



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Since we met last week, Russian Federation attacks on Ukraine have been unrelenting. Early in the morning on May 28th, Russia launched 54 Iranian-made kamikaze drones against Ukraine. Before dawn on May 29th, Russia's forces launched 40 cruise missiles and another 35 Shahed drones against Ukraine. Then, later the same day, Russia launched another 11 ballistic missiles at Ukraine. In the early morning hours on Tuesday, the Russian Federation launched an additional 31 drones against Ukraine, the third wave of missile and drone attacks against Ukraine within 24 hours and the 17th such attack in the previous 30 days. And again, early this morning, Russia attacked Kyiv with 10 Iskander ballistic missiles, killing three people, including one child. Ukraine succeeded in intercepting the vast majority of attacks, but the attacks still caused death, destruction, and panic. Videos show schoolchildren in Kyiv running through the streets in search of shelter and safety. Natalia Nevidoma, a Kyiv resident, saw teachers shepherding children to safety. Of these children, she said, quote, "how they cried, how they screamed. You know, it's so painful and scary."

It's tragic we must continue to talk about Ukraine's children living through war, violence, and death as Ukraine today celebrates its Childrens Day. However, it's important to give voice to the individual experience of children, and like my colleagues from the EU and the UK today I am raising the cases of Tihiran Ohannisian and Mykyta Khanhanov. Tihiran and Mykyta are 16-year-old boys living in the temporarily occupied city of Berdiansk. Last week, both were charged by Russia's occupation authorities under Article 281 of the Russian Criminal Code with allegedly planning to sabotage the railway system in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region. Russia's forces and proxy officials have been tormenting both boys since September last year. Tihiran was reportedly taken from his home and held incommunicado for five days. During this time, he was beaten and subjected to electrical shocks. The lawyers Russia's occupation authorities appointed to defend the boys have also reportedly not acted in their defense, creating even more fear the boys will receive only a Potemkin trial which could result in ten to twenty years of imprisonment.

We've previously discussed in this room the Russian Federation's systematic mistreatment of Ukrainian children. We continue to see reports of Russia's occupation officials in Ukraine forcibly transferring children within Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine and/or deporting Ukraine's children to Russia. A Conflict Observatory study earlier this year stated that at least six thousand of Ukraine's children, and likely many more, were being held by the Russian Federation in so-called summer camps and subjected to pro-Russia re-education and military training. Russian Federation officials have also openly and brazenly bragged about these forced transfers of Ukraine's children. Russia's treatment of Ukraine's children is organized, it is intentional, and it is deeply cruel. Russia needs to tell the international community what children it has taken, where they are, and how they will be returned to

Ukraine. Let me repeat this. Russia needs to tell the international community what children it has taken, where they are, and how they will be returned to Ukraine. We must all remain seized with this issue. The OSCE can play an important role in helping to return the children Russia has taken, in line with recommendations included in the recent Moscow Mechanism report.

Mr. Chair, it's clear that no one wants this war to end more than Ukraine and its people. You've all heard us say that any decisions about negotiations are up to Ukraine. Russia can end this war today, but the Kremlin has yet to demonstrate any meaningful interest in a just peace. Quite the opposite. While others are focused on a way to end this war, Russia is attacking a sovereign country with drones and missiles, hitting apartment buildings, healthcare facilities, and schools, killing and injuring scores of civilians, and it is simultaneously forcibly relocating Ukraine's children.

Russia remains the sole obstacle to peace in Ukraine. Russia and Russia alone can end this war today.

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