

PM address to Crimea Platform summit: 23 August 2022

I want to congratulate President Volodymyr Zelenskyy particularly for bringing us together and focusing our attention on Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea because that land grab in 2014 was the direct precursor to today's war, and we should have the humility to acknowledge that not everyone realised the sheer enormity of what was happening at the time.

All of our countries however reacted with strength and unity after Putin escalated his onslaught against Ukraine on the 24th February this year, but the first act of this tragedy opened eight years earlier – almost to the day – when Russian forces began fanning out across Crimea, and taking control of a peninsula seizing which constitutes 10,000 square miles of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

At a stroke, Putin forcibly annexed the territory of a European country – and forcibly redrew a European frontier for the first time since 1945.

He ignored the fact that Russia itself had repeatedly recognised Crimea as being part of Ukraine, and he broke so many international agreements that I cannot list them all, but they include [Article 2 of the United Nations Charter](#), the [Helsinki Final Act](#) and the Russia-Ukraine Treaty of Friendship.

And ever since the annexation, the people of Crimea have endured a brutal and systematic campaign of human rights abuses by the Russian authorities, including the persecution of the Tatars, arbitrary arrests, with a tenfold increase in detentions in last year, and the restriction of land ownership to Russian citizens.

Once he had grabbed Crimea, Putin deployed more and more Russian forces in the peninsula, turning the territory into an armed camp from which to threaten the rest of Ukraine, and Crimea duly became the launch pad for the invasion on 24th February. Or one of the launch pads. And I'm afraid that all this has even greater salience today because Putin is planning to do to parts of Ukraine, in fact all of Ukraine, what he has done to Crimea, and he is preparing more annexations and more sham referendums.

So it has never been more important for all of us to stand together in defence of the foundational principle of international law, which is that, no territory, no country, can acquire territory or change borders by force of arms, and it so follows that we will never recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea or any other Ukrainian territory.

In the face of Putin's assault, we must continue give our Ukrainian friends all the military, humanitarian, economic and diplomatic support that they need until Russia ends this hideous war and withdraws its forces from the entirety of Ukraine.

Thank you all very much.