



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on russia's Detention of OSCE Officials as part of its War of Aggression Against Ukraine

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1442nd meeting of the Permanent Council,
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Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the Delegation of the United States of America for raising this extremely important issue.

It's more than 500 days since OSCE officials Maksym Petrov, Vadym Golda and Dmytro Shabanov remain in illegal detention by the russian federation. Their human rights are continuously violated. Neither OSCE leadership and participating States nor their relatives are in possession of any credible information about their health and detention conditions.

Meanwhile the country under war criminal regime is still an OSCE participating State, despite the issue we discuss today is just another reflection of the terrorist nature of russia.

The bare fact that our colleagues remain in illegal russian detention for the second year already brings us to obvious conclusion - not enough is done by all of us, OSCE and relevant international organisations to release them.

We must say it is clear that Illegal detention of OSCE staff members is an act of terrorism against our Organisation and all OSCE participating States, and russia must be held responsible for this.

We should also always keep in mind, that every time we talk to envoys of the russian war criminal regime in this hall, we talk to the people whose only task is to justify our colleagues' detention, russian war crimes in Ukraine and blatant violations of international law.

russia kidnapped these people, took them hostage, and now is using them as a leverage in its war against Ukraine. At the same time detained OSCE staff members are not the prisoners of war, and they must be released immediately and without any preconditions.

russian accusations and staged so called "court processes" look even more cynically, considering russian destructive influence it has been exerting on OSCE SMM and the whole Organisation in general for years both from inside and outside of OSCE.

russia had dozens of its citizens as SMM's international staff, who participated in patrolling, processing of information, coordination of activities etc. So, it seems we still have to find out the real scales of russian malpractices within OSCE SMM.

In this regard we encourage OSCE Secretariat to carry out relevant work and present a detailed report to participating States on the lessons learned, based on

in-depth analyses of SMM activities, their nature, factors, influencing its objectivity and efficiency etc.

We believe that without objective analyses of all achievements and failures of OSCE's biggest ever field operation our Organisation will hardly be able to find relevant approaches to dealing with evolving threats and challenges to regional security, including those, stemming from the ongoing russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine took note of the joint statement by OSCE Chairman-in-Office and OSCE Secretary General dated 12 September. We deem it important to raise awareness of the issue of russia-detained OSCE staff at any possible occasion. At the same moment, we strongly believe it is a high time for OSCE leadership to abandon a long-lasting practice of referring to russia without even using a single word "russia".

We discuss this issue today only because to the certain extend moscow is not experiencing that much pressure, which could make it release the OSCE staff representatives. The problem is not widely visible for the media and international community.

If not complemented by relevant OSCE's legal actions and international sanctions regarding russia - as strong reaction to OSCE staff illegal detention and theft of OSCE vehicles - moscow will keep enjoying impunity and our colleagues will face the risk of losing their lives.

So, in conclusion I would like to reiterate that we must exert every pressure on russian terrorists and do our best to release these people as soon as possible. It is our duty. "It's About People", as the Chair's motto says. And it's about the credibility of OSCE and all of us.