



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9126**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 7 September 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. De Rivière/Mrs. Jarraud-Darnault . . . . . (France)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Koumby Missambo
Ghana . . . . .	Mrs. Hackman
India . . . . .	Mrs. Kamboj
Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Mythen
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; and Ms. Oleksandra Drik, Coordinator for international cooperation, Center for Civil Liberties.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

**Ms. DiCarlo:** As we are painfully aware, the war in Ukraine continues to rage. Since I briefed the Security Council on 24 August (see S/PV.9115), because of the fighting at least 104 civilians, including 10 children, have died, and at least 253 civilians, including 25 children, have been injured, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That brings the total number to 13,917 civilian casualties: 5,718 killed, including 372 children, and 8,199 injured, including 635 children. Those are only verified figures, and the actual numbers are likely significantly higher.

The war has also continued to drive large-scale displacement. More 6.9 million people are internally displaced, an increase of 330,000 since my latest briefing. Most of the newly displaced come from eastern and southern Ukraine. The current number of Ukrainian refugees recorded across Europe has surpassed 7 million, up from 6.7 million just two weeks ago. Ukrainian women, who constitute half of those refugees, continue to face significantly increased security risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Thousands of people in the conflict-affected areas of the Donetsk region and, most acutely, in the city of Mariupol, lack

access to reliable running water, increasing the risk of communicable disease.

All those numbers and facts, although shocking, cannot convey the full scale of the tragedy. But in the face of the international community's inability to stop this senseless war, we must continue to record its horrific consequences as faithfully and as accurately as possible. It is our responsibility and, indeed, the very least we can do in order to help prevent the war from escalating further and to deter other potential violent conflicts.

The United Nations continues to mobilize in order to address the massive impact of the war on civilians. The United Nations Development Programme has launched an assessment of the consequences of the war on living conditions, health, access to education, livelihoods, food security, social status, as well as overall levels of poverty and human development. Results are expected to be available in December.

As humanitarian needs rapidly rise, the Organization's response has scaled up and now reaches 12.7 million people with various forms of assistance. Over 560 humanitarian organizations — more than 60 per cent of them national non-governmental organizations — are now operating countrywide. That fully complements the incredible work that thousands of Ukrainian volunteers are carrying out in their country.

The United Nations is actively seeking to ensure that protection and assistance are available in all areas of Ukraine. We remain extremely concerned about the lack of access to Ukrainians living in areas that are currently not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. Our humanitarian response includes only 1 million people in those areas, despite the confirmed enormous humanitarian needs.

The Secretary-General has spoken at length about the impact of the war around the world, especially on shortages of food and fertilizer. As we have stressed before, the effects on countries already severely hit by climate change, drought or instability have been extremely worrisome. Somalia, for example, a country that before February sourced at least 90 per cent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, is on the brink of famine. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns that there are concrete indications that famine will occur later this year in the southern Bay region of the country. Thousands are

dying in a historic drought made worse by the effects of the war in Ukraine.

We are grateful that the Black Sea Grain Initiative continues to enable food exports from Ukraine. Since 1 August, 100 ships have left Ukrainian ports carrying over 2,300,000 metric tons of grain across three continents, including 30 per cent to low and lower-middle income countries. The World Food Programme has thus far chartered three vessels to transport wheat from Ukraine in support of its humanitarian operations. Thanks in part to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, world food commodity prices are decreasing, the Food and Agriculture Organization reports, although they remain elevated.

But to ensure that food reaches all in need, Russian fertilizers and food products must reach foreign markets. The United Nations continues its efforts to facilitate access to those products, which are not under international sanctions, to world markets.

The Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant remains a concern. The Council heard briefings yesterday (see S/PV.9124) from the Secretary-General and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding the dangers of continued military activity at the plant. As the Secretary-General said yesterday, we welcome the IAEA mission as a first step to de-escalate the situation at Zaporizhzhya.

The IAEA mission report contains recommendations to further de-escalate the situation at the plant, including a proposal to create a nuclear safety and security protection zone in Zaporizhzhya to ensure the safety of the operating staff and maintain the physical integrity of the plant. As an immediate step, I reiterate the Secretary-General's urgent call for a complete cessation of military activity in and around the plant. Demilitarization is the only answer to ensure the safety of the facility.

The fact-finding mission to Olenivka is set to deploy in the coming days in order to look into the incident on 29 July that led to the death of 53 Ukrainian prisoners of war. Between 75 and 130 more were injured. The head of the mission, retired Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, is accompanied by an experienced team of senior officials and experts. The mission must be able to conduct its work without any interference and have safe, secure and unfettered access to people, places and evidence. I want to thank Ukraine and Russia for their constructive approach in

enabling preparations for the mission. We count on their continued support.

At my most recent briefing, I stressed that we were concerned by the treatment of prisoners of war by both sides. I want to reiterate that the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine must have unimpeded access to all individuals detained in relation to the ongoing war. That includes access to places of internment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees in the Russian Federation. Both sides to the conflict must fully abide with their obligations under international law. I welcome the parties' continued engagement to agree on prisoner exchanges. Just last Friday, 14 prisoners were exchanged in the Donetsk region.

The persistent allegations of forced displacement, deportation and so-called filtration camps run by the Russian Federation and affiliated local forces are extremely disturbing. Such reports must be investigated with the cooperation of the competent authorities. Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris will provide more information on that issue.

We have repeatedly discussed in the Chamber how the war in Ukraine is devastating that country, while also endangering regional and global stability. As members heard from the Secretary-General yesterday (see S/PV.9124), just last week, the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) could not produce a substantive outcome after consensus was blocked because of issues related to the war. The NPT failure is only the latest example of how the conflict has affected international relations and cooperation. The longer it continues, the greater the risks it poses to international peace and security.

We need a peace in Ukraine that is founded on respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law. All wars are tragic, but none more so than wars of choice.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Brands Kehris.

**Ms. Brands Kehris:** The armed attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, has resulted in the mass forced displacement of civilians in Ukraine. Some

7 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine, and millions more have sought refuge outside of the country. Intense hostilities, including the large-scale destruction of critical civilian infrastructure and housing, has forced many people to flee their homes. Human rights violations in territory occupied by the Russian Federation or controlled by affiliated armed groups have also caused people to flee.

Such conditions have led to a situation in which those fleeing danger often felt compelled to evacuate in whichever direction was possible, irrespective of their preferences. Our Office has documented a significant number of cases of civilians who were displaced to the Russian Federation, including about a dozen cases where members of the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups ordered civilians in Mariupol to leave their homes or shelters and took them either to territory in Ukraine under their control or to the Russian Federation.

Once displaced in the territory of the Russian Federation, in the cases documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilians have had freedom of movement. Many Ukrainians have chosen to either travel onward to other countries or to return to Ukraine. However, those who chose to return to Ukraine were not provided with financial resources or other support to do so. For those who have been taken to remote regions of the Russian Federation, the costs of return may be particularly prohibitive. OHCHR notes that, in situations where persons have been ordered by the occupying Power to evacuate for their own safety or for imperative military reasons, those who wish to return must be brought back to their homes as soon as hostilities have ceased.

There have been credible allegations of forced transfers of unaccompanied children to Russian occupied territory, or to the Russian Federation itself. We are concerned that the Russian authorities have adopted a simplified procedure to grant Russian citizenship to children without parental care and that those children would be eligible for adoption by Russian families. Under article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Russian Federation is prohibited from changing the personal status of those children, including their nationality. Moreover, we are particularly concerned that the announced plans of the Russian authorities to allow the movement of children from Ukraine to families in the Russian Federation do not appear to include steps for family reunification or

to ensure respect in other ways for the principle of the best interests of the child.

Our Office has verified that Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups subject civilians to so-called filtration, a system of security checks and personal data collection. Individuals subjected to filtration include those leaving areas of ongoing or recent hostilities and those residing in, or moving through, territory controlled by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups. Although security checks are not prohibited under international humanitarian law, we are concerned that such checks — and detentions that may follow — take place outside any legal framework and do not respect the principles of necessity and proportionality.

According to credible reports received by OHCHR, the practice has resulted in numerous human rights violations, including of the rights to liberty, security of person and privacy. In cases that our Office has documented, during filtration, Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups have subjected persons to body searches, sometimes involving forced nudity, and detailed interrogations about the personal background, family ties, political views and allegiances of the individual concerned. They examined personal belongings, including mobile devices, and gathered personal identity data, pictures and fingerprints. In some cases, those awaiting filtration spent nights in vehicles or in unequipped and overcrowded premises, sometimes without adequate access to food, water or sanitation. We are particularly concerned that women and girls are at risk of sexual abuse during filtration procedures.

OHCHR has documented that men and women perceived as having ties with Ukrainian armed forces or State institutions, or as having pro-Ukrainian or anti-Russian views, were subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance. They were transferred to penal colonies, including the now infamous penal colony near Olenivka, and pre-trial detention centres, where they were interrogated and sometimes tortured to extract a so-called confession of their active cooperation with the Government of Ukraine. Some detainees were released after one or two months, while others remain detained as of today, with little or no information for their families about their whereabouts and fate.

Our Office has been seeking access to individuals detained after failing to pass filtration and to those who reportedly passed filtration but were nevertheless detained and sent to a centre for evacuees in Bezimenne, in the Donetsk region, close to the border with the Russian Federation. OHCHR has not been granted access to those individuals and is concerned that they may be subjected to torture or ill-treatment while being held incommunicado.

Forced displacement entails great risks for civilians. It not only gravely impacts their lives, dignity and health, but also negatively affects their economic and social rights. Since 24 February, we have documented a significant deterioration in access to adequate housing, social security and livelihood opportunities for displaced persons, in particular for people and groups in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, Roma people and older persons. Many of them are staying for prolonged periods of time in degrading conditions in ill-equipped short-term shelters.

We also have concerns that the deterioration of the economic situation, mass displacement and destruction of social ties have heightened risks of sexual violence and trafficking, especially for women and girls, who make up the vast majority of refugees.

OHCHR is closely monitoring the situation in Ukraine and the broader region, paying particular attention to groups in vulnerable situations and at higher risks of human rights violations, including trafficking. Risks of trafficking can also arise at a later phase when people have exhausted their savings or when States reduce the scope of their protection or social assistance. Receiving States should put in place systematic protection and security measures, such as gender-based violence risk mitigation with elements of prevention, reporting and services for survivors of violence, including trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

We urge the Russian Federation to grant unimpeded and confidential access to our Office and other independent international monitors to all places of detention under their control, notably to places where people who underwent filtration are being detained. The Russian Federation is also called upon to provide representatives of international human rights and humanitarian organizations with unhindered, timely and safe access to persons from conflict-affected areas

of Ukraine who are now in the Russian Federation or in areas of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation.

