

Crimes against Humanity: Ukraine Military Shelling of School in Donetsk

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On Thursday, Russia's Investigative Committee said it was launching criminal proceedings over school shelling in Donetsk, interpreting it as an international crime.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) confirms the shelling of school in Donetsk was made from the side of Ukraine's military, and the Ukrainian side is trying to fabricate proofs of non-involvement, Russia's ambassador to OSCE Andrey Kelin told TASS on Saturday.

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"The report contains facts. The facts prove that the shelling was made from artillery from the direction and distance, which no doubt are at location of the Ukrainian military near the airport and the settlement of Peski," he said.

"On Thursday, at the meeting of OSCE permanent council, Ukrainian diplomats presented pictures with television footage, where, they claimed, the drawn dots traced the shelling had been made from quite the opposite direction, from the eastern one, where the militia are," he said. "That was a very prompt fabrication made within hours of the tragedy - a useless attempt to make others responsible."

On Friday, OSCE said in a spot report the shelling of a Donetsk school on November 5, which left two children dead, was carried out from the northwestern direction.

"In the SMM's [Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine] assessment," shells "were fired from a location north-west of the football pitch and were the result of high-angle fire," the OSCE said.

"On 6 November 2014, at 8:25 hrs, the SMM arrived at School No. 63 on Stepanenko Street, Donetsk, about three kilometres north-west of the city centre. The SMM saw a football pitch on the east side of the school, enclosed by steel mesh fencing; shrapnel damage to the pitch, fencing and goal posts; and, on the northern edge of the pitch, one metre from the fence, a shell crater, which was one metre in diameter," the report said.

"The SMM saw human remains scattered around the pitch, including bone fragments, blood and internal organs. Blood-stained clothing was also visible, which appeared to have been torn by shrapnel," it said.

The monitors also discovered about 10 craters from shells nearby.

“All craters seen by the SMM were about one metre in diameter and the depths varied. The SMM’s analysis indicates that at least four of the craters were caused by 120mm mortar shells and two others were the result of 122mm artillery rounds,” the report said.

“The SMM also noted a crater in the playground, near the eastern wall. The SMM spoke to a number of people present in the area who said that on the previous day two children had been killed by an artillery shell; and four children and an adult had been seriously wounded,” it said.

“People living nearby told the SMM that there were a number of other casualties in the area. The SMM saw one woman who was leaving Stepanenko Street 14a with shrapnel wounds to her legs, who said she was being taken to hospital. The SMM observed that there was extensive damage to the apartment building and its windows,” the report said.

“Residents indicated that a number of local people had also been injured but they were unwilling to give names so it was not possible to identify or locate any casualties,” it said, adding that there were also other casualties.

On Thursday, Russia’s Investigative Committee said it was launching criminal proceedings over school shelling in Donetsk, interpreting it as an international crime. Investigators said servicemen of Ukraine’s armed forces and national guard, on an order from their commanders and Defense Ministry, army and national guard officials, carried out an aimed artillery shelling of high school No. 63 on Stepanenko Street in Donetsk.

According to the UN, more than 4,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have fled Ukraine’s southeast as a result of clashes between Ukrainian troops and local militias in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions during Kiev’s military operation, conducted since mid-April, to regain control over the breakaway territories, which call themselves the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s republics.

The parties to the Ukrainian conflict agreed on a ceasefire at OSCE-mediated talks on September 5 in Belarusian capital Minsk two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed his plan to settle the situation in the east of Ukraine.

The ceasefire took effect the same day but has reportedly occasionally been violated.

On September 19 in Minsk, the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine comprising representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE adopted a memorandum outlining the parameters for the implementation of commitments on the ceasefire in Ukraine laid down in the Minsk Protocol of September 5.

The document contains nine points, including in particular a ban on the use of all armaments and withdrawal of weapons with the calibres of over 100 millimetres to a distance of 15 kilometres from the contact line from each side. The OSCE was tasked with controlling the implementation of memorandum provisions.

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