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Intent to Destroy: Confronting Russia's Campaign to Erase Ukraine and Its People

 STRATEGIC LITIGATION
PROJECT

 **GIWPS**
Georgetown Institute for
Women, Peace and Security

INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC
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IPHR International
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 **NEW LINES
INSTITUTE**
FOR STRATEGY AND POLICY

Contributors

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New Lines Institute is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and global geopolitics. NLI produces rigorous policy and legal analysis, cross-country comparative research, and analytical frameworks. Its work is reviewed by subject matter experts from around the world and adheres to a strictly nonpartisan, evidence-based approach. Since 2020, NLI has published pioneering legal and policy analysis on incitement to genocide, including the first report concluding that there are reasonable grounds to believe Russia engaged in direct and public incitement to commit genocide in Ukraine.

IPHR is an independent, nongovernmental organization founded in 2008. With a presence in Brussels, Kyiv, and Tbilisi, IPHR works closely with civil society groups in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia to raise human rights concerns at the international level and promote respect for the rights of vulnerable communities. IPHR has been documenting atrocity crimes committed in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine since 2014 and has been using collected evidence for accountability purposes.

IHRC works at the cutting edge of education and advocacy to drive tangible change in human rights. IHRC engages in litigation, research, fact-finding, analysis, and advocacy in partnership with human rights organizations around the world, as well as communities and individuals directly affected by abuse. The IHRC's expertise spans six broad practice areas: (1) accountability and remedies, (2) armed conflict and civilian protection, (3) climate justice and the environment, (4) gender, race, and nondiscrimination, (5) protecting fundamental freedoms, and (6) social and economic justice.

GIWPS is a research and policy institute dedicated to advancing women's rights and leadership in peace and security. Based at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., GIWPS conducts rigorous research, develops global indices and policy tools, and engages in high-level advocacy to promote gender equality and inclusive peace processes. Its work focuses on the intersections of gender, conflict, and security, with particular emphasis on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, women's participation in peacebuilding, and the protection of civilians in conflict and postconflict settings.

The Strategic Litigation Project is an initiative under the Atlantic Council, a foreign policy think tank based in Washington, D.C. The SLP works at the intersection of law and policy, identifying innovative pathways to address gaps in the international justice landscape. In addition to advocacy, this includes initiating and supporting strategic litigation that broadens pathways available to victims and survivors of core international crimes.

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The content and views expressed in this document are those of the conference participants and should not be taken to reflect an official policy or position of New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy or of the other organizations involved.

Cover Image: Vehicles burn in the aftermath of a Russian air raid in the city of Kramatorsk, Donetsk Region, Ukraine on Feb. 8, 2026. (Jose Colon / Anadolu via Getty Images)



Anastasiya Donets, lead of Ukraine Legal Team, delivers the keynote address at the *Intent to Destroy: Confronting Russia's Campaign to Erase Ukraine and Its People* conference in November 2025. (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security)

Part I: Main Takeaways and Recommendations

On Nov. 19, 2025, leading international lawyers, historians, diplomats, and policy and security experts convened at Georgetown University for the conference *Intent to Destroy: Confronting Russia's Campaign to Erase Ukraine and Its People*, a joint initiative of the International Partnership for Human Rights, the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, the Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation Project and Eurasia Center, and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. The event examined Russia's escalating atrocities and rhetoric through the lens of genocide and set out concrete legal, political, and security pathways to stop the Kremlin's campaign to annihilate the Ukrainian people.

Across four panels of the conference, speakers converged on a central conclusion: Russia's war against Ukraine is not a war over territory — it is genocidal in intent, design, and execution. This consensus was grounded in extensive field documentation, open-source intelligence, survivor testimony, academic inquiry, and legal analysis. Participants emphasized that Russia's atrocities are not incidental to the war but form a coherent state strategy aimed at destroying the Ukrainian national group as a distinct protected group under the Genocide Convention.

