

Foreign Secretary statement on the situation in Ukraine

Mr Speaker, with permission I will update the House about the situation in Ukraine.

This morning Russian missiles again struck Kyiv and other cities, destroying critical national infrastructure and depriving Ukrainians of water and electricity.

Earlier today I spoke to our Ambassador in Kyiv and I heard again of the extraordinary resilience of Ukraine's people in the face of Russian aggression.

At the weekend, Russia suspended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has allowed the export of 100,000 tonnes of food every day, including to some of the least developed countries in the world.

Putin is exacting vengeance for his military failures on the civilians of Ukraine by cutting off their power and their water supply, and on the poorest people in the world by threatening their food supplies.

Over 60 percent of the wheat exported under the Black Sea Grain Initiative has gone to low and middle income countries, including Ethiopia, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

It would be unconscionable for those lands to be made to suffer because of Putin's setbacks on the battlefield in Ukraine.

I urge Russia to stop impeding this vital initiative that is helping feed the hungry across the world and agree to its extension.

Meanwhile, Russia's suicide drones and cruise missiles are killing Ukrainian civilians, obliterating their homes, and even destroying a children's playground.

A third of the country's power stations were put out of operation in a single week.

None of this achieves any military purpose.

Putin's only aim is to spread terror and to deprive Ukrainian families of shelter, light, and heat as harsh winter approaches.

I'm sure the House will join me in condemning his breaches of international humanitarian law.

I'm sure every Honourable and Right Honourable member will share my conviction that Putin will never break the spirit of the Ukrainian people.

And the House will share my incredulity over the glaring contradictions in Putin's thinking.

He claims that Ukraine is part of Russia and Ukrainians are Russians but at the same time he calls them Nazis who must be bombed without mercy.

When he launched his invasion, he convinced himself that Russian forces would be welcomed into Kyiv and they would either support him or be too craven to stand in his way.

He could not have been more wrong.

The last eight months have shown the scale of his miscalculation.

They have shown the barbarity of his onslaught, including the mass rape committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine.

The UK's campaign to prevent sexual violence in conflict is more urgent than ever and I will host a conference on this vital subject next month.

And now the Kremlin is resorting to peddling false claims, churning out invented stories that say more about the fractures within the Russian government than they do about us.

It is also reprehensible that Iran should have supplied Russia with the Shahed drones that are bringing destruction to Ukraine, in violation of UN Resolution 2231.

On 20 October, the Government imposed sanctions on three Iranian commanders involved in supplying weaponry to Russia, along with the company that manufactures Shahed drones.

Earlier, Putin announced on 30 September that Russia had annexed four regions of Ukraine spanning 40,000 square miles – the biggest land grab in Europe since the Second World War.

Once again, this exposes his self-delusion.

Putin has declared the annexation of territory he has not captured – and what he had managed to seize he is in the process of losing.

On 12 October, 143 countries – three quarters of the entire membership of the United Nations – voted in the General Assembly to condemn the annexation.

Russia had just four supporters – Syria, Belarus, Nicaragua, North Korea – and when those regimes are your only friends, you know you really are isolated.

When 141 countries denounced Putin's invasion back in March, some speculated if that was the ceiling of the international support for Ukraine.

The latest vote showed even more nations are now ready to condemn Russia.

But Putin still thinks that by forcing up food and energy prices, we will

lose our resolve.

Our task is to prove him wrong.

We will not waver in our support for Ukraine's right to self-defence.

I delivered that emphatic message when I spoke to my Ukrainian counterpart on Tuesday and my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister said the same to President Zelenskyy, when they spoke on the phone, the first foreign leader he called upon his appointment as Prime Minister.

On Thursday I will attend a meeting of G7 Foreign Ministers in Germany, where I will send a unified signal of our shared determination.

This year Britain has given Ukraine £2.3 billion of military support – more than any country in the world apart from the United States of America.

We will provide Ukraine with more support to repair its energy infrastructure and we have committed £220 million of humanitarian aid.

The House will have noted Putin's irresponsible talk about nuclear weapons, and an absurd claim that Ukraine plans to detonate a radiological "dirty bomb" on its own territory.

No other country is talking about nuclear use. No country is threatening Russia or threatening President Putin. He should be clear that for the UK and our Allies, any use at all of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the nature of this conflict. There would be severe consequences for Russia.

And how counter-productive would it be for Russia to break a norm against nuclear use that has held since 1945 and has underpinned global security.

Nothing will alter our conviction that the Ukrainians have a right to live in peace and freedom in their own lands.

If Putin were to succeed, every expansionist tyrant would be emboldened to do their worst and no country would be safe.

That is why we stand and will continue to stand alongside our Ukrainian friends until the day comes – as it inevitably will – that they prevail.

Mr Speaker I commend this statement to the House.