of the Crimean Tatars and others who dare to oppose Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. We reiterate our call on Russia to immediately release all of the 70 plus Ukrainian citizens it has wrongfully imprisoned.

The United States affirms its full support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We echo the calls of our EU, and other partners, for international monitors, including from the SMM, to have full and unhindered access to the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, as Secretary Pompeo stated yesterday, "Russia attempted to up-end the international order, undermined basic human freedoms, and weakened our common security.... Russia's use of force against a peaceful neighbor must not be tolerated by reputable states."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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