Lastly, we urge the international community to continue supporting the citizens and residents of Ukraine who have had to flee their homes.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Brands Kehris for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Drik.

**Ms. Drik:** During the six months of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Center for Civil Liberties, together with the partners from the Tribunal for Putin initiative, which is a coalition of Ukrainian human rights non-governmental organizations, has documented more than 17,000 potential international crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine. As of the end of August, the initiative's database contains information pertaining to around 30 different types of crimes, including direct attacks on and damage to civilian objects; deaths and injuries caused by shelling; the use of weapons causing superfluous injury; damage to buildings dedicated to religion, education, art and science; the forced disappearance of persons; pillaging of an occupied town or place; murder; the wilful killing of civilians; illegal detention; and depriving civilians of their liberty.

That last crime often takes place during so-called filtration, which includes unlawful practices that Russia has been implementing in the occupied territories of Ukraine over the past eight years, as the monitoring activities of the Center for Civil Liberties have revealed. Basically, Russia has expanded its experience and practices into the other temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine with its full-scale invasion in February. Just to give members a taste of what that process looks like for Ukrainians these days, I would like to recount some of the stories of the people who passed through filtration and were brave enough to share their stories. Some of their names have been changed for security reasons.

Mr. Yakov testified that he was interrogated by Russian military intelligence officers and Russian-controlled forces in occupied Donetsk. When they found out that his wife was donating to the Ukrainian army, they called her a fascist and Nazi and attempted to take away their child for what they call re-education, as they often do with the children of parents whom Russia detains in the occupied territories. The

desperate parents decided that they would rather kill themselves than give away their child. However, the Russians got interested in Yakov's professional skills. They continued his interrogation by asking him questions about the defenders of Mariupol and the Azov battalion. When Mr. Yakov had nothing to say, because he did not belong to the Ukrainian military, they began beating him and repeatedly hit him in the groin. They then connected electrical contacts to his neck. When Mr. Yakov recovered after the electric shocks, he started coughing. He realized that all his dental fillings had fallen out during his torture.

While lying on the floor, he noticed brown-coloured stains. It was blood, but it was not his. It was the blood of those who had been there before him. Then Russians grabbed him and pointed to a nearby log to which handcuffs were attached. It was also covered in blood and white shards that looked like bone fragments. He was saved only by the arrival of Russian military officers who wanted him to work for them in Mariupol. However, Mr. Yakov asked if he could take his family to Russia on a pretext of his child's need for medical care. Subsequently, the entire family managed to escape to Europe.

Another story involves a 21-year-old student from Mariupol, Taras Tselenchenko, who uses his real name because he no longer has anything to lose. His father was shot by Russian soldiers. His home city was destroyed, and, after hiding in a basement for weeks, he and his 80-year-old grandmother, who had cancer, were taken to go through the filtration process twice — first in Donetsk and then at the Russian border. There he was fingerprinted, photographed, interrogated and psychologically pressured through interrogation by a former member of the Ukrainian military, along with a Russian wearing civilian clothes and holding a baseball bat in his hands. He was also asked to give up his Ukrainian passport, but he refused and kept it. Four days later, as soon as he could, he left Russia and made his way through Georgia and Türkiye to Germany.

Another story is that of a 17-year-old musician named Marya Vychenko, whose entire family went through a similar humiliating procedure at a filtration camp in Mangush. The only difference was that she was also sexually harassed during her interrogation but was spared violence because the Russian soldiers did not find her pretty enough. "Maybe the next one will be prettier", they said to her. Meanwhile, her father had to go through all the steps of the humiliating procedure

only because he had erased the data on his phone before the filtration, which the Russians did not like. Those who do not pass filtration can be detained in filtration camps for months. From there they may be sent to detention centres or prisons in the occupied territories or Russia. We can imagine what goes on in them from the testimonies of survivors such as 16-year-old Vadym Buriak, who was detained while attempting to leave Melitopol and kept for three months. He had to live in a prison cell without even a working toilet. Almost daily, he would hear and see the torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war and then be forced to clean up the blood in the torture rooms.

And that is the case when people are able to get out at all, while many have ended up like Ivan Kozlov, from Kherson. He was detained during the filtration in Crimea, according to information available to us, and has been kept in detention centres in Sevastopol and Simferopol since April. During all that time, his relatives have had no opportunity to speak to him, learn about his condition or contact him in any way. Some civilian hostages are tortured so that they will admit that they are linked to the Ukrainian military, as illustrated by the testimony provided by a survivor named Aleksei Dubrovskiy, who was taken hostage on 25 March in the Zaporizhzhya region and held in a number of different locations, including the Melitopol airport, a shed, a police station in Melitopol and a detention centre in Kursk, in Russia. He and other hostages were hit and kicked, tortured with electric shocks and forced to crawl on the floor, and given no medical assistance of any kind. As he testified, some of the torture was aimed at forcing civilians to admit that they were linked to the Ukrainian army, as if Russia needed to prepare those hostages as part of an exchange fund. It is not rare to hear in the testimonies of those who have passed filtration that it appears that those who failed to pass the filtration were killed. As recently published satellite images reveal, there are mass graves close to some of the filtration camps, which could mean that some of the detainees may have been killed or tortured to death.

All the people who go through the so-called filtration procedures find themselves in the position of being civilian hostages, humiliated and kept in inhumane conditions, with no access to basic sanitary needs, food, water and medical care while they are tortured and witness the torture of others. They have no legal status because according to international law

they cannot be held in Russia at all. But that does not even include all the civilian hostages that Russians and Russian-controlled groups in the occupied territories have illegally detained. Many are being kidnapped and taken from their homes. They just disappear from the occupied territories until we find out that they are being detained in one of many detention centres somewhere in the occupied territories or in Russia or Belarus.

And those are not just rare individual cases. The Center for Civil Liberties alone — just one human rights organization — has already received information about at least 600 such cases, often from relatives of the Ukrainians who are being detained. It is a systematic, planned and organized activity. Moreover, based on the information that the Center for Civil Liberties collected over the past eight years, the filtration practices did not start with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February. Rather, Russia has been conducting them in the occupied territories since its first military invasion in Ukraine in 2014. It later scaled that experience to all of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It is currently estimated that tens of thousands of Ukrainians — as many as 100,000 — are being kept in filtration camps or detention centres in areas occupied by Russia or in Russia itself. That has developed into an organized and branched system of facilities, which has been extensively covered in a recent report by Conflict Observatory that coincides in many instances with the data we possess.

Basically, Russia has established a zone of complete lawlessness in the occupied territories, and by holding fake referendums and declaring those territories independent, the Government is attempting to shift the responsibility away from itself for the monstrous atrocities that are being committed there. The centres I have visited have never been independent. They are occupied by Russia, which as the occupying Power is fully responsible for adhering to the provisions of international law in those territories. Instead, Russia's army, under Russia's political and military leadership, is ignoring international law or twisting it completely for the purposes of its propaganda. Basically it is doing whatever it wants. Ukraine is not even the first country that Russia has invaded in the past 30 years, but Russia has always got away with it.

That is why Russia must be stopped and its war criminals brought to justice. Otherwise those atrocities will continue, hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians will continue to suffer and Russia will

continue to do whatever it wants and invade countries whenever it wants. If it is not stopped, who knows which country it will come to liberate next? That is why we are urging the Council to create effective mechanisms for monitoring Russia's compliance with the norms of international law in order to ensure that it stops its illegal detention of Ukrainian citizens who have not passed so-called filtration; ends its practices of torture, physical violence, threats and humiliation; provides complete and comprehensive information on the location and state of health of detainees at the request of relatives and official representatives of the State of Ukraine; and provides legal protection in the event of official allegations against those persons, including access to lawyers, international monitors and, where applicable, sponsor countries. Most importantly, the Council must promote the establishment of the accountability mechanisms that are needed to bring Russia and Russian war criminals to justice.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Drik for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Ms. Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik for their briefings, which were insightful and helpful but also very troubling.

(*spoke in English*)

One might think that there is almost no meaningful aspect of Russia's war of choice in Ukraine that we in the Council have not discussed in the course of the past six months. But today's topic is one. Since the beginning of the aggression, strong concerns have been raised, including by some of us — and for good reason — about the alleged deportations, interrogations and detentions of Ukrainian civilians by Russian and Russian-affiliated forces, all of them policies and actions that run counter to international humanitarian law. Our concerns are no longer allegations. They are facts that have been carefully and painstakingly confirmed by international institutions, independent agencies, human rights groups and professional news media, based on accurate information from interviews with people who have been deported and interrogated, as well as additional and concordant resources, including intelligence reports, verified social-media postings and satellite images. Everything confirms it, and the conclusion is beyond doubt and staggering. Russia is

altering the demographic make-up of Ukraine. To put it in other terms, that is social engineering.

Despite the appeals and requests, no independent bodies have been allowed to inspect the filtration camps, which in our view are an archipelago of unlawfulness, dehumanizing processes and black holes of human rights abuses where Ukrainians face torture and loyalty tests. Those who have passed through the camps have reported humiliation, verbal abuse and physical torture ranging from strip searches to electric shocks and staged mock executions, about which Ms. Drik provided spine-chilling details.

According to a report recently published by Human Rights Watch, Russian and Russian-affiliated officials have forcibly transferred Ukrainian civilians in areas of Ukraine occupied temporarily by Russia or to the Russian Federation, including very remote areas. Ms. Brands Kehris has just confirmed that forced transfers of adults and children have taken place. During the so-called filtration process, biometric data, including fingerprints and facial images, as well as personal belongings, have been collected. People have been interrogated both about their relations to military armed forces and their political views. Any sign that links anyone to the Ukraine Government is an indictment with dire consequences. The report notes that individuals who failed the filtration process have been detained and the fate of some is unknown. There are serious grounds for concern that their lives are at risk — if they are still alive.

Moreover, in July an expert mission established by the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to investigate alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by Russian forces in Ukraine since 24 February identified the establishment and use of so-called filtration centres. Furthermore, based on analysis of satellite images, Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab has identified 21 sites in Donetsk oblast alone affiliated with filtration operations. Those are not mere checkpoints but makeshift prisons, another phase of Russia's brutal war in Ukraine.

