



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY ANDRIJANA BESLIC, FIRST SECRETARY
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1475th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 May 2024

Madam Chair,

In our last meeting, Canada and other participating States commemorated the 80th anniversary of the deportation of Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland by the Soviet regime and we expressed our concern at the echoes of this terrible event in present-day Crimea.

In his response, the Russian delegate claimed that Crimean Tatars have never had as many powers and possibilities to exercise their rights as they do now. He attempted to discredit those who expose Russia's abysmal treatment of this community claiming they are "paid by the West".

Such an explanation denies human agency, and premises that everything and everyone is an instrument that can be manipulated. It is a core tenet of Russia's deeply rooted cynical world view and political practice.

Central to Russia's efforts in Crimea is the suppression of this agency through the destruction of fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression and assembly, and imposition of various forms of cruel punishment at its slightest manifestation.

Refat Chubarov, the Chairman of the Mejlis, the representative body of the Crimean Tatars – and I emphasize the term representative – lives in exile, and his Deputy Chairman Nariman Dzhelal, for whose release we call once again, is detained incommunicado in the Russian Federation. Indeed, the Mejlis is banned by Russia.

Let's look at just the last couple of weeks in present-day Crimea and sample the "possibilities" the Russian Federation is offering Crimean Tatars and other residents of Crimea.

A 64-year-old resident of the occupied village of Kirovske was reportedly detained for five days and fined for publishing posts on social media supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

In occupied Sevastopol, it is reported that a 58-year-old resident was accused of justifying terrorism for shouting anti-Russian slogans and jailed for 1 year and 6 months.

In Sudak, a local florist is reportedly being prosecuted for selling blue and yellow flowers and refusing to display pro-Russian propaganda in her shop.

In Saky, a resident was reportedly detained by Russian security forces for listening to Ukrainian songs, and a case was filed against him in court, allegedly accusing him of “discrediting the Russian Armed Forces”.

It was also reported that Russian occupation authorities forced Crimean Tatar activists to record on video “warnings” about the inadmissibility of so-called “extremist actions” in the lead-up to the 80th anniversary of the deportation.

Lawyer Emil Kurbedinov was fined 30 thousand rubles for a social media post about the mobilization of students by the Russian occupying authorities.

The Russian representative’s claim during our last meeting that Crimean Tatars are flourishing couldn’t be further from the truth.

According to their own representatives, who legitimately speak on their behalf, Crimean Tatars live in danger, not prosperity.

In fact, the Chairman of the Mejlis, during a visit to the OSCE two months ago said that every year of occupation is tantamount to the destruction of the Crimean Tatar people.

Madam Chair,

Since 2014, the Russian Federation lied to this Council about its true intention in Ukraine. Its representatives changed their narrative from one day to the next in 2022, offering the Council a doublespeak explanation of their military aggression, unbothered by their lack of respect for their own commitments, or interests of other participating States.

How can we expect peace and partnership from a government that brings war to its neighbour, and selfishly sends our entire region into turmoil? We can reasonably only expect more of the same.

It is therefore vital for our region as we know it that Ukraine successfully repel its aggressor. Canada supports Ukraine’s right to defend itself in words and deeds.

Madam Chair,

We are pleased to know the Peace Summit in Switzerland will bring together so many world leaders to shape practical aspects of a future peace process and define necessary steps towards it. Our Prime Minister will lead the delegation of Canada.

Canada, together with Norway and Ukraine, is actively involved in furthering Ukraine's objectives towards the release of all prisoners, and the return of deported and forcibly transferred children. We are now working closely with all our partners to contribute to the success of the Peace Summit.

Comments discrediting our collective efforts and commitment to peace in this chamber are perhaps the best indicator of the Summit's significance in future peace negotiations, and why it matters to be there.

Thank you, Madam Chair.