

Speech UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement during the Urgent Debate on Ukraine

Mr President, High Commissioner Bachelet, Colleagues,

We, the peoples of the United Nations, meet at a moment of unprecedented threat to the very principles upon which this Organisation was forged: to save ourselves from the scourge of war and protect human rights around the globe. It is essential that we do not turn away.

We have condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, an unprovoked and premeditated attack against innocent people, and a clear violation of international law.

President Putin lied to the world, staging absurd pretexts and provocations to justify his aggression. Now, civilians all over Ukraine – women, children – are sheltering as missiles hit their homes. Many have already lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands more have been forced to leave their homes, their families, and their livelihoods, to escape Russia's onslaught.

There are multiple allegations of human rights violations and war crimes as a result of Russia's military action.

It is unconscionable to think that a fellow member of the Human Rights Council, a nation that fought courageously with us to defeat fascism, would commit these egregious violations. But President Putin has proved that he has no respect for human rights, the UN Charter, or international law.

That is why it is essential that this Council establishes a Commission of Inquiry, to investigate alleged abuses and violations of human rights, and violations of international humanitarian law, preserve evidence and prevent impunity. Russia must be held to account for its campaign of destruction.

And we must condemn Russia's actions in the strongest possible terms today – as 141 of us did in the General Assembly yesterday. We call on our fellow Council members to stand by our shared values and support Ukraine's draft resolution, and we encourage all Member States to join us in cosponsoring.

The UK stands with the people of Ukraine in this moment of agony. We salute their bravery and determination as they defend their country and their freedom. We will always support their right to choose their own destiny.

Slava Ukraini.