Anyone who has studied a bit of history cannot fail to notice that filtration camps are rooted in Soviet and Russian history, from the Second World War to the Chechen wars of the 1990s. The world-renowned Russian investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya

gathered testimony from thousands of Chechen civilians detained in similar centres, revealing brutal interrogation methods, torture and human rights violations. Despite being decades apart, the policies and aims remain the same: to identify civilians they believe can assimilate into Russian culture and rule and to punish or remove those who will not. The situation is black and white. If people pay allegiance to the occupier, they are free; if not, they will be detained and may disappear. That is what is happening to countless Ukrainian civilians. Credible estimates indicate that some 1.5 million people have been processed through those filtration camps. As of June, the OSCE put that figure even higher — as many as 1.7 million Ukrainians — and it has not stopped since. But the main question concerns those who remain unaccounted for.

A terrifying dark spot in that bleak picture is the situation of children. Human rights advocates believe that Russians have separated Ukrainian children from their parents at the filtration camps and placed Ukrainian orphans with Russian families. When they do not kill children — and hundreds have already been killed — they simply uproot them and deport them to Russia. Imagine for a second the indescribable distress of Tatiana Tolstokorova, who recognized Nastya, her missing three-year-old granddaughter, being welcomed by adoptive adults in Russia, in a video posted on 14 July on VKontakte, the equivalent of Facebook in Russia. That seems to have become the nightmare of tens of thousands of Ukrainian mothers. It is reported that Russian adults in Russia who take in Ukrainian orphans receive a stipend that is four times higher than the minimum wage.

International law is clear. The forcible transfer of civilians is prohibited under international humanitarian law, the laws of the war and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and it can be prosecuted as a war crime and a crime against humanity. The Russian Federation is a State party to all those instruments, and it violates them, just as it does everything else, at will. We call on international organizations and independent agencies and encourage Ukrainian authorities to collect all the documentation available that could be used in the accountability process. The violations of international law will not remain unpunished, and the crimes committed in Ukraine will haunt those responsible until the day they die.

There is a lot that has come into the open about the unlawful policies of Russia in Ukraine, but what

we know may be only the tip of the iceberg. There is certainly significantly more that we do not know, and that is the bigger story and the bigger worry. That is why, if Russia has nothing to hide, as it claims, it should enable immediate and unrestricted access for United Nations bodies — first and foremost the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but other international humanitarian actors as well — to the so-called filtration centres and to the forced deportation and relocation areas in Russia where Ukrainian civilians are being filtered, interrogated, humiliated, denied their rights and unlawfully detained. Will Russia do that?

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their briefings. And I thank Ms. Drik so much for offering a stark and credible view of the situation from a civil-society perspective.

I want us to imagine, for a moment, that we are parents in Mariupol. You and your partner are young and healthy. You have a 10-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. You are happy. You are not particularly political, but you love your life in Ukraine. And suddenly, Russia invades. Russian forces bomb your schools and hospitals. They destroy your peaceful city. Still, you do your best to keep your family safe. You huddle in shelters. You try to survive. One day, you and your family are trying to scrounge up some food and you are stopped on the street by Russian forces. You are escorted against your will to a centre to undergo filtration. You are terrified about what happens next, because your grandmother told you stories of her friends and neighbours disappearing in the Soviet Union and even what Russia did to its own citizens during the war in Chechnya.

You are separated from your partner and your children. Your personal biometric information is recorded. Your Ukrainian driver's licence and passport are confiscated. Your cell phone is searched for perceived anti-Russian messages. You are stripped of your clothes. You are interrogated. You are beaten. You hear gunfire and screams from rooms next door. Others deemed more threatening are being tortured and killed. Because you are of fighting age, you are asked to fight for Russia. When you refuse, you are given a Russian passport and sent deep into Russia against your will, far away from your family and with no means to

communicate with anyone you know or love. You have been filtered.

That is the picture that many credible reports from diverse sources present of the so-called filtration operations that Russia has set up in Ukraine. We now have eyewitness testimony from victims and increasingly detailed reporting from groups such as Human Rights Watch, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab. And you have heard two of our briefers today share that information. Even Russia's State-managed TASS news agency has reported on the many Ukrainians who have been relocated to Russia.

At those filtration locations, Russian authorities or proxies search, interrogate, coerce and reportedly sometimes torture subjects. But those horrors are not limited to the centres that have been set up. Filtration may also occur at checkpoints, routine traffic stops or on the street. In an interview conducted by Human Rights Watch, a man from Mariupol said that he and dozens of Mariupol residents were forced to stay in a schoolhouse under filthy conditions, and that was even before they were taken to undergo filtration. Many got sick. He said, "We felt like hostages." Those operations aim to identify individuals whom Russia deems insufficiently compliant or compatible with its control. And there is mounting and credible evidence that those considered threatening to Russian control because of perceived pro-Ukrainian leanings are disappeared or further detained. One eyewitness said that she overheard a Russian soldier say "I shot at least 10 people" who had not passed filtration. Estimates from a variety of sources, including the Russian Government, indicate that the Russian authorities have interrogated, detained and forcibly deported between 900,000 and 1.6 million Ukrainian citizens from their homes to Russia, often to isolated regions in the Far East.

I want to be clear. The United States has information that officials from Russia's presidential Administration are overseeing and coordinating those filtration operations. And we are further aware that they are providing lists of Ukrainians to be targeted for filtration and receiving reports on the scope and the progress of operations. Filtered — the word does not begin to convey the horror and the depravity of those premeditated policies. Just look at how Russia is treating Ukrainian children. Estimates indicate that thousands of children have been subject to filtration,

some separated from their families and taken from orphanages before being put up for adoption in Russia. The United States has information that in July alone, more than 1,800 children were transferred from Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine to Russia. Of course, I need not remind the Security Council that the forcible transfer or deportation of protected persons from occupied territories to the territory of the occupier is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians and constitutes a war crime.

We should take a moment to consider the fate of those who do not pass filtration. The evidence is growing every day that thousands of Ukrainians deemed a threat owing to their potential affiliation with the Ukrainian army, territorial defence forces, media, Government or civil-society groups are reportedly being detained or simply disappearing.

Why are they doing that? Why are they confiscating Ukrainian identity documents? Why are they forcing Ukrainians to fill out Russian passport applications? Why are they intimidating locals and deporting anyone deemed threatening? Why are they systematically cataloguing Ukrainians moving through the system? Why is Russia appointing officials in occupied areas, imposing its education curriculum in schools and trying to get Ukrainian citizens to apply for Russian passports? Why are Russian forces and proxies doing their best to erase the living memory of Ukraine?

The reason is simple: to prepare for an attempted annexation. The goal is to change sentiments by force. To provide a fraudulent veneer of legitimacy for the Russian occupation and eventual, purported annexation of even more Ukrainian territory. That effort to fabricate facts on the ground is a predicate for sham referendums. It is part of the Russian playbook for Ukraine that we have been warning Council members about since the very beginning of the war. Those referendums will attempt to create a false semblance of legality and public support so that Russia believes that it can annex Kherson, Zaporizhzhya and other regions of Ukraine. Of course we will never recognize any efforts by Russia to change Ukraine's borders by force. We must hold the perpetrators of these atrocities to account. We must respond as an international community that still respects the Charter of the United Nations. We know what Russia will say about all of it. It will deny, deny and deny, but there is a simple way to know if any of it is true. Let the United Nations in. Give the independent observers access. Give non-governmental

organizations access. Allow humanitarian access. Let the world see what is going on.

As Security Council members, we are here to promote international peace and security and uphold the Charter. At a minimum, I hope that each of us here acknowledges that as we heard today from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, all persons being subjected to filtration need access to United Nations and humanitarian agencies as soon as possible so that we can verify their well-being. Until Russia provides that access, we will have to rely on the evidence we have accumulated and the brave testimony of survivors. The picture they paint, alongside the mounting reports, is chilling.

There will come a day when we are gathered in the Council to condemn the Russian Federation's attempts to annex more of Ukraine's territory. I ask that members remember what they have heard here today. No one — I repeat no one — will be able to say that we were not warned.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I join the previous two speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Kehris and Ms. Oleksandra Drik for their briefings.

As we have discussed, today we meet to address the emerging evidence of further potential Russian violations and abuses of international law. We are deeply concerned about reports by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and civil-society organizations that Russia is systematically detaining, processing and deporting Ukrainian men, women and children, with chilling echoes of European history.

As we have heard, while passing through filtration, civilians reportedly face interrogation, body searches, stripping, invasive data collection, ill treatment and torture. Those who are deemed most threatening are reportedly held indefinitely in detention centres, while others, including unaccompanied children, are forcibly deported to Russia. Some simply disappear. We therefore call on the Russian Federation to allow the United Nations and other relevant international organizations immediate, full and unhindered access to those held in filtration camps and detention centres and for reports to be fully investigated to ensure that those responsible can be held to account. We are also concerned that Russia may be using forced deportations

and displacement in an attempt to forcibly change the demographic make-up of parts of Ukraine. What does that tell us about Russia's war?

First, it tells us about its methods and its disregard for the rules that we agreed and observe here at the United Nations — the collective rules that bind us together. Russia acts as if the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law do not apply to it. Secondly, it confirms that this is not just an attempt to destroy Ukraine's democracy, but also Ukrainian identity and culture. Its alleged de-Nazification is a cover for de-Ukrainianization and annexation. Finally, it confirms what has been abundantly clear over the past six months. Russia's army is not being welcomed as it enters Ukrainian territory. This is a war of conquest, occupation and oppression, and a war to eliminate Ukraine.

We therefore call yet again on the Russian Federation to fully observe its obligations under international law and to put an end to its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The unresolved Ukrainian crisis and the deteriorating humanitarian situation have inflicted a heavy toll on ordinary people. It is worrying that the conflict shows no sign of ending even as a long winter approaches. Ukraine and its neighbours are facing additional challenges on an enormous scale. We must therefore step up our actions, make a greater effort to bring about peace and do our utmost to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

As a matter of principle, under no circumstances should civilians and civilian infrastructure be targeted in conflict. The protection of civilians must come first. The parties concerned should strictly abide by international humanitarian law, protect the legitimate rights and interests of refugees and displaced persons, especially women and children, support the work of international humanitarian agencies, facilitate the evacuation of personnel and provide cooperation for aid operations. China commends Ukraine's neighbouring countries for providing shelter, humanitarian assistance and social services to millions of refugees. The international community should continue to lend a helping hand to Ukraine and its neighbours, mitigate the pressure on relief capacity, bring hope to more people in need and create the necessary conditions for their voluntary return.

