



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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Today we mark the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet Union's mass deportations of Crimean Tatars, part of a policy of forced relocation of entire ethnic groups that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people. I said resulted but in fact it is resulting as it is going on right now. Today, Putin's occupation authorities continue to target Crimean Tatars for repression and persecution, including on religious grounds, unjustly arresting and imprisoning hundreds, and banning Crimean Tatar organizations. Our thoughts are with Crimean Tatar Mejlis Deputy Chairman Nariman Dzhelyal, Crimean Solidarity Coordinator Server Mustafayev, and all other political prisoners held unjustly by Russia's occupation authorities in Crimea. A court in the Russian city of Rostov today just yesterday "sentenced" three Crimean Tatars -- Oleksandr Sizikov, Alim Sufyanov, and Seyran Khayredynov -- to prison terms ranging from 12 to 17 years for allegedly belonging to an extremist organization. They should be released immediately.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russia continues its single-minded effort to seize more of Ukraine's territory through brute force. Perhaps recognizing the futility of this effort, Russia spreads destruction wherever it goes and is doing all it can to increase the bill for Ukraine's inevitable reconstruction. But several things are very clear. First, Russia cannot destroy Ukraine's spirit. Second, Ukraine will rise stronger and brighter than ever after winning this war. And third, Ukraine's friends will continue to provide the support needed to make this possible.

Russia has launched incessant waves of drone and missile strikes at Ukraine's cities for more than a year. These unconscionable attacks have hit apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, critical energy infrastructure, and even humanitarian actors and convoys bringing aid to those in conflict zones. Overnight, Russia fired 30 missiles at Ukraine, including six Kalibr cruise missiles. Ukraine reportedly intercepted 29 of these missiles, with only one hitting Odesa, albeit killing one and injuring two. This was the ninth such attack on Kyiv in this month alone. In addition, on May 13 and 14, Russia hit critical infrastructure in Kharkiv, Ternopil, and Mykolaiv, denying Ukraine's citizens access to even the most basic of necessities. We also saw reports on May 8 of the destruction of a clearly marked Ukrainian Red Cross warehouse in Odesa containing humanitarian aid. How vile. Aid that is only necessary because of Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and independence.

Ukraine is fighting back effectively though. According to media reports, Ukraine's air defense systems downed 18 Russian missiles on May 15, including six of Russia's supposedly unstoppable hypersonic Kinzhal missiles. Not only did this save countless Ukrainian lives, it also demonstrated the effectiveness of having U.S.-trained Ukrainian

service members operating advanced equipment. Russia's military is experiencing defeats on every level: its troops are demoralized, its leadership desperate, its moral standing in the international community in tatters, and now Ukraine has shown that even Russia's most powerful weapons can be countered.

Along with the physical destruction Russia has caused come alarming reports that it is removing even more Ukrainian civilians from their homes. Russia's so-called offer to evacuate civilians from Zaporizhzhya and surrounding cities, ostensibly for their own safety, rings hollow. Colleagues, it's clear that the biggest danger to civilians in Russia's war of aggression, whether they remain in their homes or flee, has come from Russian forces themselves.

Fifteen months since Russia's full-scale invasion, we continue to learn how Russia unlawfully and forcibly transfers and deports Ukrainian civilians. Ukraine's civilians in Russia-occupied territories have been unjustly detained under the flimsiest of justifications – if any at all – and under appalling conditions. These detained civilians have been sent to penal colonies or detention facilities in occupied territories or deep within Russia, many without charge, leaving their families no ability to track their whereabouts or to appeal their detention.

Many of the civilians held by Russia are victims of systematic so-called filtration operations and forced deportations, including of children forcibly separated from their families. The accounts coming to light tell of ordinary people taken into a nightmare.

The daughter of Mykola Savchenko, from Kherson region, told the NGO Media Initiative for Human Rights, that “he was taken captive not even from his own home, but from his neighbor's house where he was playing chess. The Russian military broke into the house, blindfolded them, and took them away in the trunk of a vehicle. Father, who is 58 years old, was also taken on April 3, 2022, and has not returned to this day.”

Valentyn Hryshchenko, from Kyiv, recounted his own treatment, telling MIHR, quote “They grabbed me on the street on March 23, 2022, while I was volunteering and distributing humanitarian aid to civilians.” He added, “the beatings began after a day of confinement, with one person hitting me while the other restrained me, and a third one standing nearby. The captors did not identify themselves with anything other than call signs and only declared that they were the NKVD and had the authority to determine who lives and who dies.”

We also hear troubling reports of Russia's forces detaining civilians alongside prisoners of war and mistreating both groups of individuals. A former detainee, Ihor Talalay, told the same NGO that, “the worst part was that civilians and soldiers were detained together, with no differentiation made between the two.” In other cases, Russia has reportedly reclassified civilians as prisoners of war based on prior military service, despite the fact they were not members of the armed forces when they were detained.

These are just some of the stories from those who have survived detention by Russia's forces. At this moment, several thousands of Ukrainian civilians face the dread and uncertainty brought about by their arbitrary confinement by Russia and in the parts of Ukraine that Russia occupies.

It is past time that Russia withdraw its forces from Ukraine, the whole of Ukraine, end its war, and immediately return these civilians to their homes. It is past time for Russia to remedy the damages it has wrought in this unjust war.

On May 10, in a step to right Russia's wrong, the United States began the process to transfer the assets forfeited from oligarch and Putin-crony Konstantin Malofeyev, for the benefit of the people of Ukraine. These millions of dollars, which are traceable to Malofeyev's sanctions violations, are the first transfer of forfeited funds for use in rebuilding Ukraine. They will not be the last. The United States will continue to ensure ill-gotten gains made on the back of a system that enables Putin's war will be put to rectifying its damages. This is clearly the right thing to do, and we encourage our partners and allies to take similar steps.

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