



DEBATE PACK

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Situation in Ukraine

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Summary

The battle over Ukraine may have entered something of a stalemate. The conflict has lasted since February 2014 and has claimed some 10,000 lives and driven about one and a half million people from their homes. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which the UK supports and contributes to, [continues to report](#) ceasefire violations in eastern Ukraine, causing casualties almost every day.

The Ukrainian Government has not buckled, however, in spite of its many shortcomings. Nevertheless the prospect of it being able to re-take the eastern regions from Russia-backed separatists remains remote.

Russia, meanwhile, is suffering from stretched armed forces, having committed significant resources to Syria. Russian government finances are not particularly healthy, with the Russian economy remaining weak, battered by low oil prices and Western sanctions.

The decision on whether to authorise a [proposed \\$47 million arms transfer](#) to Ukraine remains with the Trump Administration. Both the President and Congress would have to approve the deal, which would include advanced Javelin anti-tank missiles. Despite the stated aim of the Trump Administration to improve relations with Russia, a Ukrainian parliamentarian [said in November](#) that the Ukrainians were “really satisfied with the acceleration of US-Ukraine relations at the moment”, and expected the deal to be approved.

The EU is not so enthusiastic about the idea, and the [UK's policy](#) remains not to provide Ukraine with lethal military equipment, although that may be reviewed. The UK continues to support the Ukrainian military: from 2018 the UK and Canada will be running a joint programme for the Ukrainian armed forces, [described by the MoD](#) as “defensive, non-escalatory military training”.

With no decisive victory in sight, speculation has increased about some sort of accommodation. In September 2017 the Russia circulated a draft Security Council resolution for a UN peacekeeping force in Ukraine to protect OSCE observers along the line of contact between Ukrainian and Russian-controlled forces. [Some have said](#) that the proposal probably was not sincere.

Ukrainian politicians fear that a UN presence along the line of contact would only serve to harden the line of contact into a border. Presence of a serious peacekeeping force along the legal border between Ukraine and Russia could genuinely contribute to controlling the violence, however.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that any UN force would have to have access to the whole of the rebel-controlled area . Some German politicians are increasingly arguing for sanctions to be lifted in exchange for some deal. [Some have even hinted](#) at accepting the annexation of Crimea.

The Ukrainian Parliament is in the process of passing a 'de-occupation bill' that would recognise the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as occupied by Russia and reset the military campaign in the region from 'anti-terrorist' to 'national defence'. This, the Ukrainians hope, will give the Russians the responsibility for the breakaway regions. Russia, on the other hand, would like Ukraine to pay the political and economic price for re-integrating the breakaway regions.

Ukrainian politics continues to be fractious. Nationalist currents in Ukrainian society continue to resist many of the provisions of the Minsk agreements, still the internationally-backed basis for progress, although the Government of Petro Poroshenko claims that it will implement them.

The fate of Mikheil Saakashvili points up the unstable and personalised nature of Ukraine's politics. The former Georgian President is also a former friend of President Poroshenko. He was invited to Ukraine to act as a minister in Poroshenko's government. But the two fell out and Saakashvili had his Ukrainian nationality taken away. He had already been stripped of his Georgian nationality and is wanted there on corruption allegations. Saakashvili was arrested after a rooftop chase in Kyiv, but protesters blocked the police from taking him away for questioning and ripped the doors off the police van, freeing Mr Saakashvili. Saakashvili [shouted to the crowd](#) after his release:

I'm calling upon all to come to the Maidan [the central square of Kiev] and start the process of freeing the country from Poroshenko and his bandits ... There is nothing to fear ... let them fear us.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

Ukrainian police clash with Saakashvili supporters in Kiev

Reuters
17 December 2017

How I Went From the Governor's Office to a Jail Cell

New York Times
Mikheil Saakashvili
15 December 2017

Ukrainian police recapture former Georgian president Saakashvili

Guardian
8 December 2017

Ukraine rebel leader says situation in Luhansk is attempted coup

Reuters
22 November 2017

Chatham House Report: Ukraine still 'fighting for survival as an independent and viable state'

Kyiv Post
Jack Evans
18 October 2017

3. Press releases

Armed hostilities on rise again in Ukraine, where conflict 'never really stopped,' says UN rights wing

UN News Centre

12 December 2017

An uptick in armed hostilities in Ukraine has resulted in more deaths and new damages to critical water infrastructure storing dangerous chemicals – posing a grave threat to human life and the environment, according to a new United Nations report.

