



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
on the occasion of the International Day
in Support of Victims of Torture**

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1431st meeting of the Permanent Council,
06 July 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

Torture and enforced disappearance, which in certain circumstances may amount to crimes against humanity, have become a routine practice and one of the instruments of warfare for the russian authorities in the course of their aggressive war against Ukraine.

At the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Torture and other Grave Breaches of International Humanitarian Law and Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law, organized by the Chairpersonship of the North Macedonia earlier this year in Hofburg, we heard numerous testimonies of witnesses and victims, both civilians and prisoners of war, of russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

These were terrifying first-hand stories of those who went through torture by russian military, witnessed how others were tortured, cruelly and inhumanly treated, including many cases of torture to death by members of the russian armed forces.

As documented by the OSCE Moscow Mechanism experts and ODIHR's interim reports on the russian aggression against Ukraine, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 russia has widely practiced torture, enforced disappearance and abduction, rape and other sexual violence in the newly invaded territories, including the parts of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

In fact, each subsequent settlement liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine reveals horrific war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the russian army.

There are numerous cases of abduction and torture by the russian occupiers of heads of local authorities, pro-Ukrainian activists opposing the russian occupation, school principals who refused to switch to russian curricula as well as businessmen, journalists, community leaders, human rights defenders and ordinary Ukrainian citizens who refused to cooperate with the russians in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

According to the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry and the Office of the UNCHR reports, the Russian side committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, counting targeted killing of civilians, unlawful detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances, various forms of mistreatment, including torture, inflicted on detained civilians and prisoners of war.

Torture are being particularly severe against current or former members of Ukrainian Armed Forces, their friends and relatives. The mentioned reports also documented torture and ill-treatment of POWs before or during their interrogations. There are facts of the arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and torture or other ill-treatment of children.

We view as one of the challenges, which should be duly addressed by the international organizations, is that Russia denies access to the places, where it detains Ukrainian civilians and POWs, for the ICRC and other independent international monitors.

Ukraine calls upon the OSCE Chairpersonship, institutions and participating States to apply all efforts in order to secure access to those Ukrainian citizens Russia unlawfully detains.

Distinguished colleagues,

Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine brought many cases of torture and ill-treatment perpetrated by the invading army.

Those responsible for these horrific acts should not go unpunished and the victims and their families need to receive redress for their suffering.

It is critical to move forward with the issue of ensuring accountability for perpetrators of the acts of torture and other crimes during Russia's war of aggression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.