



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

WATCHING BRIEF 24-03: RUSSIAN-UKRAINE WAR UPDATE

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

4th February 2024

24 January 2024, marked 700 days since Russia invaded Ukraine. Major cities and transport hubs have been heavily bombed if not destroyed. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) puts the number of people who have been displaced due to the war at 10 million people, 6.3 million of whom are no longer in Ukraine and are categorized as refugees.

According to the UN, over 10,000 civilians, including more than 560 children have been killed and over 18,500 people have been injured since 24 February 2022. Many of these deaths occurred well behind the front lines as Russia deploys long-range missiles and loitering munitions targeted at populated areas. The 'safe places' across Ukraine are shrinking daily.

In referring to the Russian-Ukraine war, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated: 'I think the big difference from last year to this is that this year, this is not news anymore in the world. This is somehow a trend towards getting used to Ukrainian suffering.' (Associated Press, 25 January 2024.)

As events in the Middle East expand beyond Israel/Palestine, financial, humanitarian and other support from donor countries is increasingly stretched while also competing with various domestic priorities. Since the war began, the US Government has provided over \$USD 75 billion in assistance, including humanitarian, financial and military support. However, the Republicans in Congress continue to block a \$61 billion assistance package and want it linked to tougher immigration policies, especially on the border with Mexico. The Guardian warns that a second Trump Government in the US would almost certainly end all military aid to Ukraine.

On 1 February 2024, European Union leaders unanimously agreed to extend 50 billion euros in new aid to Ukraine, overcoming weeks of resistance from Hungary and amid the uncertainty of future US aid.

Speaking at the Swedish Defence University, Emmanuel Macron stated that Europe's future could no longer be decided by the US and Russia and that '...Europe had a right to determine its own future'. He argued that by stepping up now, 'the US through NATO could no longer have a monopoly in determining future relations with Moscow'. Meanwhile, since July 2023 there have been 113 attacks on Russian military enlistment offices, doubling the number of attacks over the last six months.

On the other side of the war, Russian-linked cyber hacking group NoName05716, supported by other hacking groups, has said that they are preparing a major cyber action against the Ukrainian government. This group has claimed other successful cyber attacks on the Swiss government, and Ukraine's online banking internet infrastructure.

The Financial Review reports that the Australian Government's decision not to reopen its Kyiv embassy (unlike many other supporters) makes effective communication between the two countries difficult, especially over military support needs, and is straining the bilateral relationship.

Friends may wish to contact current and former Chairs/Vice Chair of the Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group of Ukraine and ask for the Australian Embassy in Ukraine to be reopened and diplomatic staff currently at the Australian Embassy for Ukraine located in Poland to be relocated back to Kyiv:

- Independent Senator David Van (Independent, Victoria) senator.van@aph.gov.au
- Senator Catryna Bilyk (Labor Tasmania) current chair senator.bilyk@aph.gov.au
- Senator Linda Reynolds (Liberal WA) current vice chair senator.reynolds@aph.gov.au

Letters can be sent to the individual at Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

Countries with a diplomatic presence in Ukraine include: the EU, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, USA, UK, Estonia, Poland, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, the Vatican, Moldova, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, the Netherlands and Spain. Most embassies are in Kyiv.

Resources

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