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## **Ukraine: visit by Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. Focus on children and violations in the occupied territories**

“The scale of continuing serious violations of human rights of the people living in territories of Ukraine under Russian occupation is of great concern” to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O’Flaherty. This is according to an official statement released in the aftermath of O’Flaherty’s visit to Ukraine (23-25 April) – his first visit to a Member State since taking up his post on 1 April. “We must never lose sight of the human rights of the people of Crimea, including the Crimean Tatars”, said the Commissioner, who expressed his appreciation for the work carried out by the Ukrainian authorities “in developing a human rights-centred approach to the eventual de-occupation of the peninsula”. From the territories occupied by Russia, there are reports of alleged violations of freedoms of thought, conscience and religion, as well as serious human rights abuses, including torture, committed against Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians detained in the Russian Federation. At the centre of the Commissioner’s attention, however, is the situation of Ukrainian children: efforts must continue “to ensure the return of the children transferred to Russia and Belarus”, the Commissioner encouraged, without forgetting those in the temporarily occupied territories. The Commissioner also encouraged to do more to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by Russian attacks. “There are some things that cannot wait until the war is over. For instance, ensuring that every Ukrainian child can go to school, in dignity and safety”.

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