Panelists emphasized that preventing and stopping genocide requires more than documenting Russian crimes — it demands immediate and coordinated legal, political, humanitarian, and security responses from Ukraine's partners. Below are the key takeaways and recommendations.

a) Key Speaker Observations

- Genocide flourishes under conditions of impunity. Russia's imperial ideology has historically been instrumentalized in the form of mass repressions and in an artificially induced famine, the 1930s Holodomor. Facing little accountability in the past or present, Russia's imperial ideology continues as the driving force behind current atrocities. This ideology has never been meaningfully confronted by international actors, including the nations that have ratified the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, enabling repeated cycles of mass violence. Russia's attempts to destroy the identity of Ukrainians and eliminate those who resist throughout centuries culminate in the current war, reflecting Russia's long-standing techniques of demographic engineering and national erasure of those it sees as its imperial subjects.
- Russia's conduct today fits clearly within mainstream academic interpretations of genocide, including the Ten Stages of Genocide Framework: discrimination, dehumanization, polarization, preparation, and persecution are already complete; extermination and denial are underway and will continue if not met with decisive action. For now, Russia has progressed through these stages in full view of the world, taking advantage of delayed or inadequate responses.
- Evidence of Russian atrocities presented — including forcible transfers of children, torture, killings, conflict-related sexual violence, destruction of cultural heritage, coordinated Russification in occupied territories, and systematic and escalating targeting of civilian and vital energy infrastructure throughout Ukraine — meets multiple underlying acts of genocide under Article II of the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute of the ICC, as they are committed with intent to destroy the Ukrainian national group in whole or in part.
- Both Russian rhetoric — calling for the erasure, killing, and/or forcible indoctrination of Ukrainians — and Russia's escalating aerial attacks on civil-

1 LEGAL TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ian objects all over Ukraine, coupled with systematic atrocities in occupied territories, confirm the existence of Russia's genocidal intent, as they exist alongside corresponding patterns of violence. Establishing special intent does not require proving genocide as Russia's sole motive. Recognizing that genocide is a complex sociopolitical process, genocidal intent may and does coexist with Russia's military and political aims — annexation of the entire Ukrainian territory, disintegration of Ukraine's statehood, and challenging the Trans-Atlantic security architecture.

- Russia's long record of unaddressed atrocities, from the Holodomor, Chechnya, Syria, and many other examples, demonstrates the persistent impunity that has fostered the decision-making of key Russian architects and perpetrators of atrocity crimes, enabling the present genocide against Ukrainians.

b) Recommendations

- Strengthen support for and cooperation with the ICC to prosecute those most responsible for genocide and other atrocity crimes.
- Advance a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression, with strong U.S. and EU political backing, to overcome the ICC's limitations in prosecuting Russia's aggression as the main tool of genocide and bring responsible Russian leadership to account.
- Expand universal jurisdiction proceedings in national courts to capture mid- and lower-level perpetrators, financiers, propagandists, and administrators enabling genocidal infrastructure, ensuring there are no "safe heavens" for genocide enablers and accomplices.
- Mandate effective atrocity-prevention analysis and action in U.S. and EU foreign policy assessments to ensure that recognition of a serious risk of genocide triggers concrete policy consequences, not just semantic debate. At the same time, the absence of a legal determination of genocide must not be used as an excuse for inaction. All parties to the Genocide Convention, including the U.S., EU states, and other Western allies of Ukraine, have an obligation to not only punish (Article V) but also prevent and suppress ongoing genocide risks (Article VIII) whether or not there is a legal determination by the ICJ, the ICC, or other national or international mechanisms. For suggested measures to prevent and suppress, see the sections below.

a) Key Speaker Observations

- Atrocities are never unexpected — the strongest predictor of future violence is past impunity. Territorial concessions or a ceasefire without enforceable security guarantees would legitimize Russia's genocidal aims and embolden further aggression, just as earlier Western inaction did following Soviet repression in the Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and more recent atrocities in Chechnya, eastern Ukraine, Crimea, and Syria. This long pattern of unaddressed violence has created the conditions for today's genocide, driven by Russia's openly stated objective: the destruction of the Ukrainian national group and identity, not merely the seizure of land. Because Russia's goal is not territory, territorial concessions will not halt its aggression. Only a coordinated security, political, and legal response by Ukraine's Western allies — focused on protecting Ukraine's statehood and security, ensuring its people's survival, and ensuring accountability for past crimes — can deter Russia's genocidal war.
- This war's outcome will shape the future of the international law and security order: A Russian victory would embolden aggressors globally, undermine the inviolability of borders, undermine protections for atrocity crime victims everywhere, and erode the credibility of democratic allian-

2 POLITICAL TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

es, directly threatening NATO security. Failure to stop genocide in Ukraine will reverberate through Europe (Baltic states, Moldova, Poland, etc.) and beyond (Kazakhstan, Taiwan, and the wider Pacific), normalizing atrocity-based statecraft.

