

# Russian sham referenda in Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE



PUBLISHED SEP 29, 2022  
BY [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Vladimir Putin's sham referenda must be seen for what they are. A brazen and desperate attempt, to justify an unprovoked and illegal land grab, of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

They are a clear violation of international law and the UN Charter. And wholly illegitimate.

That is why the United Kingdom will never recognise the supposed results. Nor any Russian attempt to illegally annex Ukrainian territory.

We have seen Vladimir Putin use this playbook before, in Crimea. As then, Russia will try to claim that these latest votes were free and fair.

But no amount of Russian lies can hide what we all see plainly: A sham. A propaganda exercise. Without a shred of legitimacy. Conducted down the barrel of a gun, by soldiers accompanying ballots door-to-door, forcing Ukrainians to vote.

For 7 months, in an attempt to destroy Ukrainian identity, Vladimir Putin's forces have ruthlessly used violence and torture against civilians - and forced deportations - to exert control.

Sham referenda held under such fear and harassment can never be free, nor fair.

As highlighted by my Foreign Secretary last week, we know Vladimir Putin planned to rig the outcomes. Russia has no choice but to fabricate the results. These regions voted overwhelmingly to join an independent Ukraine in 1991, and for President Zelenskyy in 2019.

Earlier this week, the United Kingdom announced sanctions against those behind these bogus votes, including 33 officials and collaborators deployed by Russia to conduct them.

This latest Russian deception, and Putin's decision to partially mobilise Russia's population, only serve to highlight one thing: his invasion is failing.

His war machine is depleted. His supply of volunteers willing to fight in Ukraine has been exhausted. Partial mobilisation will only send many more thousands of innocent Russians to die in Putin's war-of-choice. A war which he could end right now.

Vladimir Putin's nuclear threats are irresponsible and will not work. Ukrainians are highly motivated. The international alliance is cast-iron strong. We and our allies are clear that any use of nuclear weapons by Russia would be met with severe consequences.

The United Kingdom's approach will not alter. We will be steadfast in support of Ukraine - and its right to defend its sovereign territory - for as long as it takes.

We call on all participating States to join us in unequivocally rejecting the results of these illegitimate referenda, and any Russian attempts to illegally annex Ukrainian territory.

If we allow Russia to change sovereign borders by force, then the core principles on which the OSCE was founded - of sovereign equality; the inviolability of frontiers; and respect for territorial integrity - lie in tatters.

And all of our borders become less secure.

This is about freedom and security for the people of Ukraine. But also about freedom and security across Europe and the World.

*Press release distributed by Media Pigeon on behalf of GOV.UK, on Sep 29, 2022. For more information subscribe and follow us.*

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