

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

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

09 October 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, reported that one and a half years after the Russian Federation's full-scale armed attack on Ukraine, the international community continues to bear witness to blatant and unabated violations of human rights. Documented abuses range from widespread torture and arbitrary detention to conflict-related sexual violence and denial of the right to an adequate standard of living. Torture remains a brutal reality for civilians and prisoners of war held by Russian authorities.

She informed the Council of the findings and data collected by the OHCHR since the beginning of the war aggression. She reported documented violations of human rights and humanitarian laws. Many of these cases may amount to enforced disappearance. Many others result from gender-based violence. The severe damage inflicted on civilians' rights to an adequate standard of living, including access to food and housing, is particularly alarming.

The urgency and gravity of the situation in Ukraine is undeniable. Accountability for violations and crimes is crucial to prevent their recurrence and provide justice for victims. It is imperative for the international community to heed these findings and recommendations, and act decisively to halt the violations of rights and protect those caught in the crossfire of conflict.

Ukraine (Country concerned) reported Russia's indiscriminate daily attacks on Ukrainian cities and towns with missiles and drones, causing loss of innocent lives and large-scale damage is nothing but a blatant violation of the right to life, liberty, and security, the right to a standard of living. Russia's deliberate destruction of medical and educational facilities across Ukraine gravely violates the right to health and education. By torturing and killing prisoners of war, arbitrarily detaining civilians, and abducting children, Russia openly and shamefully commits war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In conclusion, affirmed that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a war against each and every country present in this room, inflicting on them the hardships of food, environmental, and nuclear insecurity and undermining the exercise of human rights for all. A country that perpetrates gross and systematic violations of human rights commits war crimes and crimes against humanity and openly disdains this Council and its mechanisms cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of advocating for universal respect and safeguarding of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Interactive dialogue

The majority of the countries, while condemning in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the war of destruction, reported that Russia subjects civilians to summary executions, torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, and filtration; Russia deports Ukrainian children to Russia and Belarus or forcibly transfers them to Russia-controlled territory; and Russia systematically destroys Ukrainian cities by deliberately attacking civilians, energy, and critical infrastructure. **The EU** reiterated its strongest condemnation of all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in this context. It urged Russia to fully abide by its obligations under international law and cease its aggression against Ukraine entirely, unconditionally, and immediately. **Austria and Poland** reiterated the importance of independently investigating all allegations of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, and sexual violence, regardless of the affiliation of the alleged perpetrator(s). Those responsible, including persons in positions of command, must be prosecuted. **The Sovereign Order of Malta** affirmed that

as the international community continues to face the disastrous situation of millions of people deprived of the essential elements that constitute a normal life, it should react accordingly and choose the way to invest in peace.

Venezuela condemned the use of spaces as carefully considered as the Agenda Item 10 of this Council, for purposes very different from those for which it was conceived. Human rights issues must be addressed with transparency, objectivity, and impartiality, and with strict adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. **The Syrian Arab Republic** added that countries are working to transform this item into a new platform to target specific countries. It condemned the hostile and politicized approach that undermines the work of the Council and deviates it further from its goals and mandate and confirms the extent of the double standards practiced by Western countries. **Belarus** said that the safety of civilians must be a priority in conflict situations. In this context, it is clear that the supply of cluster munitions or depleted uranium bombs creates additional colossal risks. It was confident that the perception of several Western countries about the conflict in Ukraine as a “cheap investment” to contain Russia will not only not contribute to the speedy restoration of peace but is also fraught with further escalation of the conflict.

Russian Federation reiterated its principles: it does not consider itself a concerned country in a dialogue on the human rights situation in Ukraine. Disagree with the methodology, content, and conclusion of the report. It describes the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine, shifting the blame to the crimes committed by the Ukrainian authorities in Russia. Approach unacceptable.

NGOs reiterated their position in condemning Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. They condemned the widespread violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The **International Bar Association** was deeply concerned at the COI’s observations on allegations of genocide of Ukrainians. Some NGOs reported killings of civilians and crimes against the media and journalists committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. They urged the United Nations to take action immediately to protect the people of Ukraine.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (37 country delegations):

EU, Sweden (on behalf of a group of countries), Liechtenstein, Sovereign Order of Malta, Czech, Portugal, Japan, Georgia, Austria, Netherlands, Türkiye, Malta, US, Luxembourg, Poland, France, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Belgium, China, Romania, Ireland, Australian, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, North Macedonia, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), DPRK, Slovakia, Albania, Belarus, Montenegro, Syrian Arab Republic, Moldova, Spain, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Germany, Switzerland.

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

Ukrainian Parliament for Human Rights, Institute for Human Rights, CPTI, Center for Global Nonkilling, Human Rights House Foundation, United Nations Watch, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, International Bar Association, iuventum e.V., Public Organization "Public Advocacy", VšĮ "Žmogaus teisių apsauga".

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