- Western political hesitancy over the last four years of Russia's full-scale war — incremental weapons deliveries, ambiguous signaling, continued energy dependence on Russia, internal divisions, and sanctions loopholes — prolongs the war, increases the humanitarian toll in Ukraine, and locks Ukraine into a war of attrition, the kind of conflict Russia is accustomed to and confident it can eventually win. This dynamic reinforces the very conditions in which genocide accelerates.

b) Recommendations

- Reject any peace proposals requiring Ukrainian territorial concession. Such arrangements reward aggression, entrench impunity, and do nothing to halt Russia's genocidal intent, which targets Ukrainian identity itself rather than only its territory.
- Adopt clear, coordinated political messaging across Ukraine's Western allies that recognizes and names the genocidal nature of Russia's actions. Doing so strengthens global resolve, increases moral clarity and coherence among allies, and ensures that atrocity prevention — not mere conflict management — drives policy decisions.
- Harden sanctions enforcement, particularly against:
 - Russia's shadow oil fleet and energy-based sanctions evasion mechanisms that fuel its war economy
 - Critical war technology exports that power Russia's military-industrial complex and enable mass-casualty strikes on civilians
 - Russia's genocidal enablers, including third-party states, businesses, religious actors, and media networks that participate in or amplify genocidal rhetoric, provide political cover, or facilitate crimes such as child deportations and weapon production
- Accelerate Europe's energy decoupling from Russia to eliminate structural dependencies that have historically constrained political will and muted accountability efforts.
- Strengthen strategic communication and counter-disinformation efforts to ensure sustained understanding of the importance of supporting Ukraine's ability to resist militarily and preserve its national identity for regional stability and containment of Russia's aggressive foreign policy agenda.
- Recognize that accountability and deterrence are inseparable: Advancing legal mechanisms (ICC, universal jurisdiction, Special Tribunal for Aggression) should be treated as core political tools for preventing further atrocities and ensuring deterrence and global security.

a) Key Speaker Observations

- Russia's military doctrine incorporates deliberate targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure as a tool of national destruction, not battlefield necessity.
- The West's incremental approach — supplying Ukraine just enough military assistance to survive but not win — has entrenched a war of attrition, which Russia believes favors its long-term strategy.
- Precision deep-strike capabilities, electronic warfare parity, and robust air defense are essential to preventing further mass atrocities.
- A decisive Ukrainian victory and postwar security is not only morally nec-

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essary but strategically advantageous for the U.S. and Europe, weakening Russia and constraining China.

b) Recommendations

- Accelerate and scale defense production across NATO, ensuring steady supplies of air defenses, long-range missiles, and electronic-warfare systems to Ukraine.
- Remove political restrictions on Ukraine's use of Western long-range weapons to conduct deep-strike operations in Russia to degrade its strike capabilities and war economy.
- Implement a coalition-based no-fly zone or layered air-defense umbrella to protect Ukrainian civilians from ongoing aerial terror.
- Support Ukraine's NATO membership trajectory, framing it as the only durable security guarantee capable of deterring future genocidal campaigns while providing Ukraine with immediate Article 5-style bilateral guarantees from the U.S. and other Western allies.
- Fully operationalize the CHIPS Act and expand AUKUS to reinforce democratic control over critical technologies and counter authoritarian influence.

