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United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of International Law and Defiance of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation in Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 12, 2020

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

As part of a broader program to destabilize its sovereign neighbor, Russia has fomented and financed a deadly conflict in eastern Ukraine for more than six years now. Rather than playing a constructive role in negotiating an end to this conflict, and the opportunities and structures are there to do this, and fulfilling its commitments under the Minsk agreements, Russia cynically claims to be an uninvolved third party, pointing to unnamed outside “masters” having orchestrated a coup d’état in Kyiv.

In the *Trilateral Contact Group*, Moscow tries to frame Kyiv as the spoiler in negotiations, while attempting to hide its role of controlling Russia’s forces on the ground in eastern Ukraine. Frankly, none of this is believable.

While Russia works to hide its role in this conflict, the OSCE’s *Special Monitoring Mission* provides us with a detailed view of the situation in eastern Ukraine. Operating in volatile environments, these monitors risk their lives to deliver the unbiased reports on which all of us at this organization depend. Their work has been further complicated by the Coronavirus pandemic, which has strained their resources and placed the monitors at further risk.

Russia’s proxy forces do not make things easier. In October, the SMM reported dozens of instances in which its monitors’ movements were restricted; the vast majority occurred in Russia-controlled areas, a pattern highlighted in the Mission’s most recent thematic report on freedom of movement and other impediments. On more than 40 occasions, the SMM reported interference with its UAVs, either by small arms fire or by signal interference. We call on Russia to direct its proxies’ forces to cease their harassment of the *Special Monitoring Mission*.

As noted last week by our Ukrainian colleague, Moscow is pressuring Kyiv to negotiate in the *Trilateral Contact Group* directly with Russia’s puppet forces. If we are to see any real progress on concrete deliverables before winter sets in, Russia must begin to approach these negotiations in a constructive way, as Ukraine has repeatedly done.

We regret that the planned November 10 opening of two new entry-exit crossing points in Donetsk has not yet taken place, as our Ukrainian colleague noted. These additional crossing points would

undoubtedly improve the lives of civilians. Absent Russia's aggression, there would be no need for designated crossing points within sovereign Ukrainian territory – not one, not three, not any. There would not be any need for it, except for this aggressive effort to divide the country.

In Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, Russia's occupation authorities continue their crackdown. According to the *Crimean Human Rights Group*, there have been 101 administrative proceedings against religious organizations and their members for conducting alleged "illegal missionary activity" since the start of the occupation. The case of Crimean Muslim Imam Ablyakim Galiyev, who was charged on October 27 with such activity for holding Friday prayers, is just the latest example of reprisals against Muslim leaders who refuse to subordinate themselves to the religious leadership imposed by the occupation authorities. On October 14, a court also fined a Yalta-based branch of the Russian Greek Catholic Church \$400 for "illegal missionary activity," because it refused to bend to the will of the occupation authorities.

According to the *Crimean Human Rights Group*, Russia's occupation authorities have targeted almost all religious groups on the peninsula, except the Russian Orthodox Church.

We call on Russia to end its campaign of oppression in Crimea, cease its intimidation and harassment of ethnic and religious minorities on the peninsula, relinquish control of Crimea, and to release all Ukrainian political prisoners. We further call on Russia to remove its forces and military supporting materiel from eastern Ukraine.

Madam Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders, including its territorial waters. We do not, nor will we ever, recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea. We join our European and other partners in re-affirming our Minsk-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. All Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia fully returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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