

Peace, Security and Human Rights crisis in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region in light of the severe breaches of the Helsinki Principles

The 42nd Congress of the International Federation of Human Rights in Bogotá, Colombia from 27 to 31 October 2025;

Recalling that fifty years ago states participating in the inaugural Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki, Finland, between 1973 and 1975, reaffirmed their objective of promoting better relations among themselves and ensuring conditions in which their people can live in true and lasting peace free from any threat to or attempt against their security, and recognized the close link between peace and security in Europe and in the world, and fundamental human rights;

Recalling also that at the conclusion of the Helsinki Conference, on August 1, 1975, participating states adopted the Helsinki Final Act and the accompanying Helsinki Principles, recognizing and committing, among others, to uphold the sovereign equality of States and respect for the equality of rights inherent in state sovereignty; the territorial integrity of states and inviolability of frontiers; the right to self-determination of peoples; and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; having recognized the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which being an essential factor in the maintenance of peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among all states;

Stressing the interdependence of the human, economic and environmental, and politico-military dimensions of the Organization for the Security and Co-Operation in Europe, as encompassed in numerous OSCE instruments and commitments;

Noting with grave concern that the ongoing aggression against Ukraine, which was unleashed by Russia in 2014, beginning with the annexation of Crimea and the participation in hostilities and the provision of essential financial and military support to, and the overall planning and coordination of the activities of pro-Russia separatists, in Eastern Ukraine, and culminating in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, both in violation of the United Nations Charter, and subsequent full or partial occupation and annexation of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions of Ukraine, amounts to an intentional, flagrant and gravest breach of the Principles embodied in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent commitments undertaken by the OSCE participating states since its founding;

Condemning in the strongest terms Russia's aggression and other international crimes and violations of human rights in and against Ukraine, including extrajudicial executions of civilians and POWs, systematic, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, torture and inhuman treatment, including conflict-related sexual violence, unlawful imprisonment, persecution, mass forcible transfers of Ukrainian children, destruction of critical civilian infrastructure, cultural property, schools, hospitals and the environment, in further violation of key OSCE commitments and international human rights law and international humanitarian law standards, and likely amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and, possibly, the crime of genocide, all committed with the aim of subjugating Ukraine, denying the right to self-determination of Ukraine and Ukrainians, and destroying Ukrainian independent statehood, and resulting in immense human suffering and lasting or irreversible material, psychological and ecological harm;

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Asserting that one of the enabling factors of Russia's aggression against and occupation of certain territories of Ukraine is the lack of accountability for Russia's previous international crimes allegedly committed in the armed conflicts in Chechnya, Georgia and Syria, as well as escalating internal repressions during Vladimir Putin's tenure as President against any opponents of the regime's policies, including opposition politicians, human rights defenders, independent journalists, civil society organizations, anti-war activists, teachers and scientists, characterized by systematic abuses of human rights, among them through the adoption and implementation of [over one hundred restrictive laws](#) just in the past 10 years that restrict the activities of HRDs and CSOs undermining freedoms of association, assembly and expression, but also widespread violations of the right to life, the rights to be free from arbitrary arrest, inhuman treatment and torture, violations of the right to privacy, the right to be free from discrimination, particularly as it concerns LGBTQI+ and religious and ethnic minorities, and the right to participate in the political life of one's country, resulting in over 1,000 current political prisoners and the worst human rights crisis in post-independence Russia;

Believing strongly that the recurrence of grave human rights abuses in Russia has one of its root causes in the failure of the Russian Federation to address earnestly and fully the legacy of mass human rights abuses and international crimes of the Soviet regime through the implementation of victim-centered transitional justice measures, which has laid the ground for the breakdown of the rule of law, the entrenchment of late-Soviet power structures and methods in Russia's institutions, the falsification and political manipulation of history around the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War, and the continuation of Russia's neo-colonial dominance over ethnic minority and indigenous peoples within Russia and of its neighbors;

Deploring the unrelenting political pressure by Russia on, and the acquiescence of, the authorities of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Belarus, among others, to crack down on their own independent civil society, as evidenced by the proliferation of Russia-inspired "Foreign Agents" laws and other legislation aimed at curtailing civil and political rights and arrest and intimidation of human rights defenders and journalists, resulting in 65 political prisoners in Georgia alone, as well as Russia's malign influence through sabotage activities and propaganda to interfere with elections and otherwise undermine democratic processes throughout the OSCE region, particularly in Armenia, Georgia and Moldova;

Gravely concerned by the aiding and abetting of Russia's aggression, and the ongoing widespread and systematic violations of human rights targeting any critical voices by the Lukashenko regime in Belarus, beginning with the crackdown on peaceful protesters in the leadup and the aftermath of the fraudulent 2020 Presidential elections, resulting in mass arbitrary arrests, inhuman treatment and torture of thousands, domestic and transnational persecution, and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Belarusians, and the ongoing imprisonment of almost 1,200 political prisoners, including FIDH's Vice President Valiantsin Stefanovic and former FIDH Vice President and Nobel Laureate Ales Bialiatski, likely amounting to crimes against humanity;

Alarmed by the ongoing democratic backsliding, erosion of the rule of law and shrinking civil society space in the Participating States of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region of the OSCE, as evidenced by the increased resort to restrictive legislation, capture and instrumentalization of the judiciary by the executive branch, resulting in a rise in violations of the right to fair trial, the increased use of surveillance and the corresponding abuses of the right to privacy, the use of excessive force and arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters, the intimidation, stigmatization and harassment of human rights defenders and independent journalists, and the discrimination against LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities, women and other vulnerable groups;

Demands that Russia end its war of aggression and occupation of all territories of Ukraine, on terms that ensure accountability for international crimes, Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and a just and lasting peace, including by [placing people first](#) in any peace negotiations, by providing for the immediate release and return of all illegally detained Ukrainian civilians and Russian anti-war activists, the return of all Ukrainian children illegally

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transferred **from Ukraine, as well as the immediate end to the re-education, indoctrination and militarisation of Ukrainian children, and the restoration of their Ukrainian citizenship and identity**, the release and repatriation of all POWs held by all parties to the armed conflict, and justice and full reparations for all victims of Russian aggression and other international crimes in Ukraine;

Demands also the immediate release of all political prisoners and the end to arbitrary arrest, harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, independent journalists and any other person solely on the basis of their belonging to a national, social, political, gender, religious, racial, ethnic or any other group protected under international law;

Calls on the OSCE and all Participating States to reaffirm the interdependence of the political-military, economic - environmental and the human dimensions, stressing the importance of the fulfillment of the latter as key to the maintenance of international peace and security and prevention of violent conflict;

Also calls on the OSCE and all Participating States to reiterate that human rights violations in one State are a matter of common concern to all Participating States of the OSCE and the entire international community, and are therefore not exclusively an internal issue of the state subject to non-interference by others;

Encourages all Participating States of the OSCE to reaffirm their commitment to cooperate and uphold human rights embodied in all multilateral fora that aim to further respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights, such as the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, and support the work of all permanent and ad hoc international justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, and the International Accountability Platform for Belarus;

Encourages also all Participating States to support civil society through all available means, including by placing civil society and human rights defenders at the center of multilateral engagements concerning the three OSCE dimensions;

Declares its unwavering support to the OSCE and other multilateral fora engaged in the protection and promotion of human rights in line with FIDH's mandate.