

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 53rd SESSION

Interactive Dialogue on the oral update of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Ukraine; and the interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Crimea

12 July 2023

Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, underling that the monitoring work of the Office follows the highest standards of impartiality, professionalism, objectivity, and non-selectivity, addressed the Council regarding the situation of civilians who have been detained in the context of the war in Ukraine. Since February 2022, more than 900 individual civilians have been arbitrarily detained. The civilians detained by the Russian Federation include local public officials, humanitarian volunteers, former soldiers, perceived political opponents, priests, and teachers. He also reported documented several cases that suggest detained civilians have been used by Russian armed forces as “human shields” in order to render certain areas immune from military attacks.

In regard to the Secretary-General’s report, Mr. Türk considered the **human rights violations** in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as Russian-occupied areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. He listed his concerns regarding cases of **arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, forced conscription, population transfers of civilians**, and violations of the rights to **freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, and association**. In addition, the denial of the rights to due process and fair trial remains a systemic issue in Crimea. He remained deeply concerned that the Parliament of the Russian Federation recently adopted a federal law that would potentially exempt from criminal liability the perpetrators of international criminal offenses committed in occupied regions of Ukraine. International law prohibits the granting of such amnesty in relation to serious violations of international humanitarian law or gross violations of international human rights law. Accountability for the violations and abuses committed in this conflict continues to be conspicuous by its absence.

Ukraine (Country concerned) stated that for almost 16 months, Russian aggression and terror have been destroying buildings, and fundamental human rights, including the right to life. It affirmed that the officially documented atrocities are only a tiny part of all Russia’s crimes in Ukraine. The reports mentioned that international human rights and humanitarian mechanisms have been consistently denied access to the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia. The international community and the UN should do more to ensure the return of Ukrainian children, prisoners of war, civilians, and political prisoners back home. It is time for the international system to fix problems and put the perpetrators where they should be – at the court bench.

Interactive dialogue

47 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. The majority of these countries stressed that human rights violations reported have intensified in the year and a half since Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine. They reiterate a call for an immediate cessation of hostilities by Russia and a complete withdrawal from Ukrainian territory. The Russian Federation must respect its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law as an occupying power. Countries fully supported the work of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the Commission of Inquiry, and the experts in monitoring, reporting, and advocating on the human rights situation in Ukraine. **Among others, the Republic of Korea, the EU, Portugal, the US, and Japan** condemned in the strongest terms Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a serious violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. **The UK** focused on the thousands of

Ukrainian civilians killed, the millions displaced, the number of schools, hospitals, and homes destroyed, and the tens of thousands of civilians detained, countless among them tortured.

Venezuela, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Belarus, and Nicaragua focused on the scope of Agenda Item 10 which addresses technical assistance and capacity building to improve the situation of human rights in the countries concerned, always with their participation and through genuine dialogue and cooperation. They reiterated that the initiatives based on motivations marked by politicization, selectivity, and double standards, contribute nothing to the promotion and protection of human rights in the world and do not provide any benefit in favor of vulnerable individuals or groups. Human rights issues must be addressed with transparency, objectivity, and impartiality, and in adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. **Russian Federation** rejected the report on the human rights situation in Crimea, as well as the incomplete report on the situation in Ukraine.

NGOs, deploring the widespread human rights and IHL violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity in the course of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, stressed that the Russian occupation authorities continue to arbitrarily detain and illegally imprison Ukrainian citizens on the basis of their beliefs, ethnicity, and religion. They called on the international community to intensify its efforts on demanding access to the places of detention of those illegally imprisoned, their release, and bringing perpetrators to justice. An NGO reported that Russian armed forces have both deliberately and indiscriminately attacked Ukraine's health system as part of a broader assault on the country's civilian population and infrastructure. This overwhelming evidence demands truth and justice, including reparations to the health care system and for victims of violations.

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

European Union, Finland (on behalf of the North Baltic countries), Venezuela (on behalf of the Group of Friends), Netherlands (on behalf of a Group of Friends on accountability for Ukraine), Germany, Lithuania, Republic of Korea, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Slovenia, Sovereign Order of Malta, Spain, Luxembourg, United States, Belgium, Canada, Malta, UK, New Zealand, Ireland, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Türkiye, North Macedonia, Venezuela, Austria, Greece, Slovakia, China, Switzerland, Republic of Moldova, Albania, Georgia, Romania, Montenegro, Poland, Cyprus, Belarus, Croatia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Russian Federation, Nicaragua, France.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (12):

Catholic International Education Office, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), Human Rights House Foundation, Institute for Human Rights, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, International Bar Association, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, National Human Rights Institution (Ukraine), Physicians for Human Rights, The Next Century Foundation, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations.

To watch the full meeting refer to the UN WEB TV: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).