a) Key Speaker Observations

- The deportation and Russification of Ukrainian children — over 20,000 verified cases, with the real figure likely far higher — is the largest child abduction crisis in Europe since WWII and a central pillar of Russia's genocidal strategy against the Ukrainian national group.
- Tracing, return, and reintegration of all deported children will require concerted international effort and decades of psychosocial support, identification, legal documentation, and community-based care, far beyond emergency humanitarian cycles currently and only partially in place.
- Survivors of torture, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) — including large numbers of male detainees — and forced displacement require specialized, holistic, long-term treatment and rehabilitation frameworks.
- Major humanitarian actors such as UNICEF and the ICRC, constrained by mandates of neutrality, have been limited in their response; most child rescues and survivor support are carried out by Ukrainian families, frontline NGOs, and community networks.
- Effective humanitarian recovery is inseparable from accountability, reconstruction financing, and reparations that match the scale of atrocities and destruction. Without restoring rights, compensating losses, and rebuilding infrastructure, long-term healing and safe return cannot occur.
- Russia must be the party that bears the financial toll of its atrocities and destruction in Ukraine, including through the permanent seizure of its frozen assets that can be used for rebuilding Ukraine's infrastructure and reparations. Such use of Russian assets will establish a clear precedent that aggression comes at a high cost.

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b) Recommendations

Child Protection from Forced Deportations:

- Establish a dedicated international mechanism to coordinate the identification, retrieval, and reintegration of abducted Ukrainian children, with sustained funding and technical support for frontline NGOs and community actors – who conduct about 90% of successful returns.
- Expand cross-border data-sharing to track abducted children, monitor movements within Russia, and document the involvement of Russian state structures.
- Systematically document each case to ensure admissibility in future criminal prosecutions, sanctions designations, and reparations claims.
- Increase diplomatic pressure on Russia to secure the unconditional and safe return of all abducted Ukrainian children.
- Develop long-term mental health and social support infrastructure for returned children and their families, including trauma care, counseling, and community reintegration services.

Survivor-Centered Long-Term Care:

- Increase diplomatic pressure on Russia to secure the unconditional and safe return of civilian hostages and prisoners of war.
- Scale up trauma-informed mental health services, including long-term therapy for children, survivors of torture, and CRSV victims.
- Develop male- and female-specific CRSV programs, given the documented patterns of abuse in detention.
- Strengthen community reintegration initiatives, which have proven more effective than institution-based models.

Reconstruction and Compensation:

- Operationalize and expedite the implementation of Ukraine's tri-level compensation mechanism, consisting of:
 1. Registry of Damage (accessible through Ukraine's Diia platform)
 2. Claims Commission
 3. Compensation Fund sourced from frozen Russian sovereign assets
- Authorize the use of immobilized Russian Central Bank assets held in the U.S. and EU as the main funding source proportionate to Ukraine's damages, now exceeding \$1 trillion.

a) Key Speaker Observations

- The Russian government effectively eliminated independent media and is using state-controlled media outlets and propagandists to prepare the population for the actions the government is planning to undertake.
- Genocidal, imperial, colonialist mindsets were systematically propagated and reinforced in the run-up to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- Eliminationist rhetoric currently permeates state media coverage of the war, laying the groundwork for increasingly brutal tactics against Ukrainians and eventually other countries bordering Russia that are being portrayed by the state media as regions that rightfully belong to the resurgent empire the Kremlin strives to re-create.
- Once the ideology takes hold, prominent figures in the Russian government reiterate the same talking points that Russia's government-controlled state media has been previously tasked with disseminating. The

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latest example of this was Russian President Vladimir Putin portraying Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a holy mission "to save the Motherland [...] on the instructions of the Lord." With state media, prominent lawmakers, and military commanders portraying Ukrainians as "unholy," "unclean," and "Satanists," this crusade mentality justifies the escalating atrocities against Ukrainians.

b) Recommendations

- Western media should avoid simplistic reliance on the Kremlin's official talking points, as well as media coverage by Russian state outlets in foreign languages, designed to obfuscate the true nature of Russia's actions and motivations.
- Media coverage should systematically expose the striking disparity between Russia's rhetoric directed at foreign audiences, as opposed to its domestic propaganda, which often reveals the true intent and motivation of the Russian government toward Ukraine.
- Likewise, media coverage should highlight the incongruity of the Kremlin's words and actions as opposed to simply quoting official statements. Relatedly, the media's focus should be kept on accurate and objective coverage of Russia's atrocities in Ukraine, highlighting the daily human toll on Ukrainian society.
- Western media should focus on holding Russia accountable for its war crimes and other atrocities in the court of public opinion in the run-up to eventual accountability in the court of international law.