The health and well-being of hundreds of millions of people in Ukraine and the entire region depend on the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, and accidents must be avoided. We call on the parties concerned to earnestly implement the seven pillars of nuclear safety and security proposed by Director General Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and refrain from taking any action that could endanger nuclear safety and security. We welcome the IAEA's on-site inspection of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant last week and commend the continued on-site presence of the Agency's experts. We encourage the Agency to maintain communication with all parties on the relevant issues.

Ukraine's humanitarian situation has always been dear to our heart. With that in mind, China has proposed a six-point initiative for preventing a large-scale humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, as well as a cooperation initiative on global food security. We encourage Russia and Ukraine to maintain communication and cooperation on humanitarian issues and support the United Nations and international humanitarian agencies in providing assistance to Ukraine and neighbouring countries on the basis of neutrality, impartiality and non-politicization.

We have also been calling for and promoting the return of Ukrainian and Russian food products and fertilizers to the international market. The Chinese Government has provided three batches of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine, a concrete action that brought much-needed aid to Ukrainians caught in the conflict. We hope that those supplies, including infant formula, quilts and waterproof tarps, will help more people survive the looming winter.

History has proven time and again that diplomatic efforts, negotiation and communication are the only viable way to resolve conflicts and end crises. China once again calls on all the parties concerned to remain engaged, explore the possibility of a political settlement and create conditions for an early cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace and stability. All sides should abandon their political self-interest and refrain from escalating tensions, creating division or provoking confrontation and should make concrete efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis.

**Mrs. Kamboj** (India): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on this

important topic. Let me also thank the briefers for their presentations.

We are today witnessing the debilitating impact of conflicts on humanitarian situations across global landscapes, be it in Afghanistan, Yemen, Mali, the Sudan or Ukraine. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/381) paints a distressing picture of civilian suffering: more than 11,000 civilian casualties in various conflicts in 2021, with over 45 per cent of those in our neighbourhood in Afghanistan alone. More than 140 million people are reeling under conflict-induced hunger; 84 million have been forcibly displaced, with women and children forming the large majority of internally displaced persons.

It is a matter of concern that parties to armed conflicts seem to view the civilian population and infrastructure as legitimate targets. Vulnerable groups, including women, children and minorities, as well as indispensable civilian infrastructure, hospitals and irreplaceable cultural heritage, have been among the various collateral casualties of attacks in recent armed conflicts.

The Security Council will recall that, since the commencement of the conflict in Ukraine, India has consistently called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violence. Going forward, we continue to emphasize dialogue and diplomacy as the only way forward.

It is regrettable that the situation in Ukraine has not shown any significant improvement since the Council last discussed the conflict in Ukraine and its humanitarian consequences (see S/PV.9115). The security situation remains serious, as do the humanitarian consequences. Reports of civilian killings in Bucha were deeply disturbing.

We very much hope that the international community will continue to respond positively to the call for humanitarian assistance. We support calls urging for guarantees of safe passage in order to deliver essential humanitarian and medical supplies. India recently dispatched its twelfth consignment of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. That humanitarian aid and assistance is in keeping with the human-centred approach of the Government of India, a central tenet of our national beliefs and values that perceives the whole world as one family. Let me assure the Council that India will continue to work with the international

community and partner countries in order to mitigate the economic hardships resulting from this conflict.

The impact of the Ukraine conflict is not limited to Europe alone. In particular, the conflict is exacerbating concerns over food, fertilizer and fuel security, particularly in developing countries. It is necessary for all of us to adequately appreciate the importance of equity, affordability and accessibility. India has been approached for the supply of wheat and sugar by many countries, and we are responding positively. In the past three months alone, India exported more than 1.8 million tons of wheat to countries in need, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Sudan and Yemen.

Allow me to once again reiterate the importance of the United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those measures should never be politicized.

We continue to emphasize to all Member States that the global order must be anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

**Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Ilze Brands Kehris and Ms. Oleksandra Drik for their briefings.

Two weeks ago, the Security Council met to discuss the situation in Ukraine (see S/PV.9115) after six months of conflict. The report Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo presented to us on that occasion already presented a bleak scenario — tens of thousands of unconfirmed deaths and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and continued hostilities during winter could have dire consequences, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups, women and children.

There are signs of an intensification of hostilities in various parts of Ukrainian territory, such as the Kherson region, where fighting has intensified. That worrisome trend ignores the risks for heavily populated areas and for the integrity of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Even more disheartening is the fact that there are no signs of any engagement in peace negotiations.

In recent weeks, we have heard that the two sides are preparing for a long-term conflict, with the mobilization of additional troops and resources.

That decision will have grave impacts on the society and the economy of both sides, with unforeseeable consequences for the next generations and rippling effects for the world at large.

We have in mind the words of the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates at the meeting held on 24 August: “[t]here is value in the Council’s meetings on Ukraine when they are complemented by action” (*S/PV.9115, p. 17*). Action in this case should mean opening the path to a negotiated solution that ends the suffering of millions of people and eliminates the risks to food and energy security in other countries, especially in the developing world.

Brazil strongly condemns the use of force to resolve disputes between States. We reiterate our call for the immediate cessation of hostilities. We defend the territorial integrity of all States and respect for the security concerns of all parties.

Isolating any of the parties and closing the door to dialogue will not bring about a solution to the conflict. The grain and fertilizer agreements concluded in Istanbul in July and the arrival of the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant last week show that realistic and pragmatic negotiations and mutual concessions are the best way to achieve peace.

Respect for international law and for the Charter of the United Nations must guide the actions of States and the practice of the Council. We urge the parties to refrain from escalating the conflict and to cease hostilities. We add our voice to that of other Council members in favour of a political solution and call on the leaders of both countries to prioritize the well-being of their populations.

**Mrs. Hackman** (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for their briefings. I also thank the civil-society representative, Ms. Oleksandra Drik, for her contribution to the Council’s discussions.

Since the war in Ukraine began in February this year, and in a period of only six months, at least 14 million people are estimated to have been forcibly displaced from their normal places of abode. Close to 8 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, while some 7 million more have been

internally displaced. Although some Ukrainians have crossed back into Ukrainian territory, the numbers pale in comparison to those who every day are compelled to leave their homes. The situation, which has been infamously described as the world’s largest and fastest-evolving displacement crisis since the Second World War, is alarming and calls for urgent and concerted international action to help end the war that has become the driving force behind the mass displacement of persons from Ukraine.

Ghana is concerned about the fact that women and children are the worst affected by the war and account for the greatest proportion of displaced persons. Naturally, many of those women are pregnant, have children or are suffering from some form of disability or vulnerability. The Council has also been informed in previous briefings about human rights abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence suffered by the displaced women and children of Ukraine. We are disheartened by the realization that many of the displaced will never be able to return to their homes and the lives they once lived owing to the extensive damage and destruction done to a number of cities and residential facilities across Ukraine.

Despite the grim outlook, we note with appreciation the essential support mechanisms and humanitarian assistance being offered by the United Nations and its affiliated humanitarian agencies, as well as civil-society organizations. We also commend those neighbours of Ukraine that have continued to take in millions of people and provide them with the assistance they need, notwithstanding their own internal circumstances and challenges. Those countries must be granted additional support where possible in order to enhance their response capacity and ensure that adequate protection and assistance are extended to those who now find themselves to be refugees. We recommend that the humanitarian assistance for the displaced should include counselling and psychosocial services to help those who have been traumatized by their experience of the war. Children must also be protected, and their best interests must be prioritized at all times.

Ghana condemns all acts of human rights abuses against civilians, including the reported cases of filtration processes and other acts that may amount to war crimes. Filtration operations are inhumane and constitute violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. In that regard, we call for thorough, impartial and independent investigations

of such reports and allegations of abuses to establish the facts and ensure accountability on the part of the perpetrators, as well as justice for the victims. Attacks on civilian-populated areas and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are unjust and unacceptable and must cease. We call on the warring sides to comply with their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

I want to emphasize that a cessation of hostilities is crucial to ending the displacement and other humanitarian crises in Ukraine. The war must end now. We reiterate our call to the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. Ghana maintains the view that there can be no military solution to the war. Unless the warring sides turn their attention and resources from the battlefield to the negotiation table and to diplomatic approaches, the various crises brought about by the war will continue to evolve and further threaten global peace and security. In reaffirming Ghana's unwavering support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and its people, I want to reiterate our principled position by which we do not recognize any unilateral annexation of territory through the threat or use of force by any State against another.

Finally, we urge members of the Council to prioritize the interests of the ordinary people of Ukraine as we work towards a speedy and comprehensive solution that can secure peace and stability in Ukraine.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): Let me first thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris and the civil-society representative, Ms. Drik, for their briefings.

There can be no doubt about the significant and tragic humanitarian consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine. Russia's illegal invasion violates fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the legal norms of the world order. Russia must withdraw its troops and the war must stop. The numbers of civilian casualties are alarming and unacceptable. As we have heard, more than 7 million people have crossed the border as they flee Russia's gruelling war, seeking protection in neighbouring countries and others. Roughly the same number are internally displaced in Ukraine. Behind those numbers are real people — families, children and persons with disabilities. They all need protection, health services

and education. The restoration of family links is vital, and we must prevent and combat human trafficking and other abuses of those in dire need of protection and assistance. All the parties have an obligation to protect civilians and to safeguard and ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Russia's warfare in urban and populated areas, as well as the use of heavy explosive weapons, is destroying homes, schools and hospitals. It is important that we support Ukraine's reconstruction efforts so that the many millions of forcibly displaced people can one day return to their homes in Ukraine. Humanitarian and development actors must be engaged in that important work.

We are deeply worried about the reports of the forcible transfer of civilians to Russia and territory occupied by Russia, as well as of filtration facilities run by Russia. We are alarmed by reports that civilians appear to be arbitrarily deprived of their liberty at such facilities. There is a growing body of independent information indicating serious human rights violations and abuses against civilian detainees and prisoners of war at those sites. The reports emphasize the importance of all parties engaging in identifying and recovering missing persons. Appropriate humanitarian actors must be given unhindered access to all places of detention in accordance with international humanitarian law. We welcome the update today from Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo on the fact-finding mission established by the Secretary-General pursuant to the incident of 29 July at the detention facility near the village of Olenivka. The mission must be allowed to conduct its important work.

