

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 52nd SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner on the findings of OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine

31 March 2023

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Volker Türk, High Commissioner for Human Rights** strongly condemned the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine where severe violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are taking place. The HC deplored Russian forces' use of wide-impact explosive weaponry in residential neighbourhood causing the death of more than 8,400 civilian, and over 14,000 civilians wounded. The HC remarked cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention by Russia's military forces, including affiliated armed groups, such as the Wagner Group. The HC also highlighted human rights violations such as torture, ill-treatment, and sexual violence, most of these against children and women. The HC also remarked enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and sexual violence by Ukrainian security forces, most these against detainees. The HC had documented forcible transfers of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. The HC reported that the Office recorded several cases of ill-treatment and torture of Ukrainian prisoners in detention facilities calling upon Russia to allow unfettered access to all individuals detained by Russian forces. The HC urged not to target civilians, civilian infrastructure and to allow medical and humanitarian personnel to work unimpeded. The HC considered all victims of the war have the right to justice and to a just peace. The HC was concerned about the sharp increases in the prices of food, energy, fertilisers and other essential commodities which have heightened tensions and inequalities in every region.

Ukraine (Country concerned): Ukraine condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of the country and considers crimes amount to crimes against humanity, many of them having explicit signs of genocide. Ukraine will continue to pursue efforts towards the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian political and military leadership for the crime of aggression. The country deplored Russia's persisting attacks against residential buildings, schools and medical facilities, critical infrastructure, deliberate targeting of civilians or civilian objects, wilful killings, torture, and rape. The country strongly condemned Russia's inhumane treatment of the Ukrainian prisoners of war, who are subjected to torture and execution, and the unlawful deportation of children. The country further denounced Russia's violations of basic rights and freedoms in occupied territories. The country took note of the alleged violations committed by the Ukrainian side and will take the necessary actions. Ukraine called upon Russia to provide full and unimpeded access to the Ukrainian territories. Ukraine will not rest until accountability and justice are guaranteed.

Interactive dialogue

40 Country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. Some countries expressed their support to the High Commissioner and its oral report. Countries such as the **EU, the U.S., Australia, the UK, Japan, Türkiye, and Georgia** condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and were concerned about the large numbers of civilian casualties, attacks against critical infrastructure, ill-treatment against detainees, and cases of torture and sexual violence. They urged Russia to guarantee accountability, justice, and reparation to all victims of the conflict and highlighted their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The **EU** will continue to work with Ukraine on its 10-point peace plan.

The **Russian Federation** denounced the understatement regarding the crimes of the Ukrainian side. The country condemned Ukraine for cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, inhuman conditions of detainees, torture, and sexual violence, including against children. It commended the OHCHR for recognizing Kyiv's actions to censor media and discriminate on linguistic and religious grounds. The country called upon the OHCHR to continue to publicly respond to the criminal actions of Kyiv. **Venezuela** and the **Syrian Arab Republic** remarked that this issue does not fall under Item 10 and considered it a politicized initiative that should be resolved through the promotion of constructive dialogue. The **DPRK** considered that the root cause of the conflict stems from the hegemonic policies of the **U.S.** and the **West**. The **DPRK** further emphasized that the **U.S.** and the **West** continue to demonize **Russia** in the international arena.

Belarus considered the conflict a consequence of the ignorance by **Western countries** of numerous warnings and initiatives that could have helped preserve the system of regional and global security. Belarus hoped the world will hear the country's call for a ceasefire in Ukraine, an end to hostilities and the start of negotiations. **China** emphasized the importance of respecting all countries' sovereignty and urges for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The country also called upon the international community to support China's peace negotiations proposal.

Most NGOs commended the work of the High Commissioner. They condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and its impact on the human rights of civilians and soldiers. NGOs remained concerned about cases of ill-treatment and alleged extrajudicial executions of prisoners of war by both sides of the conflict, especially Russia's deprivation of the right to fair trials of Ukrainian prisoners. NGOs were also deeply concerned about forcible deportations, acts of torture, enforced disappearances, torture and cases of sexual violence by the Russian forces, especially on vulnerable groups. NGOs urged for sustainable peace with accountability, justice, and reparation. Several NGOs remain alarmed about the consequences of nuclear threats. Two NGOs called upon Ukraine to respect the right to conscientious objection to military service and ask for the release of conscientious objectors. One NGO highlighted that journalists are being detained in Russia and the deterioration of freedom of speech and the rise in propaganda in the occupied regions of Ukraine by Russia. NGOs urged unimpeded access of NGOs and humanitarian organizations to detention centres in Russia. Several NGOs considered Russia's crimes to amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. One NGO called for a ceasefire and considers that by providing more arms to Ukraine, the EU and U.S. have caused the continuation of the war.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (40 country delegations):

Estonia (on behalf of a group of countries), European Union, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Sovereign Order of Malta, Ireland, Czechia, United States of America, Germany, Portugal, Japan, China, Cyprus, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Canada, Poland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Slovakia, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Austria, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain, Albania, Georgia, Montenegro, Australia, Croatia, Belarus, Romania, Bulgaria, Türkiye, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Belgium, Syrian Arab Republic, Slovenia.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (11):

Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Right, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), Institute for Human Rights, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, United Nations Watch, Amnesty International, Partners For Transparency, iuventum e.V., Meezaan Center for Human Rights.

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