



## United States Mission to the OSCE

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

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Katherine Brucker  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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In May 2023, an OSCE Moscow Mechanism report exposing Russia's war crimes against Ukraine's children found, "not only has the Russian Federation manifestly violated the best interests of [Ukraine's] children repeatedly, it has also denied their right to identity, their right to family...as well as their right to thought, conscience, and religion, right to health, and right to liberty and security." A year later, we continue to witness the trauma Russia's war inflicts on Ukraine's children. Information from the United Nations Children's Fund—or UNICEF—helps outline the scope of this ongoing tragedy.

According to UNICEF, more than 1,957 of Ukraine's children have been killed or injured since 2022. This number only includes UN-verified reports and is likely much higher.

UNICEF estimates that over the past two years, children living in cities near the frontline of Russia's war have been forced to spend between 3,000 and 5,000 hours sheltering underground. That's the equivalent of four to seven months confined to a basement, a bunker, or a hole in the ground.

UNICEF survey data indicates that half of Ukraine's 13 to 15-year-olds have trouble sleeping. One in five has intrusive thoughts and flashbacks, typical manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder. Three-quarters of children and young people report needing emotional or psychological support.

Behind these statistics are real, lived experiences of trauma. Take for example 14-year-old Mykyta. Mykyta described the arrival of Russia's invading forces in the following way, "I saw tanks coming towards my school. Then they started shooting at it, at the town. First, we didn't understand what was happening. The lights were flickering and there were explosions. We moved away from the windows and hid."

This was just the start for Mykyta. As fighting raged around his hometown, Mykyta got a call from his mother who was working at a local humanitarian hub. All he could understand was one word. Help.

Mykyta says he hardly remembers getting into his father's car and driving to find his mom. He says he will never forget what he found. "Everything in the hub was broken and bread was scattered on the floor. I saw my mother's colleague. He was dead. Then I saw my mother lying in rubble. She was covered in blood and her leg was missing. But she was alive."

When he tells his story, Mykyta trembles, gets short of breath, and he's overcome by headaches. He says he longs for things to be the way they used to be. A quiet childhood, games of hide and seek, picnics, and his parents working.

Madam Chair, Russia continues to rob Ukraine's children of stability, safety, school, friends, family, a home, and hopes for their future. Russia can stop the war, and it can do so at any time. And it should: it should do so right away. But it has shown no willingness to do so. So as Ukraine continues to defend itself against this aggression, the United States is proud to back the OSCE Support Program for Ukraine's project addressing children's psychosocial needs. This project will show how the OSCE can make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable populations in OSCE participating States, and address concretely the devastating effects of the Kremlin's brutal war of aggression -- the largest land war in Europe since World War Two. The United States is committed to working with Ukraine, the OSCE, and other partners to ensure those suffering in Ukraine receive the support they need. A generation of Ukraine's children are counting on us to do so.

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