

# Our Strength is our Unity: Putin Chose War. We Remain United with Ukraine

This is a dangerous moment for freedom-loving people around the world. By launching his brutal assault on the people of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin has also committed an assault on the principles that uphold global peace and democracy. But the people of Ukraine are resilient and we will continue to support the Ukrainian people as they defend their country. By choosing to pay for a war instead of investing in the needs of Russians, Putin's invasion of Ukraine will be a strategic failure for the Kremlin and ravage the future of the Russian people.

The world is taking action to hold Russia accountable. As a result of unprecedented global sanctions coordination, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and Japan have removed selected Russian banks from the SWIFT messaging system and imposed restrictive measures on the Russian Central Bank. After Putin began his invasion, the ruble hit its weakest point in history, and the Russian stock market plunged. Severe sanctions have been imposed on the architects of this war, including Putin himself. We recognize and applaud Guatemala's early and strong support and leadership in ensuring the international community holds Russia accountable in multilateral fora, including the Government of Guatemala co-sponsoring resolutions in the UN General Assembly and the Organization of American States.

In response to Putin's war of choice, the vast majority of countries have stood by Ukraine and its people, and countries continue to support them economically, politically and defensively. Measures have been implemented to welcome Ukrainians who have fled the armed conflict and huge humanitarian aid programs and mechanisms have been launched to reduce the suffering of the displaced. Russia's ability to do business using the international banking system has been restricted, stunting Russia's ability to finance and grow its military. And we are prepared to do more.

Russia is advancing an invasion of disinformation based on lies, it is therefore of the utmost importance that we remain vigilant against the proliferation of disinformation or false news.

This was an attack that Vladimir Putin has planned for a long time. He methodically moved more than 150,000 troops and military equipment to Ukraine's border. He moved blood supplies into position and built field hospitals, demonstrating his intentions all along. He rejected every good-faith effort to address his fabricated security concerns and to avoid needless conflict and human suffering by engaging in diplomacy and dialogue.

Russia continues to justify its military aggression by falsely claiming the need to stop "genocide" in Ukraine – despite there being no evidence that genocide was occurring there. We saw Russia use these tactics before, when they invaded Ukraine in 2014 and Georgia in 2008.

At almost the very same moment the United Nations Security Council was meeting to stand up for Ukraine's sovereignty and forestall disaster, Putin launched his invasion in violation of international law. Missiles began to rain down, striking historic cities across Ukraine. Then came air raids, columns of tanks, and battalions of troops, all riding a renewed wave of disinformation and outright lies.

Putin is the aggressor. Putin chose this war. And now his people will bear the consequences of his decision to invest in war rather than in them.

Putin's goal of dividing the international community has failed. In the face one of the most significant challenges to democratic ideals since World War II, we have joined together in solidarity. We have united, coordinating intensively to engage as one with Russia and Ukraine, to provide assistance to Ukraine and develop a broad and massive response.

Putin has failed to divide us. Putin has failed to undermine our shared belief in the fundamental right of sovereign nations to choose their destiny and their allies. And Putin will fail to erase the proud nation of Ukraine.

Putin's aggression against Ukraine will cost Russia profoundly, both economically and strategically. The Russian people deserve better from their government than the immense cost to their future that this invasion has precipitated.

Liberty, democracy, and human dignity are forces far more powerful than fear and oppression. In the contest between democracy and autocracy, between sovereignty and subjugation, make no mistake: Freedom will prevail.

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