



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

### **Statement on russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1425<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
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#### **Mr. Chairperson,**

The Children's Day, marked today in Ukraine, started tragically for my country.

At 2.45 AM russia attacked Kyiv for the 18<sup>th</sup> time since the beginning of May.

Ten cruise and ballistic missiles Iskander were fired at the city.

Reportedly, there were just six minutes between the air alert and the first blows. Six minutes dividing life and death.

This attack left 11 wounded and claimed the lives of three, including a mother with her 9-year-old daughter.

This new child's death is a stark reminder of the adverse impact russia's aggressive war continues to have on children. In different aspects.

Recently, Ukrainian journalist Inna Varenysia shared a personal testimony about what it means to lose her partner and the father of their son.

«Mom, where is the daddy? I'm calling my dad. Daddy, when are you coming?»

According to Inna, Levko often asks these questions over the switched-off phone tightly presses to his ear.

His father was Maks Levin, a famous Ukrainian photo-journalist. He was one of the first journalists killed by russia after the full-scale invasion began.

A year ago, Maks Levin and his friend were cold-bloodedly executed.

Levin's body was found lying on his back. Three bullet impacts were visible, one in the chest and two in the head.

His murder was one of the first piece of evidence testifying to the existence of the execution lists prepared by the russian leadership to pacify the Ukrainian nation.

How many more children were doomed by russia to lose their beloved ones according to these lists?

Maks Levin was 40 years old when he went missing on 13 March 2022.

Levko just turned 2 years and 1 day on the day of his father's violent death.

The only memories he will have about his father are photos and some video records. "Mommy, tell me a fairy-tale. About the darkness".

According to Inna, Levko sees the darkness in a book about the war. He loves this book and really wants to win this war, so he hits the dark pages with little hands with all his might, especially if there are tanks. "Mommy, can I beat the war?" – Levko often asks.

This is how the war affects the smallest who only start to explore the world.

The story of this one family tells a lot about what Ukrainians have to pass through. How many children have lost a father or mother? Or even both?

As a father, I cannot find any words to advise how to comfort these children. There is no court where their loss can be ever remedied.

Like the loss of 484 families whose children were killed by russian soldiers.

Not to speak about those over the last nine years of the russian aggression in Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea.

As a diplomat, I know that we can prevent new losses by enhancing Ukraine's defensive capabilities, ensuring the restoration of Ukraine's borders, and bringing russia to account.

In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of children across entire Ukraine are being traumatized due to constant air alerts as russia has intensified its missile and drone attacks on our country.

A video that became viral two days ago with small school-children running to the shelter and screaming during the Monday attack on Kyiv is a showcase of how russia is terrorizing people.

Then russia fired 11 Iskander missiles of ballistic and cruise types.

It was just a six-hour pause between the day and night attack, when 40 Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles and 35 Iranian drones rained on Ukraine.

First, russia wants to deprive people of sleep and then submit them to fear during the day. To do that russia tests different tactics of terror – by sending a record number of drones – 59, as it did on Sunday night; by combining drones, cruise missiles and ballistics; by cutting time between attacks, for instance, there were three attacks in 24 hours.

In total, only Kyiv witnessed 18 attacks since the beginning of May. However, other cities are also under fire.

Like Dnipro, where russia hit a hospital on Friday, leaving four people dead and 32 wounded, including two boys aged 3 and 6.

Like Kivsharivka in the Kharkiv region where the Iskander strike on Monday wounded among others a pregnant woman and two children.

“- How did we even survive there? - I do not know”. This was a morning dialogue between two children in one of Kyiv's districts, where on Tuesday night drone's debris damaged a high-rise building leaving one person killed and four injured.

Missile attacks should never be a topic for children to talk about. However, this is a reality faced by our children living next to the aggressor and terrorist state.

Apart from psychological terror, russia continues the world's largest child abduction operation in modern history.

Thousands of Ukrainian children are the victims of russia's genocidal policy. Their identity is erased. They are subjected to forced adoption, re-education and even military indoctrination. Furthermore, this deportation campaign exposes children to other human rights violations, like trafficking and sexual violence.

This will leave them with both visible and invisible scars that could last a lifetime.

However, russian terrorists have a ready wit in finding new ways for blackmailing.

As it became known, on May 24, 2023, two teenagers, Tihiran Ohannisian and Mykyta Khanhanov, both born in 2006, in the temporarily occupied city of Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region, were charged by russia with accusations of allegedly planning to sabotage the railway.

The indictment was preceded by several months of bullying, detention, and torture of the children and their families.

This is a part of russia's other criminal campaign – taking civilian hostages. This must be stopped and all detained must be immediately and unconditionally released.

**Dear colleagues,**

Children remain the most vulnerable group in the context of russia's war. They need our protection. Yesterday "Bring Kids Back UA action plan" was presented during the opening of the Child Rights Protection Center, aiming to prosecute russia's crimes against children.

Upon President Zelenskyy's instruction, the plan was developed to unite the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities, foreign governments and international organizations to bring all young Ukrainian citizens back home.

The plan covers such issues as the return of deported children; their reintegration and socialization; recording of russia's crimes; public awareness-raising, development of family upbringing infrastructure etc.

We believe the OSCE can also contribute practically to this endeavour. We have a clear-cut mandate to do that.

Over the years, the participating States, including in the 1990 Copenhagen Document and 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration, have reconfirmed that "no one should be deprived of his/her nationality arbitrarily", as well as reconfirmed child's "right to special protection against all forms of violence and exploitation", and commit to "actively promote children's rights and interests, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations".

Therefore, we believe that the OSCE will keep a close eye on taking civilian hostages by russia, in particular children.

Furthermore, the OSCE's expertise would be valuable in pooling resources to increase our capacities to trace deported children.

As I already mentioned, russia's war will leave deep mental scars on children's souls forever. So, there is room for the OSCE to help them to cope with this challenge.

In this regard, we are also grateful to the OSCE leaders, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Secretary General and PA leadership, for their condemnation of russia's intensified missile attacks.

This was a very timely and right to point call. I cannot but agree that these attacks "achieve nothing but indiscriminate death and destruction, including on civilians – women, men, boys and girls". I believe the OSCE will continue to react to new attacks.

At the same time, we have to do our best to end these attacks with:

- greater production and supply of air defense systems and ammunition to Ukraine;
- increasing sanction pressure on russia and closing loopholes allowing russia to smuggle semiconductors for new missiles;
- final recognition of russia as a terrorist state.

As Minister Kuleba rightly put it, "Together, we will defeat another russian terror strategy".

This must be our reply to the question often asked by 3-year-old Levko.

**I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**