



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 Chargé d'Affaires, a.i Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Seven years after Russia's attempt to annex Crimea and the launch of its armed aggression in eastern Ukraine, Russia's ongoing occupation and militarization of Crimea and violent campaign in eastern Ukraine threatens European security. Despite the relative success of the *Additional Measures to Strengthen the Ceasefire* last summer, Russia persists in obstructing peace negotiations within the *Trilateral Contact Group* and shunning the *Normandy Quartet*. Additionally, Russia intentionally escalated tensions this spring by executing a large-scale military buildup near Ukraine's border with Russia and in occupied Crimea. When Ukraine appropriately requested clarifying information from Russia regarding these unusual military activities under the *Vienna Document's* risk reduction mechanism, Russia refused to provide any substantive response. These actions are unacceptable.

On the ground in eastern Ukraine, Russia continues to obstruct the work of OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) on a daily basis. Last week, Russia-led forces targeted two of the Mission's UAVs with small arms in Donetsk oblast, while other UAVs experienced jamming. Nearly all of the physical restrictions on SMM monitors in recent months occurred in Russia-controlled territory and were imposed by the forces Russia arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside. Any action that restricts or interferes with SMM's monitoring activities directly contravenes the Mission's mandate, which was adopted by all participating States, including Russia. These actions are unacceptable.

Meanwhile, Russian political parties, including *United Russia*, campaign in Russia-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine in advance of Russia's Duma elections. Russia continues its passportization campaign in eastern Ukraine, through which Russia has coerced hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian nationals into obtaining Russian citizenship. These actions are flagrant violations of OSCE principles on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of participating States.

Last week, Ukrainian Ombudsperson Denisova appealed to the *Trilateral Contact Group's* Working Group on Humanitarian Issues in response to the murders of three Ukrainian citizens in Kirov penal colony Number 33 in Russia-occupied Donetsk oblast and the need to unblock the process of transferring Ukrainian prisoners from Russia-controlled territory. She also urged that the *International Red Cross* send representatives to the penal colony to check into the circumstances of the deaths, and how the rights of other prisoners held there are being observed.

Russia holds at least 100 political prisoners from Crimea in Russia and in prisons run by Russia in Crimea. The majority are Crimean Tatars.

Last week 71-year-old Crimean Tatar Ilver Ametov was sentenced to eight months of restricted freedom after being convicted on criminal charges related to historical artifacts he kept in his home locked behind glass in a personal museum. Human rights organizations assert that Ametov has been targeted for repression due to his role as the leader in Sudak of the regional Mejlis, the representative body of Crimean Tatars that Russia unjustly deems “extremist.” Before his conviction, Ametov was subjected to at least three raids of his home by Russia’s federal security forces.

We welcome Ukraine’s upcoming *Crimea Platform* summit in Kyiv, where the United States and other members of the international community will stand with Ukraine in calling on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea, which is today and will always be sovereign Ukrainian territory, no matter how many times the Kremlin claims otherwise. The international community knows that Crimea is Ukraine, and we will continue to hold Russia accountable for its actions, including its abuses against Crimean Tatars and others residing on the peninsula.

Madam Chair, the United States fully supports Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, extending to 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 affirming our Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments and returns full control of Crimea to Ukraine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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