We also want to recall that all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition of an occupied territory are prohibited according to international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. We reiterate our demand that civilians must be protected and international humanitarian law and international human rights law fully respected and implemented. Civilians who have been forcibly transferred and who wish to return must be allowed to do so. Humanitarian actors must be assured access to the many people in need, and they must be protected against attack. Norway condemns the recent attacks on the base of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in Sloviansk.

Russia's war on Ukraine is also having global consequences, with surging fuel and energy prices and

increasing food insecurity. We commend the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to promote dialogue and negotiations between the parties. The most effective way to ease the devastating humanitarian effects of this war is to stop it. Russia chose to start this war, and Russia can also choose to end it.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We took note of the information provided by Rosemary DiCarlo and Ilze Brands Kehris. We also listened to yet more fabrications delivered by Oleksandra Drik, a well-known propagandist and former adviser to the Ukrainian Minister of Defence.

Today's meeting, which was convened at the request of the United States and Albania, has every chance of becoming a new milestone in the disinformation campaign unleashed by Ukraine and its Western sponsors against our country. We understand the West's tactics, which consist in waging a hybrid war on Russia in Ukraine until the last Ukrainian falls. The aim is to use every possible means to smear the Russian Federation and its special military operation. We are also familiar with the Western propagandists' dirty tricks. We need only recall the obviously staged events and provocations in Bucha, Kramatorsk, Kremenchuk and Mariupol that continue to be refuted by new evidence that the West is doing everything it can to conceal from the general public. Now we are being accused of some brutal kind of filtration measures that we are allegedly implementing with regard to Ukrainian citizens. Although our American colleague has already left the meeting, I have a question for her that I imagine can be passed on to her. What is the title of the horror film that she recounted to us today? We have not seen it. Was it produced by Ukraine's ministry of propaganda? When will it be released?

Turning to so-called filtration, first of all, it is unclear what this is about, since the term has no clear definition under international humanitarian law. If we are talking about identifying soldiers from nationalist battalions or the Armed Forces of Ukraine who have participated in crimes against civilians among the Ukrainian citizens who want to leave for Russia, that is a normal practice for any army anywhere in the world. It is our American colleagues who requested this meeting who can tell us better than anyone about these so-called filtration measures. Take, for example, the programme launched by the previous Administration to expel to Mexico tens of thousands of displaced persons who had applied for asylum in the United States. The

migrants were held in inhuman conditions and deprived of their right to legal representation and a fair trial. At the same time, the United States authorities often separated families by sending children and parents to different detention centres. More than 2,500 such cases have been documented.

In perhaps the darkest stain on the United States' heavily tarnished human rights reputation, prisoners have been held illegally at Guantánamo Bay without trial for many years. To this day, no one has been held accountable for the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners in secret Central Intelligence Agency prisons, which were operating in the 2000s in European countries as well. Just out of curiosity, I would once again like to ask my American counterpart, or my colleagues from the United States delegation, if the United States allowed United Nations human rights organizations in. For example, did representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) visit the prisoners at Guantánamo Bay?

Against that background, the attempts by those who initiated this discussion on a pretext of human rights to convince an uninformed public of the existence of ghastly camps in which Ukrainian civilians are tortured and forced or deceived into moving to Russia are particularly cynical. Anyone promoting such insinuations is either simply ignorant of the facts or lacking common sense. Basic international statistics disprove it. As is well known, it is the Russian Federation that has taken in the largest numbers of Ukrainian refugees. More than 3.7 million, including 600,000 children, have entered Russia from Ukraine and the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics. If we subtract the number of citizens of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics who hold Russian passports, the number of Ukrainian citizens who have left for Russia, based on the estimates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is more than 2.4 million. And they are not being held in prisons like Guantánamo. They are living freely and voluntarily in Russia. No one is preventing them from moving or leaving the country. Even the representative of OHCHR confirmed that today.

Does anyone seriously believe that such huge numbers of people could be forced to move and keep silent? Many of them are writing about their impressions and opinions on social media, giving interviews and expressing their gratitude to our country. Their postings make it clear that people are fleeing Ukraine out of fear

for their lives from a criminal regime that would not allow them to evacuate and used them as human shields.

On the territory of 85 constituent entities of the Russian Federation there are more than 1,500 temporary settlement centres able to accommodate more than 95,000 people. Rail transport has been provided to move refugees to temporary residences, with 38 trains designated for the purpose. A telephone hotline processes more than 250 queries from citizens every day. Refugees and displaced persons are being provided with financial, legal, psychological and medical assistance. We pay special attention to children, who are given every opportunity to continue their schooling. Unfortunately, that was far from the case for many children in the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, who were unable to return joyfully to school on 1 September. Because of the daily shelling of towns there by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the authorities decided that for the time being a number of schools will continue to operate remotely.

With regard to the privacy of children, which Ms. Brands Kehris mentioned earlier, we are struck by the fact that in discussing the issue, United Nations officials have repeatedly tried to ignore the fact that the Ukrainian website *Myrotvorets*, or Peacemaker, has been publishing the personal data of minors as well as adults and threatening them with reprisals. We have already informed the United Nations, and UNICEF in particular, that this extremist resource's database includes more than 340 children, including a 13-year-old girl named Faina Savenkova, from Luhansk, whom no UNICEF representative has met with yet, despite the assurances and promises made.

It goes without saying that displaced persons are registered at the border with Russia, after which those in need are helped to reach the temporary accommodation centres. We would like to point out to those who are trying to create confusion through terminology that Ukrainians and residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics arriving in Russia go through a registration process, not so-called filtration. As far as we can tell, there are similar procedures for Ukrainian refugees in Poland and other European Union countries, but they can tell us about that themselves.

Just how far from reality are our Western colleagues' fantasies about the forcible removal of Ukrainians to Russian territory is evident from the situation on the ground. Even the Western media cannot ignore the fact

that a huge number of Ukrainian citizens are attempting in any way they can to leave Ukraine for the territories that Russia has liberated. There is now a long line at the checkpoint in Zaporizhzhya, through which as many as 700 people return home every day after getting objective information from their friends and loved ones about the peaceful life in their hometowns and villages. In particular, the experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency could see that as they went through the line on their way to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and had an opportunity to talk to ordinary people. That is a clear sign that a great many Ukrainians already prefer life with Russia and do not trust the corrupt and criminal Kyiv regime.

As long as we are talking about violent actions against civilians, the efforts of the Kyiv authorities come to mind. Since the beginning of August Ukraine has been conducting a so-called mandatory evacuation of the population from the areas of the Donetsk people's republic that remain under its control and a number of other oblasts in the country. People not only do not have a right to choose where to be evacuated to, they frequently have no right to choose to remain in their homes, even when they are not in danger. Anyone who decides not to leave is threatened with punishment for cooperating with Russia. Ukraine's warped laws on so-called collaborationism enable the prosecution of people simply for receiving food from the Russian authorities — or, for example, of teachers who decide to continue teaching in a school in a liberated area. Do the human rights defenders in the West and at the United Nations not want to pay attention to those so-called wartime laws and the way the Kyiv regime is applying them?

Something else outside their field of vision are the terrorist attacks committed by Kyiv saboteurs against representatives of the local authorities in the liberated territories — the people responsible for ensuring the functioning of cities and public services for the benefit of the civilian population. The other day, Artyom Bardin, the commandant of the Berdyansk administration, died when his car was blown up. On 24 August, Ivan Sushko, head of the temporary civil administration of Mikhailovka in Zaporizhzhya oblast, was killed. His daughter, whom he was taking to kindergarten the moment of the explosion, survived by a happy accident. That is apparently how Kyiv is waging the partisan war it promised us from the very beginning of the special military operation. And given the real feelings of the

residents of the liberated territories, the Zelenskyy regime simply has no choice left but to resort to tactics of murder and intimidation.

Finally, the claims by our Western former partners about the cruel filtration procedures that Ukrainians are allegedly being subjected to on their way to Russia completely collapse when one considers, for example, the free movement of the Ukrainian agents who were involved in the murder of the young Russian journalist Daria Dugina. Let me briefly remind everyone of the basic facts. Almost a month before the crime took place, on 23 July, Natalia Vovk, also known as Shaban, a Ukrainian citizen who is wanted for that vile murder and act of terror, quietly entered Russian territory in her car with her 12-year-old daughter, Sofia Shaban. As can be seen from the published video footage, she was held at the border for a few minutes. Where then were the filtration measures and interrogations that Russia is allegedly applying to all Ukrainians entering our country? In Moscow, Natalia Vovk drove around comfortably in her car, rented an apartment and a space in a parking garage and on 20 August organized the terrorist attack that killed Dugina. After committing that despicable crime, she and her daughter immediately set off for the Estonian border and once again crossed without any filtration procedures. Similarly, her accomplice Bogdan Tsyganenko, also a Ukrainian citizen, crossed from Estonia into Russia and back again with no problems.

I would like to ask our Western colleagues a question. How could those Ukrainian criminals cross the Russian border twice without incident if our so-called police State, as many of those here say, has built a network of filtration camps for Ukrainian citizens? And how does the mass voluntary relocation of Ukrainians to Russia fit with the accusations that they are being forcibly deported? Is it not possible that our Western colleagues have once again simply become entangled in their own lies?

It is unfortunate that the smear campaign aimed at our country has now extended to human rights organizations that claim to be objective. One such recent report, which was cited widely today, contains unfounded accusations against us. The narrative of mass filtration measures is based on interviews with a few dozen people, many of whom never went to Russia at all, and others who said that they had done so voluntarily. Given the huge number of Ukrainian refugees, why did the authors limit themselves to those

disjointed and selective testimonies while refusing to ask the hundreds of thousands who have fled the conflict for Russia how they have been living all these months and years under shelling from the Armed Forces of Ukraine and what procedures they went through when they crossed the border? Basically, how impartial can human rights defenders be when they are working only with one side of the conflict, which among other things has established total censorship on its territory?

The references today to the Human Rights Watch report should mislead no one. We saw perfectly well what went on with Amnesty International, which was hounded for trying to show the real picture rather than the fictional one of the Ukrainian armed forces' use of civilian objects for military purposes. The fact is that our Western colleagues do not need the truth even from human rights defenders. They need them only to whitewash the rotten Zelenskyy regime and smear Russia's image.