The report of the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, published on Tuesday, warned that that daily ceasefire violations coupled with falling temperatures further aggravated a dire human rights and humanitarian situation on both sides of the contact line.

“The hostilities have never really stopped, affecting, in one way or another, the daily lives of millions in the conflict zone and in the country as whole, with the heaviest burden falling on those living in the immediate vicinity to the contact line,” stated Fiona Frazer, Head of the Monitoring Mission.

“As one civilian told my colleagues, ‘it is now worse than in 2014 because we can no longer bear it,’” she added.

From 16 August to 15 November, the mission recorded 15 conflict-related civilian deaths and 72 injuries – with 20 individual cases of killings, deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearances, torture and conflict-related sexual violence committed on both sides of the contact line, illustrating the prevailing atmosphere of impunity for grave violations in the conflict zone.

As the report cautioned about the situation of people who are detained incommunicado, the UN mission continued to be denied access to detainees – raising serious concerns on conditions and possible further human rights abuses, such as torture and ill-treatment.

The report detailed that in conflict-related cases, victims’ complaints of torture are often disregarded, and investigations into allegations are either rarely opened or ineffective. Behind closed doors, those detainees are ‘convicted’ without recourse to effective remedy.

This posed a grave concern, given that in November the ‘supreme court’ of the self-proclaimed ‘Donetsk people’s republic’ pronounced a second ‘death penalty.’

Also highlighted in the report was the broad interpretation and application of the criminal codes on terrorism, high treason and territorial integrity of the country.

Additionally, it flagged that protracted investigations and trials in many conflict-related cases resulted in prolonged detentions of the accused in

pre-trial detention facilities, where the issue of access to medical care remained acute.

During each month of the reporting period, more than one million crossings over the contact line were recorded, with people claiming corruption and overly complicated checking procedures.

While the UN Human Rights Office does not have access to Crimea, it continued to analyze the situation there from its offices in mainland Ukraine.

The report concluded with advice in addressing acute systemic challenges, such as having Government policies evolve in an inclusive manner, and, together with judicial reforms, foster accountability and social cohesion.

In parallel, the implementation in full of the Minsk agreements by all parties to the conflict is critical for peace and reconciliation.

Ukraine: UN and partners seek \$187 million amid humanitarian crisis that is 'worse than it's ever been'

**UN News Centre
7 December 2017**

The humanitarian situation in war-torn eastern Ukraine is worse than ever, and people are at breaking point, the senior-most United Nations aid official in the country said on Thursday, as he launched a response plan.

"From my perspective, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is worse than it's ever been since the onset of conflict in 2014," said Neal Walker, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, in Geneva.

He urged UN Member States to support the country's 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which calls for \$187 million to help 2.3 million people in the country's east.

