U.S. Unions Oppose Putin’s Invasion of Ukraine

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AFL-CIO joins the global labor movement in condemning Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Here is what working family organizations have said about the invasion of Ukraine:

AFL-CIO:

The AFL-CIO condemns the violent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military. We stand in solidarity with the workers and their families who are impacted by the devastation, and offer our condolences for lives that have been lost.

We join the global labor movement and our allies in calling for an immediate end to President Vladimir Putin’s military aggression, and we support extensive economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union, particularly those focused on Putin and his protectors. These sanctions should be strengthened, by excluding Russia from the SWIFT international banking system and by taking effective multilateral action against tax havens and financial secrecy laws that protect Putin and his enablers. We further call on all U.S.-based corporations doing business in Russia to publicly condemn Putin’s government while calling for an end to the attack on Ukraine. We stand ready to assist the Biden administration in its efforts to implement and strengthen these measures, and we call on global leaders to build toward reestablishing peace and democracy in Ukraine and the region.

Ukrainian unions have struggled for decades to guarantee the internationally recognized right to organize and bargain collectively. They have been at the forefront of campaigns to protect working people from precarious or “informal” work; fight climate change while preserving jobs and livelihoods; and end gender-based violence and harassment and employment discrimination against LGBTQ+ workers. Unions have courageously fought corruption that is widespread in the Ukrainian economy. All these brave efforts by Ukraine’s unions are now threatened by the Russian military invasion, which is destroying the basic democratic rights of freedom of association, assembly and

speech that are necessary for all effective trade union action.

The Russian government's invasion of Ukraine flagrantly violates international law and undermines the right of Ukraine and of all nations to self-determination free from the threat of violence. The consequences of the attack on Ukraine are vast—tens of thousands of lives may be lost, millions may be displaced. Countries will need to house, feed and support the many refugees fleeing the violence. President Putin's war jeopardizes international peace and global economic recovery. Workers and their families are still struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, and can ill afford the higher oil and food prices and further disruption to the supply chains this war will cause.

Going forward, the global community must come together immediately to reestablish a common security framework that ends violent conflicts and prioritizes investments in shared economic security, including jobs and basic social protections. The AFL-CIO stands ready to support policies that will bring security, peace and democracy, and we will provide continued solidarity and support to the people of Ukraine.

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Sharan Burrow:

We mourn for those who have lost their lives and offer our deepest condolences and solidarity to those who have lost loved ones or been injured.

The imposition of sanctions by governments which support democracy and the rule of law is both inevitable and justified, and should focus particularly on the entourage of President Putin, who is leading Russia down this destructive path and threatening peace in Europe and the world.

We call for world leaders to take urgent and definitive steps to initiate dialogue and find a peaceful solution to this crisis in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) General Secretary Luca Visentini:

We strongly condemn the war, which hits people and workers first, and advocate for dialogue, peace and democracy to be reestablished immediately.

Europe must stand strong against Putin's aggression and put maximum pressure on his regime, and entourage in particular, to bring about peace and dialogue.

We cannot allow policy to be shaped by violence, and we expect world and EU leaders to protect Ukraine's integrity as well as the security of all other countries in the region.

With over 100,000 people already displaced, Europe needs to prepare to welcome refugees, and we acknowledge the pledges already made by several EU member states.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) International President John Costa:

The ATU joins the trade union movement and rest of the world in standing in solidarity with the people and workers of Ukraine as they endure an unwarranted attack by Russia. We have watched as courageous Ukrainians, including its president, resist this occupation and fight bravely for their country. Our thoughts are with our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian unions as more than a hundred Ukrainian civilians have already lost their lives with hundreds injured. Many more could die in this brazen act of aggression in violation of international law.

The ATU has among our ranks people from all over the world. We believe that all people and nations should be free from threats of violence. This unprovoked assault threatens democracy, security and

peace not only in Ukraine but across Europe and the entire world. War is not the answer. We join the global community and our allies in calling for an end to President Putin's military aggression and support the call for a unified response and diplomatic solution to bring an end to these senseless attacks on Ukraine.

American Federation of Musicians (AFM):

The American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada profoundly condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war on Ukraine. We express our unwavering solidarity with the brave Ukrainian people and their elected government during this horrific time. We are concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian toll resulting from the barbaric attacks on the civilian population of Ukraine, and we pledge our resolute support to those in Russia who at great risk are protesting military aggression against Ukraine. We pray for an immediate end to the devastation and express our condolences for the unnecessary loss of life.

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten:

This unprovoked and unjustified Russian invasion is not just an assault on the democratic people of Ukraine, but also a flagrant violation of international law. We condemn it unreservedly because it traduces the fundamental principle that wars of aggression can never be the answer to disputes among nations.

Tens of thousands of innocent lives are now in the sights of an oppressive, autocratic dictator who seeks to establish Russian hegemony and military domination in Eastern Europe. Putin lives in an alternate reality where he wants to go back to the bloody age of empire. Luckily, the Biden administration understands the grievous threat he poses the world and is levying economic and diplomatic sanctions against the Russian state and its oligarchic rulers.

We stand in solidarity with our fellow unionists in the Ukrainian labor movement; with the educators, students and families in Ukraine; and with their democratic government in this moment of their trial and need.

Boilermakers (IBB) President Newton B. Jones:

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers stands in solidarity with and praises the leadership of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the steadfastly brave Ukrainian people as they fight to maintain their nation, their identity as Ukrainians and their freedom.

