

61st session of the UN Human Rights Council

High Level Segment

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Statement by

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Mister President, excellencies,

We mark the **20th anniversary of the Human Rights Council** amidst geopolitical uncertainty and attacks on the rules-based international order.

We also mark four years since **Russia launched its brutal war against Ukraine**. A war entirely illegal and unprovoked. A war rooted in imperial, colonial aspirations.

And Russia continues its barbaric aggression deliberately destroying energy infrastructure and trying to freeze millions of Ukrainians to death. These are war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Russia has trapped under occupation or forcibly deported to Russia over 1.6 million Ukrainian children. These kids are subjected to illegal adoptions, indoctrination and militarisation. And it's all aimed at erasing their Ukrainian identity. Russia must immediately ensure their safe and unconditional return to Ukraine.

Russia and its leadership must be held accountable for all atrocities committed. And Latvia fully supports completing the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The Special Tribunal and comprehensive compensation mechanism are vital to holding Russia accountable. And bringing justice to Ukraine.

Russia is the sole obstacle to achieving just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

The international community must move beyond statements. We urge all countries to exert maximum pressure on Russia. And restrict Russia's economy, including through sanctions, including other restrictive measures, to stop its ability to wage war.

We call for further diplomatic and political isolation of Russia and Belarus in international organisations, including within the UN system.

We urge all countries to increase support for Ukraine's self-defence and survival. It is our common interest that the rules-based international order and international law is upheld.

Mister President,

In **Russia**, Putin's regime is war. War economy, war propaganda, war religion, mass repressions, censorship. Even its education system has become part of the war machine. The human rights situation has eroded dramatically, including a vicious assault on

civic freedoms within Russia. There are more than 1900 political prisoners in Russia today. Numerous dissenters have been subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment, bringing back the darkest of Soviet methods. Many have been jailed for opposing the war of aggression against Ukraine.

Over 280 civil organisations have been labelled as “undesirable”. Latvia strongly condemns the Russian government’s expansion of repressive tools and the use of national security legislation to silence dissent.

Mister President,

In **Belarus**, gross, systematic and widespread human rights violations continue to take place. Latvia notes recent releases of political prisoners and thanks the United States for making it possible. Yet, more than 1100 remain imprisoned on political grounds. We continue to urge the Belarussian regime to release all political prisoners. Latvia will continue to support the democratic rights of the people of Belarus in their quest for a free, sovereign, and independent Belarus.

Mister President,

Iran has once again launched war against its own people. The Iranian people, exhausted by repressions and economic deprivation, demand basic rights and human dignity. These

demands are met with brutality, violence, and censorship by the regime. Thousands have been killed, arrested, tortured.

Latvia condemns in the strongest possible terms the brutal actions of the Iranian regime. We support the brave Iranian people standing up for their freedom. Latvia, member of the EU, supported the imposition of sanctions on those, including IRGC commanders, responsible for serious human rights violations.

We also welcome the release of political prisoners in **Venezuela**. We call on the authorities to unconditionally release all remaining political prisoners.

We welcome the Council's attention to these and other extremely concerning human rights situations, including in **Sudan, the DRC, and Afghanistan**.

And as an elected member of **the UN Security Council**, Latvia strongly commits to upholding international law, strengthening peace, security and multilateral system. My country will continue to support women's empowerment, gender equality, prevention and elimination of sexual violence in armed conflicts.

At this critical time, Latvia stands by its commitment to promote and respect human rights globally.

I thank you.