Part II: Conference Summary

This section synthesizes the core interventions of conference participants, capturing how legal analysis, empirical evidence, survivor testimony, historical insight, and policy and security expertise converged to demonstrate Russia's genocidal intent in Ukraine and to outline concrete accountability, security, and prevention responses.

Opening remarks by Dr. Joel S. Hellman, Dean, Walsh School of Foreign Service, H.E. Olga Stefanishyna (Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States, remarks delivered by Counselor Andrii Pasichnyk), and Dr. Anastasiya Donets, Lead of Ukraine Legal Team at IPHR, emphasized the existential danger Ukraine faces as Russia seeks not only territorial conquest but the eradication of Ukrainian identity. Statements from U.S. Reps. Joe Wilson, Marcy Kaptur, and Mike Quigley echoed this message, stressing the need for sustained military support to Ukraine, economic pressure on Russia, and a firm commitment to accountability as the foundation for lasting peace.



1. Mounting Evidence of Russia's Intent to Destroy the Ukrainian People

Moderator: **Erin Farrell Rosenberg**, Senior Legal and Policy Advisor, Mukwege Foundation's Red Line Initiative

The first panel assessed the growing body of evidence indicating that Russia's conduct in Ukraine meets the legal threshold of genocide.

PANELISTS



Svitlana Valko, IPHR's Ukraine Field Team Lead, described extensive documentation gathered since 2014 and expanded after Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Valko analyzed three video testimonies by survivors and witnesses of Russia's sexual violence, torture, and child abduction to showcase the main patterns of Russia's abuse in Ukraine. She highlighted the forcible transfer and reeducation of Ukrainian children and widespread conflict-related sexual violence, especially against men, as the main new and widespread patterns of ongoing Russian atrocities, together with torture of anyone exhibiting Ukrainian identity. All these crimes can be qualified as genocidal acts under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (the Rome Statute).



Amb. Clint Williamson, Lead Coordinator of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group (ACA) and former United States Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, spoke about the unprecedented scale of Russian atrocities in Ukraine: indiscriminate missile and drone strikes; widespread executions, disappearances, and torture in occupied areas; and pervasive sexual violence, especially against male detainees. Williamson pointed to Russia's destruction of cultural heritage and the forced Russification of Ukrainian children — both indicative of genocide. He described the challenges of fact-finding work, such as cataloging information about tens of thousands of documented crimes amidst U.S. government funding cuts, and developing prosecutable cases for national courts, universal jurisdiction proceedings, and the International Criminal Court (ICC).



Caitlin Howarth, Director of Conflict Analytics at the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab, emphasized the importance of open-source intelligence in mapping indicators of genocidal intent. Satellite imagery, procurement and budget records, and social media data reveal Russia's planning, funding, and operationalization of child abduction pipelines and militarization camps — processes that by their scale and visibility could not occur without high-level intent.

Panelists also analyzed the challenges of establishing genocidal intent in the context of Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine.



Dr. Dmytro Koval, Co-Executive Director of Truth Hounds, urged a break from traditional comparisons to past genocides and recognition of the unique context of Russia's genocidal war against Ukraine. Koval argued that Russia's assault on Ukraine is best understood through the lens of imperial consciousness — a worldview that sees Ukrainians as “almost Russians” who must be eliminated or subjected to inhumane treatment. This mindset shapes both the choice of victims in occupied areas and the broader campaign against Ukrainian national identity and informs the targeting of those showing Ukrainian identity. It underpins both explicit genocidal rhetoric and coded narratives portraying Ukraine as a fabricated state that must be erased. Koval noted that torture and conflict-related sexual violence used for “re-education” and terrorization of the civilian population all reflect this imperial logic and are essential evidence for demonstrating that Ukrainians are being targeted as a national group, one of the elements of the crime of genocide that needs to be established, along with underlying genocidal acts.