We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the senseless and barbaric actions of a megalomaniac tyrant, Vladimir Putin, in invading the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers will be making a financial contribution to assist the people of Ukraine. We encourage everyone to do likewise to provide relief and strengthen their efforts.

President Zelenskyy and his people are showing the world that when people organize together, they can stop even the cruelest forces of tyranny.

Fire Fighters (IAFF):

The IAFF is rising in support and solidarity with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters. As their country remains under Russian attack, firefighters are standing strong on the front lines, not in battle, but protecting the lives of Ukrainian citizens.

“It is difficult to imagine the challenges firefighters there are facing as they continue to respond during a military invasion,” says IAFF General President Edward Kelly. “This union is proud to stand with them as they continue to serve their communities without hesitation. We pray they stay safe.”

As the Ukraine military is doing its job, firefighters there are responding to structure fires caused by missile strikes and searching for survivors in blown-out buildings.

The IAFF will continue to watch the situation in Ukraine and look for ways to support our Ukrainian brothers and sisters and the global community at large.

International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) President Matt Biggs:

It is imperative for the labor movement in the United States and worldwide to aggressively denounce President Putin and his government for this illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, as well as their crimes against humanity by attacking innocent Ukrainian citizens. IFPTE fully supports the AFL-CIO and [the Canadian Labour Congress] for standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Mine Workers (UMWA) International President Cecil E. Roberts:

The blood of innocent Ukrainians is on [imported Russian] oil, gas and coal. The United States should not be in any way funding this war by continuing to buy Russian exports. We should be focusing on using what this nation has to offer when it comes to energy sources. I applaud Sens. Manchin, Murkowski and the other co-sponsors of [the Ban Russians Energy Imports Act] for their bold action. We are in full support.

We also need to start manufacturing products that use coal in the U.S. Right now, we ship millions of tons of metallurgical coal to China, which they in turn use to make steel and fabricate it into wind turbines and solar panels. They then ship those products back here. How does that make sense?

Let’s put less focus on relying on other countries to provide our resources and look at what our own nation provides. Let’s stop supporting anti-democratic regimes and tyrants and focus on using the resources we have right in our own backyard.

Musical Artists (AGMA) President Ray Menard:

AGMA stands in heartbroken solidarity with our family, friends and colleagues and all those impacted by the violence in Ukraine.

As a union, AGMA is founded on the principles of democracy, freedom and hope. We believe in using collective power for good. We believe most people want to leave the world better than they found it. We believe that beauty, art and fellowship will prevail, even when confronted with calculated and ruthless destruction.

In the face of tragedy and injustice, we turn to that which our members have devoted their creative lives: art that helps us understand all facets of what it means to be human, including days like today. As many AGMA members have sung on stages across the world:

“What shall I, a wretch, say then?
To which protector shall I appeal
When even the just man is barely safe?”
—Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*

We beg for safety to return to all in harm's way. Let compassion, unity and peace prevail. End the violence and senseless suffering.

We are all members of one union, and one family.

National Nurses United (NNU):

National Nurses United today joined with the international community and peace and human rights advocates in the U.S. and around the world to urge an immediate ceasefire and end to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a return to diplomacy.

"Any invasion of another sovereign nation is a crime against humanity that always threatens to lead to an incalculable loss of lives and other long-term health consequences for the people of that nation," said NNU President Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN. "As nurses, we know that war and all the suffering it produces are human calamities that are not justifiable and must end."

"The danger of even greater escalation—which potentially involves the two largest nuclear-armed nations in the world—is particularly chilling," Triunfo-Cortez said. "That threat should further impel all parties involved to seek a peaceful, diplomatic solution to this crisis immediately."

NNU stands in full solidarity with the trade unions and all the people of the Ukraine now in grave danger. NNU also welcomes anti-war protests that have emerged within Russia.

While ending the bloodshed must be the immediate priority, NNU said it is also important to recognize that all nations have legitimate security concerns when foreign troops are positioned near their borders.

Any diplomatic, long-term solution should be premised on a peaceful resolution of conflict and should directly address peace and security concerns for all sovereign nations in the region.

SAG-AFTRA:

In these dark and uncertain times, with war returning to the European continent, SAG-AFTRA stands in solidarity with our colleagues in Ukraine, our fellow union members of the Cultural Workers Union of Ukraine, and all those suffering the effects of this war of aggression.

It is heartbreaking to see the stories of civilians coping with the loss of family members, friends, homes and livelihoods. Watching the humanitarian crisis unfold, it's easy to feel despair and helplessness. But if you wish to help, there are organizations, including UNICEF and many others, that use your donations to aid those impacted by this war.

We insist that all nations recognize and respect the freedom of the press and ensure that our members and journalists of all nations working in the war zone are kept safe from harm.

The union also stands with the brave Russian anti-war protesters who are risking their own freedom to call for an end to the violence. SAG-AFTRA fervently hopes for a swift return to peace in the region.

Solidarity always.

United Steelworkers (USW):

The USW stands in international solidarity with the Ukrainian people as they withstand deadly and

unprovoked violence by Russian forces. Their bravery serves as an inspiration to everyone who fights on the side of democracy and freedom.

As we seek to end this baseless war, we join with the global trade union movement in condemning the violence against Ukrainian citizens, including our Ukrainian union siblings.

We call on international leaders to remain steadfast in their commitment to stemming the aggression and holding Vladimir Putin accountable for the death and destruction he caused.