



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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As we confront the consequences of Russia's incessant bombardments of Ukraine, recorded in shocking images and reports of destruction of life and civilian infrastructure, we must also keep sight of the less visible hardships facing so many Ukrainians trapped under Russia's occupation. Their tragedies extend deep into the heart of Ukraine.

Madam Chair, the Russian Federation's callous neglect of basic human needs in occupied Ukraine is causing humanitarian emergencies of alarming proportions. Residents grapple with critical water shortages, the collapse of vital emergency services, and scarce medical supplies. Many again endure winter without heat and electricity.

In addition to inflicting these immediate hardships, the Russian Federation has implemented a strategy of widespread property expropriation. Since the full-scale invasion in 2022, Russia has perpetrated one of the largest property thefts in recent times, seizing Ukrainian property ranging from sprawling industrial estates to farmlands right down to neighborhood bakeries. Russian occupation authorities label land and properties as "abandoned" and then often give the Ukrainian proprietors only days to prove their ownership, which often leads to the forfeiture of these properties. These appear to be illegal expropriations, a blatant violation of international law that goes beyond economic looting and attempts to entrench Russia's hegemony by rooting out Ukrainian property owners.

Russia also extends its influence through indoctrination. Russia's occupation authorities continue to force schools in Ukraine to adopt a Russian Federation curriculum and mandate that Ukrainian students sing Russia's national anthem. Students are subjected to a Russian version of history, falsely depicting Ukraine as a neo-Nazi state and Russia's needless war of choice as a necessary defense against so-called "Western aggression." This deliberate political indoctrination is an attempt to forcibly assimilate Ukrainians into Russia's ideological sphere and compel them to parrot Russia's false views of the world.

The bleak reality of occupation extends far beyond the erosion of infrastructure, economy, and cultural identity. The forced transfer of thousands of Ukrainian children within occupied parts of Ukraine and their deportation to Russia has gained global attention, thanks in part to our collective work here. The lesser known but harrowing plight of the elderly and persons with disabilities in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine also paints a grim picture. Russia has forcibly taken many vulnerable elderly persons and persons with

disabilities to Russia, stripped them of their Ukrainian citizenship, and left them to fend for themselves.

The experience of Oleg Andreev, as documented in a 2023 investigative report by the Telegraph newspaper, epitomizes Russia's abuses. Mr. Andreev, a 65-year-old paraplegic from Mariupol, survived intense shelling that killed his mother. A Russian soldier stole his wheelchair and vital documents, including his passport, and Russian authorities relocated him to a facility in Russia without his family's knowledge. There, Russian Federation authorities subjected Mr. Andreev to a painful medical procedure without anesthesia, and medical staff stole much of his pension.

The young and the old aren't the only ones to suffer. Russian authorities aggressively conscript fighting-age Ukrainians in Russian-occupied territories, as many as 65,000 since Russia's invasion, according to Ukraine's military intelligence. And as we have noted in this Council before, there are reports that the Russian Federation plans to mobilize Ukrainian teenagers for military service in the Russian Armed Forces. Ukrainians are forced to become pawns in a conflict not of their choice or making, and to fight against their own country.

Madam Chair, we must continue to call out the terrible conditions inflicted upon Ukrainian civilians by the Russian Federation. We are seeing not just egregious human rights abuses and unyielding attempts at cultural and economic assimilation, but also deep and widespread suffering.

Our solidarity with Ukraine is unwavering. We will continue to support the people of Ukraine in defending their country and their freedom. Our resolve is steadfast. We will continue to work with our international partners in this vital effort and hold the Russian Federation to account for its atrocities against the Ukrainian people.

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