



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 Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 29, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Last week at this Permanent Council meeting, participating States discussed Russia’s role in the conflict in Ukraine—specifically, its continued obstruction of efforts to end the conflict it unilaterally started. Once again, participating States rejected Russia’s attempt to pass itself off as “a neutral mediator.” The *Minsk agreements*, the OSCE more broadly, and the G7 have all identified Russia as a party to this conflict.

I agree with my esteemed Russian colleague’s statement last week that the only way to resolve this conflict is through peaceful means. Such means would have to include the Kremlin fulfilling its commitments and ceasing its aggression. Despite the reduction in ceasefire violations noted by the Chair, which we of course welcome, we are alarmed by recent reports from the SMM, which recorded 3,600 ceasefire violations, including 427 explosions. Those are not peaceful means. Also included in the report was an account of two UAVs targeted by Russia-led forces. Those are not peaceful means.

The SMM regularly registers the use of weapons that should have been withdrawn according to the *Minsk agreements*—there were 37 violations from July 19th through the 25th alone. The *Minsk agreements* are clear. What is not clear is how any state claiming to desire the resolution of this conflict through peaceful means can continue to fuel the conflict by arming, training, leading, and fighting alongside forces in eastern Ukraine. While at the same time, Russia’s Spokespeople and “Chief Negotiators” rhetorically deny the state of Ukraine the sovereign right to charter its own political future.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, harm to its civilian populations, and political coercion are not confined to the Donbas region. Exercising the rights to freedom of expression and association are not crimes. Practicing one’s religion is not a crime. Yet we continue to see countless efforts by Russia’s occupation authorities to harass, intimidate, and arbitrarily detain residents of Crimea for doing just that. We are appalled by the FSB raid conducted last week of the home of Crimean Tatar Ali Ibragimov, which resulted in the three-day detention of his son Abdulla. It is no coincidence the raid was carried out on the Muslim religious holiday of Eid al-Adha. Abdulla is facing administrative charges for “publicly displaying the attributes or symbols of extremist organizations” in response to his allegedly posting in 2013 on social media—before the occupation had even began—an image of a symbol for Hizb ut-Tahrir. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an organization that is legal in Ukraine, but Russia has decreed it as “extremist.”

We call on Russia to cease its harassment of Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and members of other religious and ethnic groups and to release all political prisoners from Crimea that it holds. We further call on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea and to remove all its forces and equipment from eastern Ukraine.

Madam Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to 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 our Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments and returns full control of Crimea to Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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