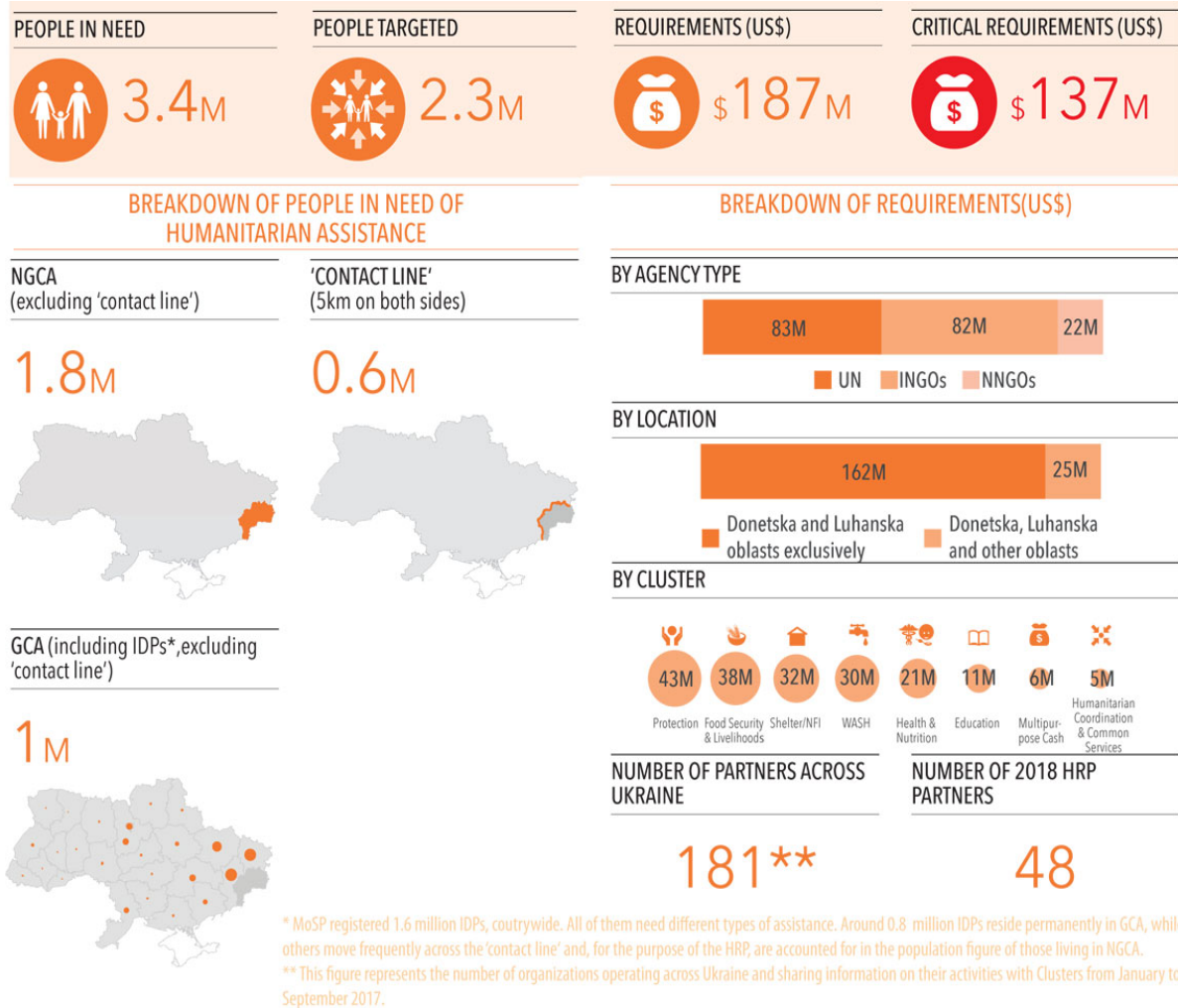
"Today, I call on the Member States to show their solidarity by supporting this important appeal," said Mr. Walker, stressing that "lasting peace is the only humanitarian solution for millions of people affected."

Amid a spike in needs and ongoing clashes in the east between government forces and separatists, Mr. Walker noted Ukraine as being among "the most forgotten" conflict.

Entering its fourth year, many of the affected people have exhausted their savings and ability to cope, and are now forced to choose between food, medicine, shelter or their children's education. Millions risk daily shelling, intensive fighting and other hostilities.

At the same time, through only five operational checkpoints along a 457-kilometre 'contact line,' up to one million people cross every month to access basic services, social benefits and maintain family networks.

"The people of eastern Ukraine continue to pay the highest price for the conflict," maintained Mr. Walker.



Of the 4.4 million affected people, some 3.4 million require humanitarian assistance and protection – 2.3 of whom are considered to be the most vulnerable, including the elderly, women and children.

"While Ukraine may no longer be front page news, millions of men, women and children urgently require our help," he underscored.

The HRP outlines the key humanitarian relief and protection activities required by 32 international and 16 national organisations in 2018, including throughout the harsh winter months.

