



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST
UKRAINE**

1492nd MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

17 October 2024

Madam Chair,

I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Victoria Roshchyna, to the Ukrainian delegation and to all Ukrainians alike for the loss of their fearless and courageous compatriot. Victoria's sense of duty took her to occupied areas of Ukraine to share with the world the horrific truth of Russian occupation, for which she rightfully received the Courage in Journalism award.

She died while in Russian custody. Victoria was only 27 years old.

Victoria went missing in August last year, but her family was only officially notified that she was in Russian custody in April of this year.

Victoria was reportedly held in Berdiansk and the notorious Taganrog detention centers, where, in both cases, it has been alleged that Russia tortures inmates. Earlier this year, we heard from a former Ukrainian Prisoner of War about his ordeal in Taganrog, which included repeated torture, rape and other degrading and humiliating treatment.

We do not want to imagine what Victoria may have been subjected to while in Russian captivity.

There is no shortage of accounts and credible evidence of Russia's systematic use of torture on detainees, whether civilians or Prisoners of War.

Canada strongly condemns Victoria's death in Russian captivity. We call on Russia to stop silencing independent media voices and immediately release all illegally detained journalists and media workers

Madam Chair,

10 days ago, Ukraine, Norway, and Canada hosted the fifth meeting of the Working Group for Point 4 of Ukraine's 10-Point Peace Formula. The Working Group is dedicated to the return and release of illegally deported children, Prisoners of War, and unlawfully detained civilians.

This was the last meeting of this group before the upcoming Ministerial meeting on the human dimension of the 10-Point Peace Formula, which Canada is co-hosting with Norway and Ukraine in Montreal on October 30/31. My Norwegian colleague informed you of the Conference in a previous Permanent Council meeting.

We expect the Ministerial meeting in Montreal to draw up a roadmap with concrete measures on the Human Dimension to set the stage for the Second Summit for Peace in Ukraine, including seeking to return detained civilians as well as deported Ukrainian Children.

We call on the international community to remember Ukrainian civilians who are being detained, as well as children, whose present and future are terribly affected by this illegal and unjustifiable war. We condemn the war crimes, murders and sexual violence committed against Ukrainian children, the attacks on schools and hospitals, and the forced illegal transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children to Russia.

We demand that Russia return Ukrainian children to their families, legal guardians and communities, in line with the best interests of the child. We remain committed to this return and support efforts and mediation undertaken to this end, including the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, co-chaired by Canada and Ukraine, and supported by many countries around this table.

Enfin, madame la Présidente,

Nous ne nous laisserons pas d'exiger le retour immédiat de tous les enfants et détenus que la Russie a transféré et déporté illégalement.

Nous ferons tout ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour les réunir avec leurs familles et leurs proches, et ce avec l'aide de partenaires et d'États concernés.

A cet égard, je réitère une fois de plus l'appel du Canada pour la libération des trois responsables de la Mission spéciale de surveillance en Ukraine de l'OSCE-- Vadym Golda, Maxim Petrov et Dmytro Shabanov. Ils sont détenus illégalement par la Fédération de Russie depuis trop longtemps. Il est maintenant temps qu'ils rentrent sains et saufs.

Merci, madame la Présidente.