



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
UNDER AGENDA ITEM:**

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

1561st MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Monsieur le Président,

Chaque semaine au sein de ce Conseil, nos collègues russes font des déclarations qui ne correspondent pas aux faits établis et qui rappellent des discours que nous pensions appartenir au passé. Ce malgré les faits établis et reconnus par tous dans cette salle.

En 2022, la Russie affirmait qu'elle n'envahirait pas l'Ukraine et tournait en dérision ceux et celles qui disaient le contraire.

Après l'invasion à grande échelle, la Russie a ensuite tenté de réécrire l'histoire en présentant ses actions comme une réponse nécessaire et prévisible à ses préoccupations de sécurité.

Nous sommes maintenant à la cinquième année de la guerre d'agression illégale, non provoquée et injustifiable menée par la Russie contre l'Ukraine.

Depuis le début de cette agression, la Russie nie systématiquement des atrocités pourtant abondamment documentées, les qualifiant de fausses ou de mises en scène. Allant même jusqu'à rejeter le blâme sur l'Ukraine, et même d'autres Etats participants.

C'est dans ce contexte que, la semaine dernière, mon collègue russe a accusé le Canada d'affirmer, sans preuve, que la Russie cherche à effacer l'identité ukrainienne.

Examinons donc les faits, bien documentés, sur lesquels s'appuient le Canada.

Mr. Chair,

Last year, Russia's own Ministry of Education issued an order removing Ukrainian language instruction from schools in illegally occupied Ukrainian territory, citing "changes in the geopolitical situation." It followed years of pressure, threats, and punishment aimed at parents and teachers who tried to keep Ukrainian education alive.

Human Rights Watch documented parents being threatened if they refused to enroll their children in Russian run schools or continued Ukrainian education remotely.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented the confiscation of Ukrainian books and artwork, the removal of Ukrainian cultural symbols from public spaces, and the forced enrollment of children into Russian youth organizations designed to inculcate loyalty to the Russian state and denigration of all things Ukrainian. People expressing Ukrainian identity were detained and abused.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly documented children being forced to speak Russian, sing Russian patriotic songs, and undergo military training.

Amnesty International documented families and teachers living under Russian occupation risking reprisals for continuing with Ukrainian education, with some parents choosing to hide their children to avoid them being taken to “re education” institutions or for adoption in Russia.

This is what Russia calls “de-nazification.” In reality, it is a clear and documented attempt at erasing a Ukrainian national identity.

Russia also claims to be a defender of Russian speakers. This claim was made, in part, to justify the illegal annexation of Crimea and the subsequent full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia then went on to level predominantly Russian speaking cities such as Kharkiv and Mariupol. Is this how Russia protects language rights?

This illustrates a broader point.

Canada does not make accusations without facts. Russia does.

Our position is straightforward. We respect international law. We respect borders and sovereignty. We expect others to do the same.

This approach also extends to language.

In Canada, the protection of our official languages is constitutional. We also invest in Indigenous language revitalization because we recognize the damage caused by forced assimilation policies. Internationally, we promote our languages legitimately, without coercion.

Nevertheless, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs labeled us “two-faced double-dealers” for our said “duplicity in language policy” by accusing Canada of eradicating bilingualism in Ukraine.

We categorically reject these serious and unfounded allegations.

Our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is consistent with international law and our international obligations.

This being said, Canada remains open to addressing credible concerns of human rights violations, raised in good faith; however, we will not engage with accusations that fail to meet basic standards of accuracy.

Mr. Chair,

Canada supports Ukraine's right to defend itself against Russia's illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of aggression. We will continue to do so in words and deeds.

Thank you.