4. PQs

Crimea: Human Rights **04 Dec 2017 | 116590**

Asked by: Theresa Villiers

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his Russian counterparts on the detention of Tatars involved in human rights works in Crimea.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British Government is committed to raising concerns publicly, multilaterally and directly with the Russia Government, about human rights abuses committed by the "de-facto" Russian authorities against Crimean Tatars since the illegal annexation of Crimea. I regularly raise our concerns directly with the Russian Ambassador to the UK, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers will continue to raise our concerns with Russian counterparts. The UK has supported Ukraine in ensuring the persecution of Crimean Tatars remains in the international spotlight, most recently through our support of the successful resolution on the human rights situation in Crimea at the UN General Assembly's third committee in November.

Ukraine: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe **11 Sep 2017 | 8699**

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Special Monitoring Missions to Ukraine; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is a long-standing supporter of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. The UK contingent is the second largest in the Mission; we are one of the largest contributors to its budget, and have provided specialist training and support. We receive regular reports from the OSCE on the SMM's work. These highlight a worrying level of ongoing ceasefire violations in the Donbas, which continue to cause casualties on a daily basis. They also show persistent obstruction of monitors, in the vast majority of cases by Russian-backed separatists. SMM public reports can be found on the OSCE website.

Ukraine

11 Jul 2017 | 627 c142

Asked by: John Whittingdale

4. What steps he is taking to support economic and political development in Ukraine. [900341]

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is in the lead on this issue, helping Ukraine to make the vital reforms that it needs, and to continue to crack down on corruption, which is so important if we are going to encourage long-term and continued investment in a successful Ukraine.

Asked by: John Whittingdale

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the organisation last week of the Ukraine reform conference in London, which demonstrated that Britain will continue to play a leading role on the world stage in the years to come. Can he confirm that, while Ukraine still faces major challenges, progress is being made in areas such as tackling corruption? Will he also tell us what more can be done to assist it?

Answering member: Boris Johnson

May I get the ball back over the net by congratulating my right hon. Friend on becoming chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Ukraine? All of us in this House have a clear interest in a strong and successful Ukraine, which is why we have invested another £33 million in helping the Ukrainians to tackle their governance problems. The House should be in no doubt about what is going on in Ukraine. It is, if you like, an arm wrestle between two value systems: our way of looking at the world and the Russian way of looking at the world. It is vital for our continent and for this country that our way prevails. With British help, I believe that it is prevailing and will prevail.

Asked by: Chris Bryant

23. Is not one of the real problems that the Russians are actively meddling in Ukraine? So far, there has been no sign of all the efforts that Britain has rightly made paying dividends in Russia stopping its corrupt meddling in that country. [900360]

Answering member: Boris Johnson

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that the fault lies squarely with Russia. Russia annexed Crimea and continues to drive the problems in the Donbass. The UK is contributing to the efforts to stave off Russian military meddling with the non-lethal equipment that we have agreed to send to Ukraine. More importantly, however, we are engaged in helping the Ukrainians to sort out their domestic political scene and to crack down on corruption. To be fair to them, not only are they seeing growth of 1.5% or 4%, depending on whose figures are to be believed, but they have made more progress in cracking down on corruption in the past three years than in the past 25 years. A very different country is being born.

Russia: Ukraine

10 Jul 2017 | 3131

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he last met representatives of the Russian Government to discuss the ongoing conflicts in eastern Ukraine.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I raised the ongoing conflict in Ukraine with Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov in London on 10 March. The Foreign Secretary also raised the UK's concerns about the conflict in Ukraine with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a meeting of G20 Foreign Ministers in February this year. UK officials continue to raise our concerns through political and military channels with representatives of the Russian Government.

Eastern Ukraine

28 Mar 2017 | 624 cc116-7

Asked by: Sir Gerald Howarth

7. What assessment he has made of recent developments in eastern Ukraine. [909514]

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The causes of the conflict in Ukraine lie very much with the Russians, who bear the overwhelming responsibility for the considerable loss of life there. I was pleased to be able to raise the matter with my Polish counterpart, Witold Waszczykowski, during a visit to Kiev a few weeks ago. What is crucial to progress in Ukraine is not just for the Russians to desist from supporting military activity in Donbass and pull out of Crimea, but for the Ukrainians themselves to make the reforms that will increase international confidence in Ukraine.

