

DELIVERING REPARATION TO UKRAINE FROM THE £2.5 BILLION SALE OF CHELSEA FC

AUGUST 2025

BACKGROUND

In March 2022, Roman Abramovich pledged to sell Chelsea Football Club and donate the c. £2.5 billion to support victims of the war in Ukraine. Shortly after, he became subject to UK sanctions for his close connections with Putin's regime. With his funds frozen, the sale of Chelsea FC was made possible by a licence granted by the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) on 24 May 2022 to create a foundation with "exclusively humanitarian purposes supporting all victims of the conflict in Ukraine, and its consequences." To date, the funds, still in Abramovich's name, remain frozen in a UK bank account.

THE DELAY

Establishing the foundation requires a decision to be made on the **destination of the funds**, which is the crux of the impasse. When announcing his decision to sell the club, Abramovich said proceeds from the sale would be donated via a foundation "for the benefit of all victims of the war in Ukraine". The UK government has stated that the funds should only be spent on "[humanitarian efforts inside Ukraine](#)", while Abramovich insists they be used for [all victims of the conflict](#), which could potentially extend beyond Ukraine's borders and even encompass those in Russia. Three years after the club was sold, an agreement has not been reached.

Abramovich cannot access the c. £2.5bn sale proceeds due to the funds being frozen under UK sanctions, but the money still legally belongs to him and cannot be moved without either a licence from OFSI or until the sanctions against him are lifted.

REDRESS calls on the UK Government to:

1. Take steps, in coordination with partners, to ensure that the proceeds of the sale of the Chelsea FC are **swiftly released**.
2. Ensure that the funds are used to **fund reparation** for survivors of the conflict, particularly, of survivors of gross violations of international human rights law and of serious violations of international humanitarian law, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.
3. Engage existing reparation mechanisms, Ukrainian civil society and survivors in **guiding the distribution** of the funds.

According to REDRESS's timeline of engagement, as of August 2025 the Labour government have been asked about the sale of Chelsea FC on 39 occasions, since taking office in July 2024. Despite this sustained attention, there has been limited progress in resolving the issue.

UK threatens Abramovich with legal action

On 2 June 2025, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and Foreign Secretary David Lammy [made a joint statement](#) expressing their frustration at the failure to reach agreement with Abramovich over the proceeds from the sale of the Chelsea Football Club, and threatened

to take Abramovich to court over the matter: “While the door for negotiations will remain open, we are fully prepared to pursue this through the courts if required, to ensure people suffering in Ukraine can benefit from these proceeds as soon as possible.”

Questions remain regarding the use of interest accrued on the frozen Chelsea funds. REDRESS and the APPG on Magnitsky Sanctions and Reparation are exploring the current destination of the interest and tax revenues, together with the possibility of repurposing both the interest generated and any associated tax revenue as reparation for survivors.

HOW THE UK CAN SUPPORT REPARATION TO VICTIMS

A survivor-centered approach to Ukraine’s reconstruction and recovery remains urgently needed. Defence, humanitarian assistance, and rebuilding efforts must take place alongside and in coordination with meaningful reparations for survivors. Survivors have a legal right to reparation. Financing reparations is not only a matter of justice for survivors, but an investment in the future of Ukraine. Addressing survivors’ urgent needs now can prevent them from becoming exacerbated and the harm they have already suffered compounded. **Survivors must not be made to wait until a peace agreement is reached, or for Russia’s agreement, in order to receive reparation.**

How the Chelsea funds are distributed should be determined in collaboration with those working within the existing [reparation landscape](#) for Ukraine, survivors and civil society. Through the foundation, or by a separate route, the funds could be channelled into mechanisms such as:

1. **The ICC’s Trust Fund for Victims**, which can deliver reparations and support to victims of serious international crimes;
2. **The Global Survivors Fund**, which is helping Ukrainian authorities provide interim reparations for conflict-related sexual violence;
3. A **new UK mechanism for “victims of internationally wrongful conduct”**, which could pool funds and enable those who have suffered abuses abroad to access them as reparations; and
4. The **Claims Commission for Ukraine**, currently being established by Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee on an International Treaty under the Council of Europe. While not yet fully operational, the Commission is part of a three-pillar reparations framework being developed to ensure justice and accountability for victims and is closely connected to the Register of Damage for Ukraine.

£2.5 billion has the power to transform the lives of many victims of the conflict, allowing them to move forward with their lives. The UK Government should not delay any further in resolving the Chelsea FC impasse.