Prof. Susan Farbstain, Director of Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, analyzed the legal challenges of proving another and arguably the most challenging element: special intent to destroy the Ukrainian national group. Direct evidence of such intent can be found in Russia's rhetoric urging “denazification” of Ukrainians who refuse to become Russians. At the same time, because genocidal plans are rarely explicit and often conveyed through euphemisms and subtext (like “denazification” for killing), courts rely heavily on inference from context and patterns of conduct and accompanying rhetoric. Farbstain cautioned against a rigid interpretation of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) “only reasonable inference” test as requiring the exclusion of all other possible motives when inferring intent. Genocidal intent, she underscored, can and has been found by courts to coexist with military or political aims. Demanding the elimination of such coexisting aims defeats the purpose of the Genocide Convention, particularly in armed conflict. Prof. Farbstain emphasized that in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, genocide unfolds as a process of systematic atrocities accompanied by genocidal rhetoric, revealing the real intent behind them when viewed holistically: Restrictions on language, education, atrocities against members of the targeted group, coupled with the rhetoric to “denazify” Ukrainians, and denying the existence of the Ukrainian nation, all point to the requisite special intent. Russian actions in occupied territories, she noted, already exhibit a “template” of what Russia would impose nationwide if unrestrained.



2. Impunity for Genocide: Historical and Ethical Dimensions

Moderator: **Viola Gienger**, Washington Senior Editor at Just Security; Research Scholar at NYU School of Law

The second panel examined the risks — and historical pattern — of genocide flourishing under conditions of impunity.

PANELISTS



Dr. Gregory Stanton, Founding President of Genocide Watch, used his “Ten Stages of Genocide” framework to show how Russia's actions against Ukraine fit a clear genocidal pattern: classification (“us versus them,” Russian versus Ukrainian); discrimination (replacing Ukrainian officials in occupied areas); dehumanization (branding Ukrainians as “Nazis”); polarization (eliminating moderates, from silencing dissent and independent media to the killing of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny); preparation (amassing 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders as the world failed to act); and persecution (torture in occupied territories and the kidnapping of Ukrainian children). He warned that the next stage, extermination, justified by perpetrators as “purifying” society, will continue if Russia is not stopped by force. Stanton emphasized that denial



permeates every stage, from Russia's refusal to acknowledge the 1932-1933 Holodomor to its ongoing denial of current atrocities.

Dr. Kristina Hook, Assistant Professor at Kennesaw State University and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, argued that confronting Russia's long-standing and largely unchecked pattern of atrocity crimes is both a moral and strategic necessity. Drawing on the historical precedent of the Holodomor, she emphasized that preventing genocide requires understanding the ideology behind it — an imperial worldview that has long driven Moscow's repression of Ukrainians, from language bans and religious persecution to the Holodomor, for which newly declassified archives reveal former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's genocidal intent. This ideology, she noted, has never been meaningfully challenged, enabling a pattern of impunity visible again today in killings, kidnappings, and filtration camps. Hook warned that Russia seeks to absorb Ukrainians when useful and erase those it cannot destroy, and she said such violence will continue as long as Russia's underlying imperial ideology remains intact. She noted that the Kremlin today has shown no sign of backing down from its maximalist genocidal intent but has rather sought to prolong the war and undermine the long-term ability of Ukrainians to protect themselves, in keeping with the Kremlin's intent to destroy Ukrainian identity and sovereignty.



Kimberly Hart, Director of Policy and Programs at GIWPS, stressed that atrocities never happen unexpectedly — the strongest predictor of future atrocities is past ones, and what the world permits through ongoing impunity shapes what comes next. She highlighted that women's experiences are central to Ukraine's future, noting the hundreds of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence and underscoring that women are key leaders in documenting violations, strengthening community resilience, and advancing justice.



Julia Davis, CEO and founder of Russian Media Monitor, described Russia's invasion as explicitly genocidal from the onset, fueled by state-controlled propaganda that openly calls for the mass killing, "cleansing," or "reprogramming" of Ukrainians. Kremlin-backed media personalities, officials, and military figures routinely dehumanize Ukrainians as "Nazis," Satanists, zombies, animals, insects, or "genetic mutants;" claim Ukraine does not exist; and insist that millions must be killed for the rest to submit. Davis emphasized that Russian media has long prepared the public for large-scale atrocities, justifying war crimes, glorifying executions, and framing the assault as a holy war and Russia's imperial destiny. Such systematic dehumanization and explicit calls for extermination, she concluded, reveal a state-backed genocidal project.



3. Legal, Political, Security, and Humanitarian Responses

Moderator: **Melinda Haring**, Senior Advisor at Razom for Ukraine

The third panel focused on tangible mechanisms to pursue justice, enhance deterrence, and strengthen Ukraine's defense.