We are not opposed to discussing what is happening in Ukraine. The special military operation has brought to light so many facts about the criminal activities of Kyiv and its Western associates that we could continue to discuss them almost every day. But we believe in talking about real problems, not imaginary ones. And since we have wasted our time today discussing the latest speculations and fantasies, we propose that tomorrow we discuss the real threats to international peace and security that are being posed by foreign Governments' supplies of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine. We would like Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, as well as civil-society representatives, to brief the Council, and we will send the corresponding request to the French presidency right away.

**Mr. Kiboino** (Kenya): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehriss for their updates on the situation in Ukraine. I also thank Ms. Drik for her insights.

We must always go beyond enforcing international law in the conduct of war by appreciating that the greater evil is war itself. That is because war inevitably leads to the suffering of civilians. One of the most frequent harms is forced displacement and its domino-like effect on food insecurity, the destruction of livelihoods, the outbreak of disease, sexual abuse, the denial of schooling for children and forced labour, to name but a few. The war in Ukraine has generated the fastest and largest

mass displacement since the Second World War, with 6.9 million internally displaced and 7 million refugees. Last month alone, more than 330,000 people, mostly from eastern and southern Ukraine, where the violence has been raging, were displaced. We commiserate especially with the most vulnerable Ukrainians, who have been forced to flee their homes in response to a war that is against the most basic laws of international conduct, including the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The claim that some of the forcibly displaced are being subjected to filtration processes is serious and alarming. We call for an independent investigation into those allegations to establish facts on which the Security Council can take appropriate action. In that regard, the relevant United Nations agencies should be granted access to those who have been forcibly displaced, particularly those who are in or have been in the alleged filtration camps. Most critical is the urgent need to prevent new waves of forced displacement, which would certainly worsen the humanitarian situation. More should be done to provide humanitarian assistance and ensure the safety and protection of civilians from war-related violations, including forced displacement, particularly in the besieged cities in the east and south of Ukraine.

Even as we discuss the plight and fate of those forcibly displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, we would like to recall the International Day for People of African Descent, which took place on 31 August. On that day we underscored the need to combat the multiple forms of discrimination and violations against people of African descent. We vividly recall the different treatment that Africans and people of African descent received when, like millions of others, they sought to escape Ukraine after the war broke out. What transpired then should still move every State to review its laws and practices, address racial discrimination and uphold its duty to treat all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers with the dignity they deserve.

Kenya reiterates once again that although multilateralism — as anchored in the United Nations, including this body — is dealing with grave challenges, it remains our hope and bulwark against war. We therefore continue to call for a cessation of the conflict in Ukraine and for a resort to diplomacy. That is the only viable avenue for resolving this conflict, which continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico)** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik for the information they have shared with us.

As we all know, the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine has led to a large number of civilian casualties and the destruction of basic infrastructure, with serious consequences. It has forced millions to flee their homes in search of protection and assistance, and many of them, as refugees, have crossed borders into neighbouring countries, while others are displaced inside Ukraine. The numbers may fluctuate, but the reality on the ground is that millions of people have been unable to return to their places of origin. The massive displacement of people has created a series of challenges for their host countries, whose solidarity we are grateful for because it has made it possible to provide care for millions of people.

Mexico calls on all the parties to respect international human rights law, refugee law and internally displaced persons law, as well as international humanitarian law, and in particular the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions adopted in 1977. It is important to remember that according to international humanitarian law, the parties to an international armed conflict may not deport or forcibly transfer the civilian population of an occupied territory. That is part of the Fourth Geneva Convention and customary international law, and violations of it constitute war crimes. What Ukraine is experiencing is an ever-evolving crisis, so that understanding new needs and mitigating threats to vulnerable groups are a challenge and a priority. Multiple United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations have warned about the risks faced by some groups in particular, and I would like to briefly discuss three such groups.

First, with regard to women, a few months ago we heard from UN-Women about the public health risks that women are dealing with in the region (see S/PV.9064). Special Representative Patten has already warned about how the hostilities are disrupting services for victims of sexual violence and has stressed the importance of addressing the threat posed by trafficking humans for purposes of sexual exploitation and prostitution. For that reason, we strongly believe that humanitarian responses and strategies must have a clear gender perspective.

Secondly, with regard to children, both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF have been unequivocal in noting the importance of ensuring the immediate identification, registration, protection and proper care of unaccompanied or separated minors and of avoiding adoptions during or immediately after an emergency.

Thirdly, with regard to older people and persons with disabilities, the 2.7 million with disabilities in Ukraine have very limited access to emergency information, shelters, health services and support networks. They face serious difficulties in accessing services that allow them to address urgent conditions or pre-existing illnesses that are not being cared for. Mexico calls for taking all necessary measures to ensure that any displaced civilians have shelter, food and health services.

In the light of the information that the Security Council has heard today about so-called filtration processes, we believe it is crucial that the United Nations have unrestricted access to those sites so that it can objectively and rigorously add to the relevant information.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that the only way to resolve the deplorable situation on the ground cannot be through concessions such as we have had so far. The only way is through an immediate cessation of hostilities. To that end, it is urgent to advance along a diplomatic track with greater commitment from the international community.

**Mr. Mythen** (Ireland): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for their very concerning briefings and Oleksandra Drik for her testimony.

Ireland continues to be disturbed by the continued shelling of areas containing civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. The first six months of war have already seen more than 12 million Ukrainians forced from their homes, creating a displacement crisis of enormous proportions. Those are not static numbers based on those of the first weeks of the war. The number of internally displaced persons rose by 330,000 just this past month. Nor are they mere statistics. We are talking about children, the elderly, the infirm and those with disabilities — vulnerable people caught up in a situation beyond their control, seeking shelter and safety, just as we would do. That makes the destruction of the infrastructure they depend on all the more abhorrent.

On 24 August, a missile attack near a train station in Chaplyne killed at least 25 people, including children, leading to yet more lives lost in an illegal war. Members of the Council have recalled many times in the past six months that the parties to a conflict must comply with international humanitarian law, including the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants. We condemn indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. There are no excuses and no exceptions.

That is why we once again call on Russia to comply with all its obligations. There must be full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians, including those who choose to remain in Ukraine or are unable to leave. They are not combatants and must be protected. Those who seek to leave or are forced to leave must be allowed to do so safely and for destinations of their own choosing — I repeat, of their own choosing.

We are appalled at the evidence of horrific violations occurring in Ukraine. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have documented cases of enforced deportations, arbitrary detentions, abductions, torture and summary executions. There is evidence of the enforced deportation of Ukrainians, including children, to areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia or to the Russian Federation, and of the worrying use of so-called filtration centres as part of the process. Those violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law may constitute international crimes, including war crimes. It is critical that the United Nations be granted access to all filtration centres.

We know that displacement and conflict increase the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence. Indeed, the Council has already heard horrendous reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers against women and girls, men and boys. But let us be clear — rape is not a given in war, but rather a deliberate act that may constitute a war crime and has lasting effects on victims and survivors and their communities. There must be no impunity for such crimes.

We are also very concerned about reports of the mistreatment of prisoners of war. All prisoners of war must be treated humanely in all circumstances, in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention. Allegations or incidents of mistreatment must be properly investigated and the perpetrators held

accountable for violations. The International Committee of the Red Cross must be given access to all prisoners of war.

Finally, we are deeply disturbed by the disrespect for international humanitarian law in this war and we are resolved to ensure accountability for any international crimes taking place in Ukraine. We cannot and will not accept impunity for such crimes, wherever they occur. Once again, we call on Russia to end its aggression, comply with its obligations under international law and withdraw unconditionally from the entirety of the territory of Ukraine.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates): I too would like to thank our briefers, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris, for their sobering updates. I have also taken note of the briefing by Ms. Drik.

Along with many other households in New York and around the world, many of us have been consumed this week with preparing for the start of the school year. That should be a joyful and exciting time for families, and particularly for schoolchildren, which makes it very difficult to imagine amid the conflict we are discussing today or any other ongoing conflict around the world that is on the Security Council's agenda. The images of Ukrainian children back in their classrooms have been profoundly moving for the resilience they show, as the war has not spared some 2,300 educational institutions and has entirely destroyed 300, according to United Nations reports. Like all wars, the war in Ukraine has disproportionately affected women and children. At this particular time of the year, we recall UNICEF's estimates that more than 2 million children have fled their country and many others have been internally displaced. Some may be able to attend virtual classes in Ukraine, but most will be in need of schools or day-care facilities in their new homes. At the same time, even those lucky enough to have a school to go to are grappling with the social anxieties of integration and trauma. Ms. Brands Kehris's briefing on the protection of children is an issue that the Ukrainian and Russian authorities should investigate and rectify with urgency. It is an area where communication between the two parties is much needed and expected by the international community.

If ever there was a clear-cut illustration of the need for a gender-responsive humanitarian approach, this is it. The Security Council should insist on tailor-

made solutions by donors and humanitarian actors that specifically address the needs of Ukraine's women and children. In the face of those difficult challenges, we commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as other United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners, for their swift response to the needs of displaced people, as well as the host countries. As the conflict goes on, their generous protection and service delivery for those seeking refuge, including an education, becomes ever more vital. At the same time, we once again underline that such protection must be provided without prejudice or discrimination.

People fleeing war are at their most vulnerable. In such conditions, it is key that they retain dignity and agency. Those seeking safety must be allowed safe and voluntary passage, and when circumstances permit, any return home should similarly be voluntary, safe, dignified and durable. We reiterate that all the parties must scrupulously abide by their obligations under international law, including those aspects of international humanitarian law that address displacement. Since the start of the conflict, guaranteeing the safety of those fleeing has proved to be a particular challenge, with recent fighting intensifying in the areas surrounding Kherson, Kharkiv and Dnipro. Routes to safety must be secured and the humanitarian actors supporting evacuations protected. Meanwhile, there are reports of the destruction of water, electricity and gas infrastructure, which once again leaves people in particularly vulnerable situations without access to life-sustaining services as winter approaches. We reiterate our call for the protection of civilians and for ensuring that no civilian objects, including those indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, are targeted. As the conflict drags on, the need to find a way to halt the suffering and stop the violence only deepens. We must redouble our efforts to help to mitigate the effects of the conflict and move towards further confidence-building measures. There is no other path forward.

In the past month we have welcomed the resumption of agricultural exports from Ukraine as a result of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, but it will be vital to ensure that grain continue to reach those most in need, not just those able to pay. At the same time, we also hope to see swift progress in getting Russian fertilizer out to global markets. That is crucial for next year's harvest and to avoid any further deterioration in the current

food crisis. It will not only contribute to addressing the real needs of millions around the world, but it may also create momentum for other tangible agreements to address the conflict.

We continue to gather here and listen to descriptions of the mounting costs of the war, and as with all wars, the human costs will only worsen with every day that passes. However, what is needed now is ideas and the political will to make them a reality. We saw that six weeks ago in a small way in Istanbul and we must see it again. A cessation of hostilities would be the right place to start.

**Ms. Koumby Missambo** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik for their respective briefings on the situation in Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine continues to cause major displacement as people flee the war, with large-scale humanitarian consequences. Despite considerable international mobilization, the humanitarian cost of the war continues to rise with increasingly heavy fighting. Despite the fact that some have returned, the numbers of people fleeing the war since the beginning of hostilities have now reached more than 7 million, including women, children, older persons and vulnerable people. We have said it at every Council meeting, and we will say it again today with the same resolve. Civilians are paying too high a price, despite the fact that their protection is guaranteed by international legal instruments, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The parties to the conflict must abide by them.

Six months after the start of the war, as international public opinion awaits specific proposals from the Council to put an end to the conflict, it is clear that the parties remain antagonistic and continue to trade invective. We must properly plan for a diplomatic outcome to this deadly war.

We have received with some alarm the allegations of the existence of filtration camps and of the use of files on both civilians and prisoners of war, together with ill-treatment, the use of forced labour and cases of torture. These are particularly serious allegations, which, if true, would be inconceivable and unacceptable. A state of war does not mean state of lawlessness, and human distress cannot be an object of speculation, blackmail or exchange. It is particularly horrifying to know that children, in the hundreds of thousands, would also be

affected by this inhumane treatment. On such a serious matter, independent and impartial investigations must be conducted in order to establish the facts and determine responsibility.

Protecting civilians from the horrors of war is one of the primary purposes of the Council when it has failed in its principal mission — ensuring the peace and security of peoples. All the mechanisms available to the multilateral system must be activated so as to not compound the horror of war with inhumanity. My country will be tireless in the search for peace and will stand by those who propose alternatives to the deafening language of bombs, guns and artillery fire. I urge the parties to cooperate with the United Nations and its specialized agencies to ensure the protection of civilians — in Ukraine and beyond.

Humanitarians must have unhindered access to locations and people in need of relief. We also urge the warring parties to engage in good faith in negotiations to end the war and achieve peaceful coexistence. In that regard, I welcome the ongoing negotiations between the parties for the exchange of prisoners and the agreement that allowed the export of grain from Ukrainian ports. In our view, those are glimmers of hope that call for others.

In conclusion, I reiterate my country's appeal to all parties to put an end to the hostilities and to silence the guns. That is the only way to avoid further increasing the humanitarian toll of this war.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I thank Ms. DiCarlo, Ms. Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik for their briefings.

The war of aggression that Russia has been waging for almost seven months, in violation of all the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, has unbearable consequences for civilian populations. When Russia decided to attack Ukraine, it knew the cost of its actions on the ground and the devastation it would bring about. While the consequences of this unlawful and unjustified war are being felt around the world, the Ukrainian people are paying the highest price. I would like to express once again our total solidarity with the Ukrainian people and commend their courage in defence of their country.

France is very concerned about reports of the forced transfer of Ukrainian civilians to areas occupied by Russia or to Russia itself. Those acts were documented by various independent bodies. Reports also document Ukrainian civilians, including children, being forcibly transferred to Russian-occupied areas or to Russia when they were merely seeking to flee hostilities. Russian authorities have also subjected Ukrainian civilians to deplorable detention conditions and to “filtration” processes. We must shine a light on those extremely serious acts, which, if proven, could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since the beginning of the war of aggression launched by Russia, we have not ceased to receive testimony of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. I will say it again — the crimes committed in Ukraine are being thoroughly documented, evidence is being collected and forensic analyses are being carried out, so that they can be examined by the courts. Nothing will remain hidden. The perpetrators will be held accountable.

The work of the International Criminal Court and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, created by the Human Rights Council, is indispensable to this effort of documentation, analysis and the fight against impunity. We support their work and the efforts made by the Ukrainian courts in the framework of the investigations they have opened. France, alongside its partners, will remain fully mobilized.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Ms. Hayovyshyn** (Ukraine): I recognize the representative of terrorist Russia in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Ilze Brands Kehris and human rights expert Oleksandra Drik for their substantive and truthful presentations. The horrific facts presented to us on the human suffering inflicted by the Russian occupiers proves again that the only way end this war is to hold the aggressor accountable for its criminal actions — criminal, indeed, due to both the immense record of crimes in the occupied territories of Ukraine and the criminal

background of many Russian soldiers recruited recently for the war against Ukraine.

The story of the Russian murderer Neparatov is one of many that highlights the level of degradation of Russia’s armed forces. Back in 2013, Neparatov was a leader of a gang, sentenced to 25 years in prison for killing five people and committing armed assaults. The murderer joined the Russian occupation forces in Donbas, was killed a short time thereafter and then awarded with a Russian high military decoration.

No moral constraints, the readiness to kill and to terrorize civilians — those are the personnel welcomed now by Russian military recruiters. That is the face of the Russian army.

Today, almost 200 days since the invasion started, we are more than confident in Ukraine’s victory, despite the fact that the enemy is still on our land, and we still have a long way to go to liberate the entire territory. We have no doubt that it will happen. In fact, it is already happening. In recent days, Ukrainian forces liberated territories and settlements in the Kherson, Kharkiv and Donetsk regions.

The Russian occupation forces consider terrorizing local populations to be an important part of their attempts to prepare the ground for fake referendums. But broad active and passive resistance in the occupied territories, the disdain of the local population towards the occupiers, the small number of collaborators and, first and foremost, the intensive actions by the Armed Forces of Ukraine have already forced Russia to abandon its plans to hold such referendums in September, as earlier planned by Moscow. We have no doubt that they will fail with any new deadline as well.

As a part of its aggression, Russia continues its forcible deportation of Ukrainian citizens to its territory. Our people are being transferred to isolated and depressed regions of Siberia and the Far East. The scale of the crime is outrageous. According to available data, nearly 2.5 million Ukrainians, including approximately 38,000 children, have been transferred from the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine. By blocking evacuation routes to mainland Ukraine, Russia simply leaves the population of the occupied areas with no choice but to go either into Russian territory or occupied Crimea. Russia is indeed the main recipient of forcibly deported Ukrainians.

As part of the forced evacuation and deportation process, Russia detains refugees in so-called filtration camps, extra-legal facilities that have been widely used by Russia to terrorize the civilian population on a pretext of identifying dangerous persons. In reality, those whom the occupiers suspect of disloyalty — because of their political views or potential affiliation with the Ukrainian army, Government, media or civil-society groups — disappear after so-called filtration into the grey areas of occupied Donetsk and Luhansk. Families are separated and children are grabbed and taken away from their parents. According to the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, some of those people were later held at a tragically notorious site in Olenivka, where Russia killed 53 Ukrainian prisoners of war, and in Donetsk. Many detainees were reportedly tortured, and some were summarily executed. So-called filtration camps have been also set up in the cities of Makiivka, Snizhne, Torez, Shakhtarsk, Khartsysk, Novoazovsk, Berdyansk and in the villages of Nikolske, Bezimenne and Yuryivka. According to the Ministry for Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, only about 16,000 deported citizens have been able to return to Ukraine. According to their accounts, most of those transferred to Russia have neither means nor travel documents, so that tens of thousands of those who want to return home are literally trapped in Russia.

In most of our countries, this is the time to go back to school. Regrettably, the school year in Ukraine has started against a backdrop of rocket and artillery bombings by Russia, with education facilities a regular target. Since the beginning of the invasion, Russian forces have damaged 2,177 educational institutions, leaving 284 of them totally destroyed. Due to the security threats, only 56 per cent of educational institutions are prepared to provide in-person learning for their students. A primary concern is Russia's attempts to expand its practices of militarization and the Russification of education to the territories it has occupied since February, with a focus on erasing Ukrainian ethnic identity. According to available data, approximately 200,000 children of school age remain in the occupied territories. School principals and staff there are subject to pressure and intimidation aimed at forcing them to follow Russian school programmes. Needless to say, the curriculum that Russia is trying to impose in the occupied territories of Ukraine does not provide for the study of Ukrainian language and literature or the history of Ukraine. Since most

Ukrainian teachers in the occupied territories refuse to collaborate, the Russian occupiers are trying to replace local staff with people from Russia.

Children from the occupied territories are being transferred to Russia and illegally given up for adoption. The forcible transfer of children from one group to another with intent to destroy, whether in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group is a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. On 23 August, the Krasnodar City Department for Family and Childhood Affairs in the Russian Federation publicly reported that more than 1,000 Ukrainian children from Mariupol had been illegally transferred to outsiders in the Tyumen, Irkutsk, Kemerovo and Altai regions. More than 300 children are currently being held in specialized institutions in the Krasnodar region. We reiterate that all Ukrainian children who have been illegally displaced to the territory of Russia must be returned to their parents or legal guardians. Until that happens, that crime demands a powerful response from the international community.

In the face of an existential threat to the Ukrainian State and people, we have continued to contribute to averting the global food crisis and fulfilling in good faith our obligations under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. More than 90 ships have left Ukrainian ports so far, and overall we have exported more than 2 million tons of our foodstuffs by sea from Ukrainian ports. But as long as Russia is able to continue its aggression against Ukraine on land and sea, the global security threat and food crisis situations will remain fragile.

