

Human suffering in temporarily Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair and thank you to Mr. Samoilenko for briefing the Permanent Council today on the devastating consequences of Russia's illegal invasion on Kherson and its people. It is with heavy hearts that we continue to hear of civilians being killed and injured; of children being left without parents, and parents losing their children. We share the sorrow of the Ukrainian people as they watch their once vibrant cities ruthlessly destroyed.

The international community has witnessed Russia's brazen but futile attempts to assert its control of Ukrainian sovereign territory temporarily under the control of the Russian military.

In places such as Kherson, Russia has installed illegitimate pro-Kremlin administrations. These self-appointed proxies of the Kremlin neither represent the brave Ukrainian citizens under their assumed control nor do they act in meeting their basic needs. Instead many civilians are unable to access essential healthcare services, or fundamental necessities including electricity and water. In Mariupol, the WHO have raised the flag on infectious diseases, particularly cholera, being at risk of spreading. In Kherson, residents were left to collect the remnants of those killed from the streets, and in Skadovsk, people had to organise themselves to prevent looting, with many elderly not receiving their pensions.

We have also heard today the horrifying stories of civilians who have suffered directly at the hands of the Russian invaders. The [Moscow Mechanism report of 12 April](#), stated that credible evidence had been discovered to suggest that violations concerning even the most fundamental human rights, namely, the right to life; prohibition of torture; and other inhuman and degrading treatment, had occurred. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine are but two bodies who have documented cases of rape, torture, false imprisonment, forced deportations, forced disappearances, and summary execution in Russian controlled areas.

Russia has embarked on a systematic policy in temporarily controlled areas to erase Ukrainian culture, history and identity. Russia has simplified the process for issuing passports for residents of the southern Ukrainian regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Ukrainians are being denied the right to use their own currency, with the forcible attempted replacement of the hryvnia with the Russian rouble. Teachers have been brought in from Russia to impose the Russian curriculum on schoolchildren in Kherson. This systematic attempt is not new, and follows a pattern. We know in illegally annexed Crimea, Russia forced Ukrainians to assume Russian citizenship or lose their properties, their access to health care, and their jobs.

Furthermore, Russia has implemented a severe crackdown on free speech and media freedom in these areas. Their aim is clear – to completely control the media space. In Kherson, access to Ukrainian television channels is being blocked; internet service providers are being replaced with Russian ones; and Kherson's residents are being urged to listen to pro-Russian radio stations for their news. Disinformation is being spread through these channels. And this policy by the Russian government is being accompanied by one which sees the disappearance, detention and abduction of Ukrainian journalists or their relatives for daring to tell and expose the truth of Russia's shameful invasion of its sovereign, democratic neighbour.

Mr Chair – we stand with all the Ukrainian people who have bravely demonstrated their sovereign will to resist and remain part of Ukraine. It is the Ukrainian people's right – and the Ukrainian people's right alone – to determine their own future. It is not President Putin's right. And it is increasingly clear that the Russian government and the Russian military cannot break or subjugate Ukraine. Ukraine has shown the most immense resolve, bravery and valiance over the past 106 days. Ukraine has shown the world that it will prevail in its battle for freedom. And we must be steadfast in providing international support that Ukraine both needs and deserves. The UK will be resolute and unwavering in our support – to ensure Ukraine wins its battle for self-determination and Russian forces withdraw. We will do all we can to ensure Ukraine succeeds.