PANELISTS



Mykola Yurlov, Counsellor at the Department of International Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, outlined Ukraine's multi-layered accountability strategy, including the creation of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression and expanded cooperation with the ICC, reinforced by Ukraine's 2025 ratification of the Rome Statute. These mechanisms, he stressed, are essential to any just and lasting peace, as Russia's objective remains the erasure of Ukraine's statehood — an expansionist threat that would not stop at Ukraine but endanger the Baltics, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and beyond. Moreover, Ukrainian society's demand for justice is so central to its identity that any political decision that compromises justice in exchange for peace will not be accepted by Ukrainians. Yurlov also spotlighted a tri-level compensation



mechanism to address over \$1 trillion in war-related losses since 2014, comprising the Registry of Damage, a Claims Commission in the Hague that will review the claims and award compensation, and a Compensation Fund that is planned to use immobilized Russia's Central Bank assets and for which the U.S. REPO Act has been crucial to advance reparations for Ukraine.

Amb. James Gilmore, Former U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), stressed that Ukraine's security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are non-negotiable. Any territorial concession, he warned, would validate Putin's objective of eliminating Ukraine and rebuilding a Russian empire — an outcome that would destabilize the international order and risk a wider war contrary to U.S. interests. He dismissed newly floated peace plans in Washington, arguing that the U.S. focus should not be on bringing Russia to the negotiating table but on preventing Russian aggression and conquest and ensuring the security and sovereignty of Ukraine. In this regard, political messaging is as critical as military force, and gathering evidence of Russian atrocities strengthens the political narrative necessary to constrain aggression. Gilmore highlighted the importance of the ICC's indictment of Putin, which already restricts his movements in countries from South Africa to Brazil and across Europe. He concluded that Ukraine must not surrender any territory and that defending legal and moral norms is as essential as battlefield success in containing Russia and preserving global security.



Dr. Evelyn Farkas, Executive Director of the McCain Institute, addressing the Trump administration and wider U.S. debates about peace negotiations, rejected proposals for territorial concessions or recognition of Russian control. She emphasized that any Ukrainian territory currently occupied by Russia cannot be ceded de jure and that even de facto arrangements would only be conceivable if paired with credible, NATO-backed security guarantees, robust accountability measures, and substantial reconstruction support. Without these, she argued, no settlement would be stable or legitimate. Farkas called for stronger NATO deterrence, suggesting that the Europeans should call recent Russian railway attacks in Poland an Article 5 attack and stress that future similar hostile actions will be met with kinetic force. Farkas also commended Ukraine's pressure on Russia's oil revenues and urged for further U.S. and EU restrictions on the shadow fleet as some of the steps in the right direction.



Dr. Azeem Ibrahim OBE, Chief Strategy Officer at New Lines Institute, argued that Russia's war has been genocidal from the start, with the main purpose to wipe out "Ukrainianness." Making territorial concessions to Russia will not stop the war, as Russia's goal is not territory but the destruction of Ukrainian identity. The genocidal nature of this war is reflected most starkly in the systematic deportation and Russification of Ukrainian children — a form of demographic engineering seen in past genocides. He stressed that, despite its flaws, the current international justice system remains the strongest safeguard for fixed borders and imposes reputational costs on aggressor states. Ibrahim attributed the present stalemate partly to Europe's dependence on Russian energy and partly to the incrementalism of the Biden administration, which delayed key weapons and left Ukraine fighting to survive rather than win. Emphasizing the war's staggering human toll and the centrality of economic endurance, he called for robust security guarantees — ideally NATO membership for Ukraine — and innovative reparations mechanisms, including the use of frozen Russian assets, highlighting the crucial role of the U.S. REPO Act in this regard.



4. A Plan for Action

Moderator: **Ana Lejava**, Senior Policy Officer at Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

The final panel examined long-term justice, reintegration, and global security.

