



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 16 June 2022

Thank you,

Norway aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and stands fully behind its content, but allow me some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

There are abundant indications of systematic, and large-scale war crimes being committed against the people of Ukraine by the Russian Armed Forces and their proxies, some of which may even be crimes against humanity.

I want to stress that those committing atrocities must know that their actions will be investigated, and that the international society will do its utmost to hold individuals at all levels to account for their actions.

The Russian Federation denotes its brutal war as a “special operation” to liberate the people of Donbas from the supposedly cruel regime in Kyiv.

Liberate to what? Let us have a look at what Freedom House writes about fundamental freedoms in the so-called “Peoples Republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk, which have been occupied by Russian forces and Russian-backed armed formations since 2014: “Politics within the territories are tightly controlled by the security services, leaving no room for meaningful opposition. Local media are also under severe restrictions, and social media users have been arrested for critical posts. The rule of law and civil liberties in general are not respected”.

In addition, we hear eyewitnesses talk about illegal detentions, torture, censorship, enforced disappearances, and confiscation of private property. We hear about

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indoctrination starting in the kindergarten, where the children learn that they must love the republic they live in, and that Ukraine is the enemy.

In this week's meeting of the human dimension committee, NGO representatives pointed to the fact that support for human rights is a contribution to conflict prevention and resolution. Both Ukrainian and international civil society representatives addressed the need and wish for contacts with civil society in the Russian occupied parts of Ukraine, as well as in Russia proper. They urged us, the OSCE and its participating States, to look for more ways to help civil society now being urged into silence and even prevented from doing the most urgent humanitarian work needed.

Mr. Chair

Europe's most authoritarian regimes can now be found in the areas that are controlled by Russia. Areas that Russia is now claiming to "liberate" – in reality as a pretext to invade Ukraine. Freedom House calculates global freedom statuses on a weighted scale, from zero to one hundred. The so-called "People's Republics" of Luhansk and Donetsk are awarded a meagre four points out of a hundred and are far behind even Russia itself with its 19 points. The Ukrainian territories Russia took control of in 2014 have become strongholds of oppression, where the inhabitants are denied fundamental rights and liberties.

Thank you.