

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



January 27, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Protecting and Prioritizing Human Rights in Ukraine

Dear President Trump,

On behalf of Amnesty International's members and supporters across the United States and Ukraine, we urge your administration to protect and prioritize human rights in Ukraine.¹ For nearly three years, civilians in Ukraine have paid too high a price for Russia's full-scale war of aggression. Many thousands of civilians have died as a direct result of the war and millions have fled their homes. Far too many have seen their communities severely damaged or destroyed and had their lives upended. For over a decade, those living in occupied Crimea—an integral part of Ukraine—and in the occupied regions of Eastern Ukraine have suffered severe human rights violations.

By adhering to the following principles, the United States can mitigate such suffering and lay the foundation for a peaceful and just future for Ukraine and a more stable region.

- 1. Russia must cease its war of aggression against Ukraine.** Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a manifest violation of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and an act of aggression that is a crime under international law. The United States must continue to condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine.
- 2. Civilian detainees and prisoners of war (POWs) must be treated in accordance with international law.** Civilian detainees and children who were forcibly displaced, detained or transferred must be urgently released and allowed to return safely and voluntarily to their homes or freely chosen destinations. All POWs who are gravely wounded or gravely sick, or whose mental or physical well-being is endangered by captivity, must be repatriated to Ukraine or accommodated in a neutral country, as guaranteed by the Third Geneva Convention. All captives endangered by inhuman conditions of captivity must be released according to the same Convention, and those remaining in captivity must be afforded their rights under international law to humane treatment, adequate living conditions, food quality and quantity, medical care, the right to send and receive

¹ Amnesty International is an independent, Nobel Peace Prize-winning, global human rights movement of more than ten million people. Amnesty International USA is the movement's U.S.-based section.

correspondence, and to receive relief shipments. Numerous reports indicate that Russian authorities have systematically subjected Ukrainian POWs to torture and ill-treatment.² The United States must lead the call for unimpeded access for independent humanitarian organizations operating in Russia and in occupied Ukrainian territory to monitor the treatment of civilian detainees and POWs.

- 3. Economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine must be maintained and should reach at-risk groups, including children, older people, and Indigenous Peoples.** All relief, recovery and reconstruction assistance to Ukraine should address the needs of the civilians most at risk. That includes children, who have been the victims of numerous indiscriminate, and in some cases apparently *deliberately targeted*, attacks with explosive weapons, such as the [attack on the maternity hospital and drama theatre](#) in Mariupol documented by Amnesty International in June 2022. Russian aggression has also [deprived children of their right to education](#), with some parents in occupied areas choosing to hide their children to avoid them being taken to ‘re-education’ institutions, for adoption in Russia, or having them forcefully enrolled into schools operating under the Russian curriculum. Meanwhile, [older people have been disproportionately killed or injured](#) during the conflict, and they also struggle in displacement to access housing, support services, and healthcare on an equal basis with others. In [occupied Crimea](#), Russia has systematically disrupted, restricted, or banned the use of Ukrainian and Crimean Tartar languages, oppressed religious and cultural practices that do not conform to those endorsed by Moscow, and forcibly transferred Ukrainian residents out of Crimea and enabled Russian civilians to move in. All aid delivered to Ukraine in advance of or as part of a settlement between Ukraine and Russia should reach children, older people, and Indigenous Peoples most affected by Russia’s acts of aggression. This effort is consistent with U.S. policy under the [Women, Peace, and Security Act](#), which you signed into law in 2017, Section 7 of which underscores the importance of consulting with marginalized populations regarding U.S. efforts to resolve violent conflict.
- 4. Civilians fleeing the war must be guaranteed refuge and protection.** [Over 6.8 million people](#) who were living in Ukraine have been forced to leave their homes, seeking safety primarily in European countries. The United States should provide support to the countries harboring the greatest numbers of civilians who fled the war. The United States should also maintain and extend Temporary Protected Status for the comparatively few Ukrainians who have fled to the United States. This will allow those civilians to remain under U.S. protection until a just and lasting peace is achieved and the conditions allow for their safe and voluntary return to their homes.
- 5. All those responsible for human rights violations and war crimes committed during the entirety of the conflict – including high-level officials - must be held accountable.** Since the start in 2014 of Russia’s occupation of Ukraine’s Crimea, Amnesty International has documented numerous atrocities, including the deliberate targeting of civilians and critical civilian infrastructure, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions,

² See for example: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Treatment of Prisoners of War and Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June to 31 August 2024*. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024/Ukraine-OHCHR-40th-periodic-report.pdf>

torture, unlawful deprivation of freedom, forcible transfer of civilians, and the abuse of POWs. The United States must demand accountability for war crimes and all crimes under international law, and human rights violations committed since Russia's military intervention in 2014. It should not undermine accountability pursued by international institutions, and should refrain from taking any steps to target or sanction the International Criminal Court.

- 6. Ukraine must receive sustained international support for demining and clearance of explosive remnants of war.** Anti-personnel landmines continue to pose a deadly threat to civilians in Ukraine. Ukraine [recorded](#) 580 landmine casualties in 2023, among the highest rates in the world. Data gathered by humanitarian mine clearance organizations working in Ukraine shows most casualties come from anti-personnel mines, which are inherently indiscriminate weapons, and as such prohibited by international humanitarian law. Similarly, cluster munitions, which have been used by both sides throughout the war, utilize submunitions or bomblets that can fail to explode on initial impact, leaving duds that can [indiscriminately injure and kill](#) for years, until they are cleared and destroyed. The United States has a moral responsibility to maintain its long-term and longstanding funding for, and ongoing implementation of, programs to clear all types of unexploded ordnance. Doing so will enable Ukrainians to access their land, including farmland which is critical to Ukraine's economy, without the fear of severe injury or death.

Mr. President, your administration has the opportunity and moral responsibility to set Ukraine on a path to a more just and peaceful future. Ukrainians are suffering immensely, but are also demonstrating remarkable resilience and a will to use support and safe harbor provided by the United States and other partners to rebuild and maintain their lives and communities. We urge you to seize this moment to support them and ensure that human rights are at the top of the agenda for Ukraine.

Sincerely,



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Veronika Velch, PhD
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CC:

Marco Rubio, Secretary of State

Mike Waltz, National Security Advisor

Senator James Risch, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Representative Brian Mast, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

Representative Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee