

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 51st SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner on the oral update on Ukraine

04 October 2022

Mr. Christian Salazar Volkmann, Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported to the Council that since February 2022 the Russian Federation's wide-scale armed attack had resulted in a dire human rights situation across Ukraine. The people in Ukraine had experienced unspeakable suffering and devastation, as well as a wide range of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. This affected both civilians and combatants. Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the hostilities. He also affirmed that the hostilities are damaging and destroying homes and critical civilian infrastructure. Mr. Volkmann reported disturbing figures and data concerning human rights violations of the rights of life, liberty and security; as well as concerning restrictions of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. He also described cases of violations of IHL in the context of detention, of both civilians and prisoners of war. Appalling reports of torture and ill-treatment of both civilians and prisoners of war continued. Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention of civilians have become widespread in territory controlled by Russian armed forces or affiliated armed groups. Considering the recent developments and referendum, Mr. Volkmann said that the Russian Federation has taken steps which have deepened rather than resolved the conflict. These steps have exacerbated the human rights violations associated with it, moving further away from peace toward escalation. The Council and the international community should do everything possible to prevent further escalation. They should encourage all efforts at peace and ensure respect for IHRL and IHL in Ukraine.

Ukraine (Country concerned) affirmed that the ongoing Russian aggression accompanied by massive human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, is a deliberate destruction of the UN Charter and human rights. Innocent Ukrainians are being killed, their homes and their lives are being destroyed on direct orders from terrorists. In the temporarily occupied territories, Russian forces are sending Ukrainian citizens to "filtration camps" before forcibly relocating them to Russia in violation of the Geneva Conventions. These people are not refugees, they have been forcibly deported and must be returned home. Ukraine affirmed that Russia violates every rule of international law, the international legal order and core human rights principles. It does not deserve a seat in any international multilateral institution for its deep contempt for multilateralism.

Interactive dialogue

47 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. **The majority of countries** condemned all violations of IHRL and IHL committed in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The level of destruction and suffering inflicted on civilians is unacceptable, especially for vulnerable civilians. Moreover, continued reports of unlawful killings, conflict-related sexual violence, and torture and ill-treatment are alarming. All allegations must be thoroughly investigated, and perpetrators must be held accountable. **Albania, Switzerland, Iceland, Latvia, Montenegro, Republic of Korea, and Poland**, among others, condemned in the strongest terms Putin's illegal sham referendums in Ukraine. They also condemned the illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhia regions of Ukraine. The annexation is a fundamental violation of the Principles of the UN Charter and international law. **EU, Denmark, North Macedonia and Austria** urged Russia to fully abide by its obligations under international law. They also urged Russia to implement the provisional measure, and cease its aggression against Ukraine entirely, unconditionally, and immediately. Conversely, **Russia Federation, Belarus, Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela** noted the one-sided and unbalanced nature of the report, which reflects Western approaches to covering the Ukrainian crisis. They also rejected the use of Item 10 of the Council's Agenda, for purposes

contrary to those intended. This encouraged selectivity, politicization and double standards, which undermine the credibility of the HRC.

NGOs condemned Russia's military action in Ukraine, not only as an almost unprecedented violation of the territorial integrity of a UN Member State, but as a blatant breach of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. They criticized the widespread repression of freedom of movement, thought, conscience and religion and condemned the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly of all those in the Russian Federation who have dared to criticize the military action. UN Member States should urgently pursue a way to peace negotiations and facilitate such a path which is within the UN's mandate. They called on the international community to ensure full legal guarantees of their human right to conscientious objection and to provide them with protection and asylum. Investigations into violations of international humanitarian law and human rights should take place.

Concluding Remarks

In his final remarks, **Christian Salazar Volkmann, Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**, addressed a few issues raised by the Member States. In particular, noting the continue attacks in Crimea, the HRC should provide support to human rights defenders and lawyers working in the region. The international community needs to support the evacuation of persons in vulnerable situations, especially the disabled and the elderly. Mr. Volkmann reaffirmed the several allegations reported by the OHCHR of forced deportations, IHL and IHRL violations, and forced transportation of protected persons and of children for adoption. Ukrainian men and women are disproportionately suffering from various forms of human rights violations by Russian forces, including conflict-related sexual violence. Noting the efforts of the Government of Ukraine to investigate and prosecute war crimes, the international community should advocate for accountability at all levels. This includes supporting regional and international mechanisms. Regarding the recent annexation issue, Mr. Volkmann said any annexation of any State by another under threat of force is a violation of the UN Charter. The impact of the so-called referenda and purported annexation is under monitoring.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (47 country delegations):

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark (on behalf of Group of Friends of Accountability following the Aggression against Ukraine: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, U.S.), Estonia, (on behalf of Nordic-Baltic), Estonia, Denmark, EU, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Norway, Germany, Ireland, France, Australia, Syrian Arab Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, U.S., Belarus, Georgia, Türkiye, China, EU (on behalf of a group of countries).

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor (11):

Baptist World Alliance, Center for Global Nonkilling, Conscience and Peace Tax international (CPTI), Human Rights House Foundation, International Commission of Jurists, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Humanist and Ethical Union, iuventum e.V., The Next Century Foundation, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organization, NHRI Institutions Nationales.

International organizations (0)

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).