



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 31, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This past week, we cautiously but enthusiastically—welcomed steps toward disengagement at Zolote. The successful commencement of disengagement, as well as continued progress on the long-overdue bridge construction project at Stanytsia-Luhanska, are further evidence of tangible results from the Zelenskyy administration's commitment to peacefully resolving the conflict. We commend Ukraine on these efforts, including endorsing the Trilateral Contact Group's agreement on the so-called "Steinmeier Formula."

Regrettably, Moscow has not demonstrated a similar commitment to achieving peace. Russia continues to stall on meeting its security commitments in eastern Ukraine and delay a meeting of the Normandy Quartet leaders. Russia failed to withdraw any forces, weapons, and equipment from Ukraine—as stipulated in the Minsk agreements and implicit in the "Steinmeier Formula"—this past week it again sent convoys into Ukraine that were observed by the OSCE's Border Observation Mission. Unfortunately, the mission was unable to determine the contents of these vehicles, and we seriously doubt Russia's characterization of them as "humanitarian" in nature. As detailed in yesterday's FSC meeting, there is a demonstrated correlation between previous such "humanitarian convoys" and spikes in attacks and shelling by Russia-led forces.

As always, the civilian population in eastern Ukraine suffers the most from Russia's choices. In recent weeks, mines and unexploded ordnance injured more than ten civilians, including seven children, against a backdrop of increased ceasefire violations in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. The OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission has already reported 41 civilian casualties, including nine fatalities—from these types of explosions—so far this year.

Russia and its proxies systematically restrict the movement of Special Monitoring Mission personnel, which limits the Mission's ability to observe the conflict and fulfill its mandate. According to the most recent weekly report, all 21 restrictions during this reporting period occurred in Russia-controlled territory, and we call upon Russia to direct its proxies to cease their harassment of the Special Monitoring Mission.

The Special Monitoring Mission's unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, were again subjected to small-arms fire and signal jamming. Such attempts to interfere with the Mission's UAVs are unacceptable, and we call upon both sides to ensure their forces do not hinder—or damage—these valuable assets.

Mr. Chair, the United States joins OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir in condemning the October 22 decision by a “court” in the so-called “Donetsk People's Republic” to convict *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* journalist Stanislav Aseyev on dubious espionage and extremism charges and sentence him to 15 years in prison. We are troubled by reports that he has been abused in detention and call on Russia to release all those detained for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are also concerned by reports that Russia-led forces in Donetsk also hold *RFE/RL* contributor Oleh Halaziuk.

The United States remains seized with the UN Secretary General's disturbing report on the abuses in Russia-occupied Crimea. The United States calls on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea, cease its repression of the Crimean Tatars and others who oppose Moscow's attempted annexation of Crimea, and release all wrongfully imprisoned Ukrainian citizens. We are troubled by occupation authorities' October 28 decision to charge Ukrainian activist Oleh Pryhodko with terrorism and weapons possession, charges that human rights monitors maintain have been fabricated in retaliation for his political views. Pryhodko, who has been in detention since October 10, has faced years of harassment under the occupation, including several raids on his home to seize banned Ukrainian literature and

symbols, and interrogations for refusing to remove Ukrainian license plates from his car.

Mr. Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in affirming that our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. The separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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