UN Human Rights Council 61: UK Explanation of Vote on the draft resolution for the International Covenants

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UK Explanation of Vote on the draft resolution for the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenants on Human Rights. Delivered by UK Human Rights Ambassador, Eleanor Sanders.

Thank you, Mr. President,

The UK is and has always been a committed supporter of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These instruments are cornerstones of the international human rights framework: we take their obligations seriously, as well as their spirit into our way of life. We expect all States parties to the Covenants to uphold the obligations they freely undertook in 1966 and to ensure full respect for the rights enshrined within them.

Mr President,

I will go straight to the point:

We do not consider it appropriate for Russia to present this text to the Council when it is in flagrant breach of so many of the principles and values contained in these treaties, as well as the UN Charter itself.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine was the starkest example of Russia’s willingness to violate virtually every right enshrined in the two Covenants that it purports to commemorate in this resolution. Multiple UN and independent reports have documented these facts.

But even before that, we saw over many years the Russian state eroding its own population’s ability to enjoy the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, access to a fair trial…and the list goes on. Some states in this room have seen first hand how the Kremlin represses its citizens not just on its own soil, but also targets them outside its borders, including on the streets of the UK.

Mr. President, the reporting from the Human Rights Committee themselves – the body charged with monitoring implementation of the ICCPR- highlights the farcical nature of this initiative. In 2022, the Committee expressed its extreme concern about Russia’s ongoing war of aggression in Ukraine which has resulted, in large-scale deprivation of life. But they spoke to an empty room, because Russia did not attend their own ICCPR review.

This is not the record of a State that can credibly bring forward an initiative to commemorate these Covenants. And this is the reason why we feel it necessary to call a vote on this initiative and will abstain.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-61-uk-explanation-of-vote-on-the-draft-resolution-for-the-international-covenants