Mr Speaker

We must hasten progress somewhat. Sir Gerald Howarth—briefly.

Asked by: Sir Gerald Howarth

Is it not clear, though, that unless we do more to help our Ukrainian friends, Russia will continue with impunity to seek to destabilise Ukraine? Given that the western Ukrainian-owned businesses in Donbass have just been expropriated by so-called separatists, no doubt with the support of Russia, perhaps we should consider expropriating Russian assets in the United Kingdom, starting with football clubs.

Answering member: Boris Johnson

I am grateful for that suggestion. This country already leads the way in imposing sanctions on the Russians for their actions in Ukraine, and we continue to insist on those.

Asked by: Chris Law

Does the Foreign Secretary agree with me, and with the Secretary General of Amnesty International, that the United States President's Executive order implementing a travel ban on people from six countries—

Mr Speaker

Order. No, no. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was seeking to take part in an exchange about Ukraine, possibly in anticipation of our not reaching his question. We probably will reach his question, but I am afraid that, whether we do or not, he cannot talk about the travel ban purported to be applied by the United States in respect of an exchange about Ukraine. Does any other Member wish to take part, in an orderly way? Yes: Mr Chris Bryant.

Asked by: Chris Bryant

It is clear that the Russians have behaved perniciously and disgracefully in Ukraine. As the Foreign Secretary has said, their behaviour has led to many deaths, many people have been detained incommunicado, and terrible human rights abuses are going on, as well as the expropriation of assets. The Foreign Secretary regularly boasts about how well we have done in ensuring that there are sanctions in the European Union, but how will we be able to do that when we are no longer a member of the European Union?

Answering member: Boris Johnson

The hon. Gentleman will know that there is to be a White Paper very soon, presaging a Bill on how we will continue to take part in sanctions jointly with our friends and partners across the channel.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

28 Feb 2017 | 63790

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on the effect of the conflict in eastern Ukraine on public opinion in that country.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have not received reports of any data on the effect of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine on public opinion. However, the National Democratic Institute has conducted recent polling in government-controlled parts of Ukraine on a range of related issues. What has been clear from their polling is that there is strong support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence, and for continued sanctions against Russia because of its role in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. 80 per cent of respondents would not exchange Ukraine's right to determine its own future for peace in Eastern Ukraine. Restrictions imposed by Russian-backed separatists mean that access to reliable information in non-Government controlled areas of Eastern Ukraine is extremely poor, and there is little genuinely open public discussion on the effect of the conflict.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

24 Feb 2017 (Corrected: 27 Feb 2017) | 63634

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the capacity of the Ukrainian authorities to provide government services to civilians living in districts under separatist control; and what representations he has made to his Ukrainian counterpart on the provision of services to such civilians.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Corrected answer] Given that these territories are not under Government control, there are clear logistical limitations to service provision by the Ukrainian Government to civilians living there. Nonetheless, the Ukrainian Government continues to provide water, heating and energy supplies to non-Government held areas. The UK provides close support to the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons and we welcome the Ukrainian Government's efforts to pursue further ways to provide support to those in non-Government controlled areas, including by facilitating crossings and the transport of goods across the Line of Contact. However, the best way to secure the provision of services to civilians across the Donbas would be a full and comprehensive ceasefire; ongoing fighting poses a grave threat to vital utilities as well as civilian lives, as seen recently in Avdiivka.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

