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Russia in Firing Line as UN Human Rights and Disarmament Bodies Meet

By AFP

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UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addresses the Human Rights Council. **UN Geneva / flickr**

Days after the United Nations General Assembly in New York voted overwhelmingly to demand Russia's immediate withdrawal from Ukraine, Moscow's war also dominated the opening sessions of the UN Human Rights Council and Conference for Disarmament, both of which opened in Geneva on Monday.

"The Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered the most massive violations of human rights we are living today," UN chief Antonio Guterres told the rights council on the first day of a record six-week session.

Seventy-five years after the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights, UN rights chief Volker Turk decried the re-emergence of "the old destructive wars of aggression from a bygone era with worldwide consequences, as we have witnessed again in Europe with the senseless Russian invasion of Ukraine."

Montenegro's President Milo Djukanovic, among nearly 150 ministers and heads of state and government set to address the Human Rights Council this week, cautioned that "Russian aggression is a test for the entire world."

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"It is Ukraine today, but tomorrow it might be some other neighboring country. We cannot be neutral."

At the opening of the nearby Conference on Disarmament, British minister for Europe Leo Docherty issued a statement on behalf of 44 countries slamming Russia's actions.

"Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a threat not only to Ukraine but to international peace and security and to the rules-based international order," he said.

U.S. under-secretary of state for arms control and international security Bonnie Jenkins criticized Russia's suspension of participation in New START, the last nuclear arms control pact between Moscow and Washington.

"Russia is once again showing the world that it is not a responsible nuclear power," she said, warning that "we now face a dramatically unstable security environment that pulls us away from collective action here."

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