



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for convening this Special Permanent Council which is fully justified and timely.

As we noted yesterday, the Russian Federation has continued to demonstrate its complete lack of interest in ending its war of conquest. Quite the opposite. Russia's attacks and war mongering have made clear its goals remain the same: obliterate Ukraine and subjugate its people.

As I noted yesterday, starting on December 29th, Russia launched waves of missiles and drones against Ukraine over the New Year holiday in its largest aerial bombardment of the war. That first night, Russia fired over 150 missiles and drones, killing at least 32 people and injuring more than 160. The damage to civilian and critical infrastructure was enormous. Reports indicate that Russia's bombardments hit residential and office buildings, schools, a regional oncology center, a maternity hospital, a thermal power plant, a museum, and a shopping center. These buildings are all places where high numbers of civilian casualties could, and should, be expected.

Then, on January 2nd, Russia reportedly launched over 100 missiles and 35 Iranian supplied drones at Kyiv, Kharkiv, and other cities. The combined casualty count from the holiday attacks is well over 45 people killed and 280 injured. Among those killed was Dr. Lyudmyla Shevtsova, an 85-year-old professor who survived World War II, only to now be killed by Russia's forces. In the small town of Pokrovsk, the attacks trapped two families – six adults and five children – under the rubble of their destroyed homes. Days later, some were still buried in spite of the herculean efforts of Ukrainian rescue teams.

And now, on January 23rd – just three days ago – Russia launched 41 missiles in an air raid that went on for more than two and a half hours, the longest since the January 2nd attacks. Eighteen were killed and at least 130 wounded in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk. Kharkiv was the hardest hit, with nearly 11,000 residents disconnected from the electricity grid in the dead of winter. Multiple children were among the wounded and hospitalized, and a sanatorium for sick children was destroyed.

Madam Chair, these attacks on civilian structures and residential areas must stop. They are unacceptable and they are war crimes.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has found that Russia's acceleration of its aerial bombardments has led to a sharp increase in civilian casualties. The UN Mission verified that in December alone, Russia's attacks led to the death or injury of at least 592 Ukrainian civilians, a more than 25 percent increase in civilian casualties over the preceding month. The UN Mission believes the actual figure, however, is much higher. Colleagues, what do these relentless attacks and mounting casualties tell us about the Kremlin's interest in peace?

War mongering by Russia's leadership and leading propagandists also demonstrates a continuing thirst for war. On January 17th, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev said yet again, as I noted yesterday, that Russia's core war aims included the elimination of Ukrainian statehood and independence. Medvedev claimed that Ukraine's very existence as an independent state was "mortally dangerous."

Pro-Kremlin propagandist Dmitry Steshin put it a different way. Steshin said Russia was not interested in peace because "we would be leaving this abscess [meaning Ukraine] for the next generation to pop." He went on to explain that "not even a whiff of Ukraine's statehood must remain... or we'll have to start over."

This attitude goes right to the top of the Kremlin. In his end-of-year press conference, Putin declared he will continue his war until Ukraine is defeated or capitulates to his demands. On January 16th, he again dismissed diplomacy as "an attempt to motivate us to abandon the gains that we have realized over the past year and a half. But this is impossible." Clearly these are not the words of a leader interested in peace.

Madam Chair, we need to listen when Putin and others indicate they're interested in war, not diplomacy or dialogue. The Kremlin's disinterest in peace is fundamentally about its refusal to respect the independence of Ukraine and the path the Ukrainian people have freely chosen of democracy, the rule of law, and full integration with Europe and the Transatlantic community. This was, and is, a sovereign Ukrainian decision. Putin and his cronies appear unable to accept that Ukraine has chosen its own path. Week after week, the support of this room for Ukraine and its decision is crystal clear. As long as Russia wages its war of choice, we will condemn its unconscionable attacks against the people of Ukraine. We are with Ukraine in its fight to defend its sovereignty and freedom and will continue to rally partners around the world to do the same.

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