Such modern-day evil must be fully disarmed if we are to prevent a repetition of violence and bloodshed. That is a key lesson from the Second World War, which began 83 years ago on 1 September 1939. People believed that it would be possible to avoid any repetition of those terrible crimes and such a cruel war, but a similar morning dawned again for millions of Ukrainians on 24 February 2022. Once again an aggressor is trying to seize territories in Europe through mass murder and terror by exploiting the ideology of hatred. But one thing did not happen again. There were no pacts with the aggressor. From the very beginning of the war, we have received real help from true friends all over the world. Russia's capacity to wage a war has been limited by sanctions packages, and we urge the international community to further expand that practice, which is literally saving the lives of Ukrainians. As President

Zelenskyy said on the occasion of the anniversary of the Second World War, we will do everything we can to ensure that Ukrainians and other nations throughout the world live freely. We will do everything we can to ensure that the morning of 1 September, the morning of 22 June and the morning of 24 February are never repeated again. We will do everything in our power to ensure that hatred finally loses.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Massari** (Italy): I too would like to thank the briefers, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik, for their alarming but very effective descriptions of one of the darkest sides of this war.

As we have reiterated multiple times, the Russian aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law. However, the filtration system for Ukrainian civilians that we have heard about today is a violation of *jus in bello* more profound than anything we have witnessed in Europe since the Second World War. It was precisely to prevent such horrors that the international community gathered in Geneva in 1949 to adopt the four Conventions we all know. It is therefore crucial to reiterate once again that the forcible transfer of civilians from an occupied territory to the occupying Power's territory is prohibited, regardless of motive. In addition to that already grave breach of international humanitarian law, which could be prosecuted as a war crime and a crime against humanity by the International Criminal Court, credible sources have also raised awareness of potentially cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, including illegal biometric data collection, torture, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances. All such acts fail to respect the most basic human rights, despite attempts to spread disinformation.

Those crimes are not only a violation of the international legal framework, but they are also an offence to the shared values and principles on which the United Nations is built. The seriousness of the situation requires two swift and crucial actions in order to end the unacceptable and inhumane conditions in which thousands of innocent Ukrainian citizens find themselves as we speak.

First, we call on Russia to grant unfettered access to the relevant United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to freely

and safely visit its temporary placement centres with direct and complete access to civilians there, in line with the Geneva Conventions.

Secondly, we call on Russia to ensure the immediate return of all forcibly transferred Ukrainian citizens, particularly women and children, to their territories of origin and their full freedom of movement to third Countries. In that regard, Italy believes that the effective evacuation mechanism established in Mariupol, thanks to the coordination efforts of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, is a clear example of how international humanitarian law cannot be allowed to merely depend on the voluntary compliance of armed and non-armed groups and that it should be replicated to end the heinous filtration system.

Let me conclude by pointing out that we must also ensure that those crimes will not happen again. From that perspective, Italy highlights the urgent need to guarantee accountability for the perpetrators of such severe breaches of international humanitarian law, reaffirms its full support for the work of independent, international and domestic investigative forums so as to avoid any form of impunity and supports the further strengthening of the existing compliance mechanisms, particularly the International Criminal Court.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Mr. Szczerski** (Poland): I thank you, Sir, for convening this briefing to discuss yet another disturbing aspect of the war in Ukraine. I also thank the briefers for their insightful remarks and alarming information.

It is a tragic, yet verifiable, fact that every conflict brings terrible suffering to civilians. After the Second World War, we know that all too well in Poland. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is no exception. Deliberate attacks against the civilian population have forced millions of Ukrainians to seek shelter outside their home country. Evidence has emerged that, in their attempts to flee the territories occupied by Russia, they have been faced with yet another dire choice, which the representative of Ukraine just mentioned, or what is in fact no choice at all — to leave Ukraine for Russia or not to leave at all. As already indicated by the Ukrainian Administration and further confirmed by the recent report of Human Rights Watch, the forced transfer of civilians from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the from the overrun city of Mariupol to

the Russian Federation has been conducted by Russian and Russian-affiliated troops and officials.

We express our grave concern about the deportation of civilians to Russia. We are also deeply worried by the establishment of the so-called filtration centres for people evacuated from the besieged and temporarily occupied territories. The accounts of those who were subjected to forced transfers and filtration processes are horrifying. Such practices bring to mind Stalinist methods. Their systematic character leads us to assume that they might have been premeditated. The practice constitutes another attempt by the Kremlin to eliminate the Ukrainian people physically and destroy their distinct identity. And they will never succeed in doing that.

Information about Ukrainian children who have been transferred to Russia is particularly disturbing. Such actions constitute a violation of both the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The protection of the most vulnerable and defenceless victims of war remains Poland's priority, and we call on the international community to hold the perpetrators accountable and protect Ukrainian children's right to their identity, including their nationality, without unlawful interference.

The forced transfers are yet another element on the long list of serious violations by the Russian Federation of the laws of war that amount to war crimes — and even crimes against humanity. It is all the more deplorable that the Russian Federation is presenting the Ukrainians entering its territory — voluntarily or not — as refugees and migrants, whereas they are, in fact, victims of Russia's violations of international law. For those reasons, accountability for violations of international law, including international human rights law, committed in Ukraine by the Russian Federation should remain our priority.

Poland has consistently called for bringing the perpetrators of those atrocities to justice. We continuously support the work of the fact-finding, investigative and accountability mechanisms mandated by the relevant international organizations to investigate those violations. We have supported the establishment of the dedicated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. We were also part of the broad group of participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) that twice invoked the OSCE Moscow Mechanism to investigate violations of international law and international human rights law resulting from the Russian Federation's aggression.

Poland once again strongly urges the Russian Federation to stop its war of choice and fully withdraw all its forces from the territory of Ukraine. We call on Russia to respect international law and international humanitarian law, in particular to stop the practice of illegal forced transfers and allow all civilians transferred out of Ukraine to leave in the direction that they want.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

**Mr. Chatrnúch** (Slovakia): Despite the many calls by the international community, the Russian Federation continues to pursue its unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law. We are concerned about Russia's intention to stage fraudulent referendums with the aim of illegally annexing the occupied territories of Ukraine. Those anticipated steps follow the same tactic that the Russian Federation used in 2014 with regard to Crimea. Slovakia does not and will not recognize such an illegal annexation violating the fundamental principles of international law. We take this opportunity to reiterate once again that the aggressor accountable for the situation is evident, and we call for an immediate cessation of Russian military activities in Ukraine and the unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from the entire territory of Ukraine.

We are concerned about numerous reports that, since the beginning of this senseless war of choice, the Russian Federation's officials, as well as officials affiliated with the Russian Federation, have been forcibly transferring Ukrainian civilians to areas of the occupied territories of Ukraine and to the Russian Federation. That action is not only deplorable and immoral, but it may also constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to those reports, during the process of filtration, citizens of Ukraine are subject to compulsory security screening, which includes collecting civilians' biometric data, conducting body searches and questioning them about their political views. The process, which violates multiple human rights, is moreover conducted in inhumane conditions. There is also serious information that individuals failing

the filtration process have been detained and that the whereabouts and fate of some of the detained remain unknown. In that regard, there are serious grounds for concern that those individuals are at particular risk of torture and the deprivation of life. We call on the Russian Federation to cease all such activities immediately and allow all forcibly transferred civilians who want to return to Ukraine to do so.

Last but not least, we deplore once again the propaganda and false narrative that we heard today from the representative of the Russian Federation under the pretext of humanity.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

**Mr. Pildegovičs** (Latvia): I speak on behalf of the three Baltic States — Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia. We welcome the convening of this meeting on the forcible transfer and deportation of civilians in Ukraine. We thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris and Ms. Drik for their thorough briefings.

For almost 200 days, Russia, aided by Belarus, has continued this brutal war of aggression, in blatant violation of international law, by violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and terrorizing and committing atrocities against civilians. We have repeatedly underlined that Russia started this war and that only Russia can end it — by completely and unconditionally withdrawing its troops from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, as well as by implementing with immediate effect the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice and complying with General Assembly resolutions ES-11/1 and ES-11/2, adopted on 2 and 24 March, respectively.

According to the latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), more than 5,718 civilian deaths have been documented in Ukraine, underlining the fact that OHCHR believes that the actual statistics are considerably higher. Moreover, the number of dead and injured civilians is growing every day, as new crimes against civilians are discovered and new attacks on civilians are executed regularly by the Russian military.

We call on Russia to immediately stop violating international humanitarian law and the human rights of the people of Ukraine. We strongly condemn the forced

passportization and conscription into the Russian armed forces of the citizens of Ukraine who live in the temporarily occupied territories. We strongly condemn deportation of Ukrainian civilians to Russia, the forcible transfer of children, the illegal adoption of Ukrainian children and abduction of civilians, including mayors and other democratically elected representatives, as well as journalists and activists.

According to various credible Government, non-governmental and international organization reports, Russia has forcibly transferred over 1.7 million Ukrainians to Russia, including over 240,000 children. Russia's forces have set up almost 20 so-called filtration camps or centres in the temporarily controlled territory of Ukraine. Ukrainians, who have endured those camps have reported treatment ranging from humiliation to verbal abuse and physical torture, including strip searches, confiscation and searches of their electronic devices, the use of electric shocks and even staged mock executions of detainees. Such vulnerable groups as women, children, orphans and older persons have suffered the most.

There is clear and undeniable evidence that Russia is deporting Ukrainian civilians. Even Russia itself has admitted to forcibly transferring Ukrainian civilians. In May, a Russian official acknowledged that "1,426,979 people, of which 238,329 are children," had been "evacuated from dangerous areas of the republics of Donbas in Ukraine to the territory of the Russian Federation."

We would like to recall that the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights told the Human Rights Council that her office is looking into allegations that children in orphanages had been taken to Russia. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for her detailed briefing today. We call on international human rights organizations to continue documenting cases of the forcible transfer of Ukrainian citizens and to provide regular and public reports about their findings. Similar to the fact-finding mission regarding the massacre of Ukrainian prisoners of war in Olenivka, we call on the United Nations to establish a fact-finding mission to document the deportation of Ukrainian citizens.

We must make no mistake: Russia's war against the civilian population of Ukraine is not a coincidence or collateral damage. It is a deliberate and consistent approach throughout Russia's continued aggression

aimed at breaking the resistance and spirit of Ukrainian people. Unable to defeat Ukraine on the battlefield, Russia's military seeks to achieve its aims by terrorizing Ukraine's civilian population.

It is high time for the international community to demonstrate that the norms aimed at the protection of civilians are not empty statements that can be trampled by dictators and bullies, but instead ironclad obligations

that we are collectively determined to uphold. We must ensure accountability at all levels for atrocities committed against Ukraine and its people, including deportations. It is of the utmost importance to continue to provide all the necessary support in that regard. Justice must prevail. The perpetrators must be — and will be — held accountable.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*