



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

Norwegian statement on International Humanitarian Law in the OSCE region
As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen
at the 86th Joint Meeting between the Forum for Security Cooperation and the
Permanent Council
Vienna, 23 November 2022

Dear Co-chairs of the PC/FSC,

International humanitarian law applies to all states. It is not optional. Sadly, we have to witness blatant disregard for our shared commitments time and time again.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated clear violations of international humanitarian law. We look with horror upon the multiple examples of Russia's treatment of prisoners of war. Many have been tortured and some remain unaccounted for. The discoveries of mass graves are shocking. We see missiles deliberately targeting civilian areas and infrastructure without military purpose.

We see the devastation of children's playgrounds, of libraries, museums, schools, and historical monuments. We also see the targeting of energy grids and water stations, which puts children, the elderly and other vulnerable people at risk now that winter is approaching.

What could possibly be the purpose of this, except for spreading terror and making the situation as difficult as possible for the civilian population of Ukraine?

Chairs,

Protection of civilians is a key priority for Norway. We must support the International Committee of the Red Cross in fulfilling their unique mandate as laid out in the Geneva Conventions.

We thank the international and national humanitarian responders for their bravery in delivering humanitarian protection and assistance to those in need. The humanitarian support to local frontline responders and to ensuring continuation of essential services are of utmost importance to mitigate the trials of winter. Norway gives such support through the UN and other organizations. We call on Russia to allow access to humanitarian relief, including access to prisoners of war.

In the OSCE we have our own tools to uncover and document violations of international humanitarian law. The Moscow Mechanism has been invoked twice this year, allowing for fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of abuses and violations of IHL in Ukraine.

The experts discovered clear patterns of serious violations and multiple instances of war crimes mostly attributed to the Russian armed forces. These findings have also been backed up by other investigations, such as those made by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. Now we are apprehensive of the stories that will come from the newly liberated area in Kherson and fear that even more violations of international humanitarian law will be uncovered.

Chairs,

We would like to thank all speakers today for their insightful presentations on a very critical and timely topic. Russia's conduct in Ukraine underscores the importance of the topic of today's security dialogue. It also underlines the value of cross-dimensional cooperation, as this is an issue that warrants a wide and comprehensive approach, such as the recent FSC-Security Dialogue on the Code of Conduct on the pol-mil aspects of security.

Awareness raising efforts are needed. In the case of international humanitarian law, such efforts consist of three steps: Prevention of violations, documentation of violations, and prosecution of those responsible for violations. Firstly: to prevent war crimes from happening in the first place, every state must educate their armed personnel on international humanitarian law. Secondly, if a violation takes place, states must collect and preserve evidence of such crimes. Lastly, states must enforce the rules by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators.

In the case of Russia's aggression against Ukraine the international community will not sit idly by but hold all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law accountable.

Let me end by again reiterating that Norway condemns Russia's war of choice in the strongest terms possible. The Russian Federation must immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia chose to start this war. It must now choose to stop it.

Thank you.