



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
1470th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 April 2024

Madam Chair,

During the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting this week, we heard from civil society organizations working on the release of arbitrarily detained civilians in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

Their testimonies echo the numerous reports that have already clearly established the pattern of Russia's practices: filtration, unlawful detention, individuals often held incommunicado, and in conditions contrary to those required under international law. The sheer number and similarities of these stories – echoed in the reporting of experts – points to a pattern of the use of arbitrary and unlawful detention by Russia in its aggression against Ukraine.

Subscribing to a Ukrainian news website could be reason enough to be suspected of disloyalty to the Russian occupation, and lead to arrest. Russian authorities then simply fabricate the evidence – often by extracting it with the use of torture.

A Ukrainian human rights organization shared with us the story of 24-year-old police officer Mariana Checheliuk. Mariana, a civilian, was hiding in the Azovstal plant during the Russian bombardment of Mariupol in 2022. When the plant was evacuated, Mariana was detained by Russian forces, and has been in detention since. She is detained in Mariupol, but according to reports, Mariana was also held in Olenivka, and Taganrog in the Russian Federation. We have previously shared a story with the Council from a former Ukrainian POW who was also held at Olenivka and Taganrog. His story is one of torture, abuse, rape, and dehumanizing treatment.

Mariana's parents are looking for their daughter and are desperate for more information about her. And she is only one of many – too many -- civilians who are arbitrarily detained by Russia and whose fate we ignore.

We call on the Russian Federation -- once again -- to treat all detainees in accordance with their obligations under international law, including to allow for regular access by the ICRC to detainees and to their places of detention, to facilitate communication with their families, and to provide timely and adequate medical assistance. These are basic minimum guarantees of protection under international humanitarian law.

Madam Chair,

Resilience is about withstanding and recovering quickly. Ukraine is our region's prime example of resilience.

And collectively, we must continue to support Ukraine to withstand this aggression, which it has done admirably, and help its people recover quickly from the brutality with which Russia is waging its war of choice.

Accountability and justice are key to doing that, and Canada will continue supporting accountability mechanisms to ensure the perpetrators are held accountable their violations of international law.

Thank you, Madam Chair.