PANELISTS



Simon Papuashvili, Program Director at IPHR, stressed that accountability for Russian atrocities must be strengthened across domestic courts, third-country jurisdictions, and international bodies, noting that Russia's century-long record of unpunished crimes promotes impunity and must be confronted now. He highlighted the vital role of domestic accountability in Ukraine, bolstered by U.S. technical assistance and civil-society funding — support now jeopardized by U.S. foreign-aid cuts. Internationally, Papuashvili underscored the importance of the ICC, which can try those most responsible without immunity barriers, and the need to advance a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression, which requires strong U.S. political and financial backing. Papuashvili also pointed to the expanding use of universal jurisdiction in national courts worldwide. He warned that weak sanctions enforcement and ongoing Russian interference threaten democratic resilience, making coordinated and comprehensive accountability efforts urgently necessary.



Gillian Huebner, Executive Director of the Collaborative on Global Children's Issues at Georgetown University, highlighted one of the war's gravest humanitarian consequences: the largest child abduction crisis in Europe since World War II, with at least 20,000 Ukrainian children taken to Russia and only about 8,000 returned. While Russia spends \$867 million annually on this deportation and re-education system, the U.S. provides almost no dedicated support, leaving families and communities to bear the burden. Huebner stressed that 90% of effective child protection happens locally, while international bodies like UNICEF and the ICRC have remained largely silent, maintaining impartiality. Most children are returned through frontline efforts — mothers and grandmothers traveling into Russia with help from groups like Save Ukraine, or abducted children maintaining contact to help free one another. Because reintegration will require decades of tracing and trauma support, she called for sustained international commitment and a global coalition to bring Ukrainian children home.



Dr. Michael Cecire, Security and Defense Researcher at RAND Corporation, argued that making Russia's aggression untenable requires understanding Russia's actual military doctrine. Under that approach, destruction of civilians and civilian infrastructure is not incidental but central to Russia's war-fighting concept with eliminationist intent — a reality overlooked by Western democracies due to their own adherence to civilians' protection. Cecire warned that the current Western approach — providing Ukraine just enough support to prolong the fight and relying on sanctions to gradually weaken Russia — has locked the conflict into an attritional war that Russia historically excels at and believes it can win. To shift the trajectory, he called for expanding Western defense production, tightening sanctions, and enabling precision deep-strike operations against Russian military infrastructure to counter Russia's strike capabilities and electronic-warfare advantage. Ultimately, he stressed that Russia is a revisionist power that must be confronted with unified, robust deterrence rather than incremental measures that allow the persistence of its doctrine of targeting civilians to destroy the Ukrainian nation.



Leslie Shedd, Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, argued that defeating Russia's imperial project is essential for U.S. national security and that Washington must better understand the direct benefits of a Ukrainian victory. Ukraine is the "Silicon Valley of drones," and its survival ensures U.S. access to cutting-edge unmanned systems. It also serves as a real-time testing ground for U.S. weapons, including the Patriot system, whose performance

During the *Plan for Action* panel, panelists discuss paths to long-term justice, reintegration, and global security. (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security)



in Ukraine has already strengthened U.S. defense capabilities. Strategically, Shedd stressed that a weakened Russia is good for the United States, as Moscow has already lost hundreds of thousands of troops and drained resources — setbacks that also undermine China, which relies on Russia for energy and military technology. Addressing the issue about potential security implications of a Russian defeat, Shedd was clear: It is a powerful Russia — not a defeated one — that is the real threat. Thus, U.S. policy must be built on strength, not fear. Shedd called for full implementation of the CHIPS Act and an expansion of AUKUS to reinforce democratic control over critical technologies and counter authoritarian influence.

Conclusion

The findings of the conference *Intent to Destroy: Confronting Russia's Campaign to Erase Ukraine and Its People* demonstrate that genocide in Ukraine is not a theoretical risk but a present and escalating human rights, political, and security crisis threatening not only the Ukrainian nation but all Western democracies. It is unfolding in real time through Russia's systematic use of aerial attacks, killings, torture, CRSV, deportations, cultural erasure, and dehumanizing rhetoric that openly calls for the destruction of the Ukrainian people. The international community must respond with decisive, coordinated action grounded in the duty to prevent, suppress, and punish genocide, guided by moral clarity and backed by real political and military resolve.

Stopping genocide demands both accountability for past crimes and prevention of future ones. Speakers across all panels delivered a unified message: Ukraine must win — politically, legally, morally, and militarily. Anything less risks the destruction of the Ukrainian nation and the outbreak of wider regional conflict that would upend the post-World War II security and human rights order.



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