24 Feb 2017 | 63635

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of (a) Ukraine and (b) Russia on the presence of military equipment and troops in civilian-populated areas of eastern Ukraine.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The conflict in eastern Ukraine continues to have a devastating effect on millions of civilians living on both sides of the Line of Contact. Reports by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that all sides have used civilian areas for military purposes are very concerning. We welcome recent efforts by the Ukrainian Government to repair civilian infrastructure in Avdiivka damaged by fighting, and condemn the fact that civilian repair teams came under fire while carrying out this vital work. We regularly raise these issues with the Governments of both Russia and Ukraine, emphasising the need for all sides to abide by the Minsk agreements, which call for heavy weaponry to be withdrawn from the Line of Contact. But we are clear that the fundamental cause of this conflict remains Russia's continuing attempts to destabilise Ukraine through its support for separatist forces, including through the provision of military equipment and troops.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict
24 Feb 2017 | 63636

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of foreign fighters in eastern Ukraine.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Ukrainian authorities estimate that there are up to 3500 Russian nationals fighting in eastern Ukraine. We are also aware of reports of a relatively small number of other nationals present in eastern Ukraine. The presence of Russian fighters in Ukraine remains a key obstacle to progress in implementing the Minsk peace agreement, which requires the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict
24 Feb 2017 | 63637

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Ukrainian civilians living along the line of separation between the breakaway districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the rest of Ukraine; and the number of civilians living in combat zones on either side of that line.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UN estimate that up to 0.8 million people reside in areas near the line of contact which have the potential to be affected by fighting, and that 2.3 million people are resident in areas under the control of Russian-backed separatists.

Ukraine: Russia
22 Feb 2017 | HL5375

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the governments of Ukraine and Russia to seek a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine and an end to the violence there.

**Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns
 | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The second Minsk Agreement, signed in February 2015, provides for a comprehensive ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, alongside a range of other steps (such as the withdrawal of foreign troops, humanitarian access and an amnesty and prisoner exchange). The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) monitors the implementation of the agreement and reports on ceasefire

violations. The UK is the second largest contributor of monitors to the SMM, and we are strongly supportive of Franco/German-led diplomatic efforts under the Normandy process to secure full implementation of the Minsk Agreement, including a comprehensive ceasefire. We regularly raise this in international fora and with the governments of both Russia and Ukraine.

Ukraine: Politics and Government
20 Feb 2017 | 63850

Asked by: Dr Paul Monaghan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the political situation in Ukraine.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Ukrainian Government faces considerable challenges both in upholding and protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of continuing Russian destabilisation, and in taking forward a comprehensive programme of political and economic reform. The Prime Minister underlined in Parliament on 25th January the UK's "commitment to the independent sovereign state of Ukraine", and our continuing strong political and practical support.

Ukraine: Politics and Government
15 Feb 2017 | 63393

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the progress of the Governments of (a) Ukraine and (b) Russia in implementing their respective obligations under the Minsk agreements; and when he expects those agreements to be implemented in full.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Delivery of the Minsk agreements remains the key process for securing long-term peace and a restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty in eastern Ukraine. The UK continues to support French – and German – led diplomatic efforts towards supporting the implementation by all parties of their commitments under the Minsk agreements. The immediate priority is for putting in place an effective ceasefire, which will in turn create much more favourable conditions for the implementation of the remainder of the Minsk agreement.

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Debates

Ukrainian Holodomor

7 November 2017 | 730 cc544-60WH

Motion that this House has considered the Ukrainian Holodomor.

Agreed to on question.

[This debate includes contributions on the current situation in Ukraine]

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

HL Deb 30 March 2017 | 782 cc81-96GC

Lords question for short debate on what assessment they have made of the future role of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, in the light of the continued conflict in the east of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation.

Anglo-Russian Relations

HC Deb 4 May 2016 | Vol 609 cc140-55WH

Motion that this House has considered Anglo-Russian relations. Agreed to on question. Sitting adjourned without Question put.

[This debate includes contributions on the current situation in Ukraine]

5.2 Early Day Motions

IMPRISONMENT OF UKRAINIANS BY RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

EDM 679 (session 2017-19)

12 December 2017

Stephen Gethins

That this House notes with concern the imprisonment of Ukrainians by Russian authorities in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine; is concerned by reports that the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to be denied access to Crimea; and urges Russian authorities to ensure free access to international human rights monitoring missions as well as other human rights organizations and non-governmental organisations to Crimea.

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