

Russia continues to commit atrocities in Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. I would like to start by offering my condolences to those who lost their lives and those injured by the bombing in Istanbul – terrorism in all guises is abhorrent.

Turning to Ukraine, the UK also expresses condolences for the victims of the missiles which landed in Poland this Tuesday. We stand in solidarity with our ally, Poland. [As my Foreign Secretary stated in our Parliament yesterday](#) – the only reason missiles are flying through European skies, and landing in European villages, is because of Russia's aggression. We commend Poland's decisive, determined, but calm and professional response to the situation.

Over the past few weeks, we have highlighted the dire humanitarian impact of Russia's intensified attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure across Ukraine, ahead of winter. Russia's continued, callous targeting of Ukrainian cities this week shows only Putin's weakness. These were the heaviest Russian missile strikes since the start of the war. Up to 10 million households were left without electricity, showing the cruelty of the approach by the Russian government and military.

Mr Chair, I would like to focus my statement today on life in the Ukrainian territories under temporary Russian control. This started in 2014, not in 2022. A clear pattern has emerged of the repeated, systematic and brutal actions of the Russian military and government against the civilian Ukrainian population. A clear pattern of violations of international law, including international humanitarian law. Horror after horror after horror.

In March 2014, Reshat Ametov was abducted while protesting outside a local government building in Simferopol, Crimea, in protest against the illegal takeover of Crimea by Russian troops. Two weeks later, his body was found with signs of torture. Since then, Russia has continued to persecute and restrict the fundamental freedoms of ethnic and religious groups, including Crimean Tatars like Reshat, with arbitrary arrests, torture and intimidation.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine this year, [two Moscow Mechanism Reports](#), and our weekly statements at this Council, have highlighted further Russian atrocities in Ukraine. The Moscow Mechanism Reports document grave human rights abuses and violations, including torture, executions of civilians, unlawful detention, enforced disappearances, rape of women and of children, and much more. We have condemned Russia's "filtration centres" which subject Ukrainian civilians to interrogations, humiliating body searches and illegal deportations. We have condemned Russia's sham, illegal referenda conducted down the barrel of a gun.

And today, we condemn the latest horrifying accounts coming from Kherson. Yevhenia Virlych, a journalist, stayed in Kherson for five months before escaping. Working in secret for her own safety, she documented how seven

thousand people initially protested against Russia's temporary control in March. Protests stopped by April – because Russian troops were shooting at civilian crowds. Another resident of Kherson, Ludmilla, is 76 years old. Ludmilla wept when she was handed a bag of food by an NGO in newly-liberated Kherson – and described her “months of hell” living under temporary Russian control. Ludmilla's son was killed by shelling in May. Ludmilla's daughter-in-law and grandchildren evacuated to Poland soon after. Like many others, they faced long and dangerous journeys, involving Russian check points and “filtration camps”. Ludmilla decided to stay at her family home and survived without running water, electricity or gas and with dwindling food supplies. Allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law, including the use of torture in Kherson are coming to light.

But there is hope. The Ukrainian flag has been raised again over Kherson only weeks after Putin declared that the city would be part of Russia “forever”. As Kherson and countless liberated settlements have demonstrated, Russia's crimes are systematic and sustained. The Ukrainian people are fighting to take back what is rightfully and legally theirs and escape this living nightmare. In doing so, they are standing up for the fundamental OSCE principles that matter to all of us – of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the non-use of force.

We welcome the news that the Black Sea Grain initiative will be renewed until March. Over 11 million tonnes of grain and other food have already been delivered since July. It is vital this continues.

Mr Chair, the way out of these horrors remains simple. President Putin must withdraw all Russian troops from Ukraine unreservedly and unconditionally. Russia must pay for the damage it has inflicted in Ukraine – [as voted for by 94 countries at the UN this week](#). And those individuals responsible must be held to account for actions which are in clear violation of international law. [As my Prime Minister said at the G20 this week](#), the UK will never back down when it comes to supporting the Ukrainian people in the face of this brutality. We will stand by Ukraine now and until Ukraine prevails. As long as it takes.