



Statement calling on the Russian Federation to immediately cease military action, withdraw, and take accountability for violations of international law, three years after the start of its invasion of Ukraine

24 February 2025

1. Three years have passed since the Russian Federation (Russia) began its military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. As we have repeatedly criticized, Russia's invasion is an act of aggression that violates Ukrainian sovereignty and is an illegal use of force that clearly violates the UN Charter, and it is completely unacceptable.

2. In the course of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as numerous war crimes and the crime of aggression as prohibited by the Treaty Establishing the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute). According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), at least 12,654 civilians have been killed and 29,392 civilians have been injured since the invasion began.¹ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the estimated number of people that have fled from Ukraine as of 17 February 2025 is 6,903,200.² Such killing of civilians and attacks on infrastructure essential to civilian life are clear violations of international humanitarian law, such as the Geneva Conventions.

International organizations, such as the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, have reported serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law by the Russian military, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, such as attacks on and deliberate killings of civilians and non-combatants, indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and other sexual violence, and unjustified destruction of civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure and medical facilities.³ This includes the deportation and forcible transfer of approximately 20,000 children to date, as confirmed by a Ukrainian government agency.⁴

3. Furthermore, in order to continue its military invasion, the Putin regime in Russia has been strictly controlling domestic speech and severely repressing anti-war movements. Outrageous acts that trample on freedom of expression and the press and personal freedom are completely unacceptable, from blocking access to certain social media and independent media sites, to amending and enacting a criminal code that severely punishes the dissemination of so-called "disinformation" about Russian military actions and public calls for an end to military actions, with a maximum sentence of 15 years of imprisonment, to arbitrary detentions and abusive treatment of opposition leaders and anti-war activists (such as transfers without their lawyers' knowledge, long-term imprisonment in punitive cells, isolation measures, denial of appropriate medical care, etc.).

4. After three full years passing since Russia began its invasion without heeding the strong protests and condemnations of the international community, further killings, human rights violations, and violations of the international legal order cannot be tolerated. Currently, there are reports of efforts toward ceasefire negotiations, but it is absolutely unacceptable that the United States and Russia should resolve

the conflict by ratifying violations of international law against Ukraine, a sovereign state, and forcing it onto Ukraine. Such a resolution would violate Ukraine's sovereignty and political independence, and it would be incompatible with the principle of international law (UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 (1970), the so-called "Declaration of Friendly Relations"), which states that territorial annexation based on the use or threat of force is illegal under any circumstances.

Any peace agreement must not exonerate Russia from violations of international law or war crimes, and it goes without saying that measures such as the establishment of an international mechanism for compensation for damages and losses in Ukraine should be taken.⁵

HRN once again strongly urges the Russian government, first and foremost, to immediately cease all military actions and withdraw from Ukraine and to ensure accountability for violations of international law (including responsibility for redress and compensation). We also call on the international community to continue and strengthen political and economic pressure to end the aggression and to work towards realizing lasting peace based on the UN Charter and international law.

¹ OHCHR, "Fact Sheet: Three years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: Key facts and findings about the impact on human rights 24 February 2022 to February 2025", Feb, 2025, <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Human%20rights%203%20years%20into%20Russia%27s%20full-scale%20invasion%20of%20Ukraine-factsheet%20%28ENG%29.pdf>.

² UNHCR, "Ukraine Refugee Situation", last updated 19 Feb. 2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

³ OHCHR, "Press release: War crimes, indiscriminate attacks on infrastructure, systematic and widespread torture show disregard for civilians, says UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine" 16 Mar. 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/war-crimes-indiscriminate-attacks-infrastructure-systematic-and-widespread>; OHCHR, *supra*, note 1.

⁴ Children of War, "Children of War: 24 February 2022 - 25 February 2025", <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua/en/>.

⁵ UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-11/5, "Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine", 15 Nov. 2022, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/ES-11/5>.