IPHR International Partnership for Human Rights

Statement on Ukraine Independence Day

24 August 2026

24 August marks thirty-five years since Ukraine declared its independence in 1991, affirming the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination and sovereign statehood after long periods of imperial and Soviet domination.

Today, that independence remains under sustained assault. Russia's war of aggression is not merely an attempt to seize Ukrainian territory. It is an attack on the substance of Ukrainian independence itself: the right of Ukrainians to live safely in their own country, to maintain their national and cultural identity, to raise their children as Ukrainians, to control their own resources and institutions, and ultimately to determine their own future.

Since Russia first unlawfully occupied Ukrainian territory in 2014, and with vastly increased intensity following the full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russian forces and occupying authorities have subjected Ukrainians to widespread and serious violations of international law. Across Ukraine, including in Russian-occupied territories, these acts of aggression have inflicted immense harm on civilians and civilian infrastructure and affected fundamental aspects of civilian life, Ukrainian culture and identity, and the country's economic resources. The cumulative effect has been to inflict immense suffering on the Ukrainian population while undermining the foundations of Ukraine's ability to exist and develop as an independent state.

These are not isolated consequences of armed conflict. Taken together with Russia's continued denial of Ukrainian nationhood and its attempts to impose Russian political, cultural and social control on occupied territories, they form part of a broader assault on Ukraine as an independent state and on Ukrainians as a distinct national group. The mounting evidence has led IPHR and partner organisations to conclude that Russia's conduct meets the definition of genocide under the UN Genocide Convention.

For more than a decade, IPHR has worked alongside Ukrainian civil society organisations to document various dimensions of this assault, support those pursuing justice and strengthen efforts to ensure accountability. Investigations have documented killings and torture under Russian occupation; a widespread and systematic campaign of

conflict-related sexual violence against men; the deportation, prolonged separation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children; repeated attacks on homes, hospitals, schools and critical energy infrastructure; and the systematic appropriation of Ukrainian property and agricultural resources. Other investigations have traced supply chains and loopholes through which critical Western technologies and sanctioned components continue to reach Russia's military-industrial complex and be used in weapons systems deployed against Ukraine. This evidence has been used not simply to preserve the truth of what has happened, but to advance accountability and to identify measures capable of preventing further atrocities.

Ukraine's independence cannot be fully secured without the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, the return of unlawfully deported children and detained civilians, and the ability of all Ukrainians to exercise their rights free from Russian occupation and coercion.

Ending Russia's war of aggression and the suffering it has caused must remain the immediate priority. At the same time, lasting peace requires sustained efforts to ensure accountability for serious international crimes and to protect Ukraine and its people from renewed aggression. States must act decisively against those individuals, entities and international networks that enable Russia to continue its aggression and atrocities.

On Ukraine's Independence Day, IPHR reaffirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, with those Ukrainian civil society organisations, human rights defenders and civil society investigators working for truth and justice, and with the survivors whose courage and resilience remain at the heart of the pursuit of accountability.

Thirty-five years after Ukraine declared its independence, its right to determine its own future remains non-negotiable. **Ukraine is sovereign. Ukraine is independent. And no act of aggression can extinguish the Ukrainian people's right to build a democratic, prosperous and fully independent nation.**