

UKRAINE: Calling for De-Escalation and a Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict

May 17,
2024 (v3)
(first issued
May 20,
2022)

statement by Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

The Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group calls for a cease-fire and true international efforts for diplomatic resolution after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The involvement of the United States and NATO could escalate the fighting to include use of nuclear weapons.

The expansion of NATO since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has led to the current situation, as did the US support for a coup that overturned the elected government of Ukraine in 2014.

The Minsk Agreements of 2014-15 called upon the parties to de-escalate by creating semi-autonomous regions in eastern Ukraine, but fighting in the region continued up until the Russian incursion into Ukraine in February 2022.

It is true that Russia attacked its neighbor country, but it is also true that the US ignored Russia's concerns about moving NATO so close to its borders.

The US attacked and invaded Iraq in 2003 without provocation, and led NATO to conduct a similar attack on Libya in 2011.

While it seems strange to those unfamiliar with the situation for Russia's President to accuse Ukraine, whose President is Jewish, of being Nazis, the Ukrainian military has absorbed the Azov Battalion, a well known neo-Nazi militia, into its ranks.

Contrast the US approach to this conflict, opposing the larger nuclear-armed country (Russia) and supporting the smaller one with few military resources (Ukraine) with the Middle East, where America supports a known nuclear armed state (Israel) and sends inadequate humanitarian aid to the mostly unarmed territory under attack (Gaza).

After Congress voted to spend \$61 billion more on weapons and other support for Ukraine, a man on the front lines said "*Are you serious? Now this war will just continue*" (Daily Beast, 4/25/24).

How can this conflict be brought to a peaceful end?

- 1- The parties need to agree to an immediate cease-fire.
- 2- Humanitarian aid needs to be brought in for those lacking food and medical attention.
- 3- There should be no more arms transfers to Ukraine, and in general, no further arming of the combatants.
- 4- Negotiations need to commence, including a plan for independence and security of both Russia and Ukraine.
- 5- In support of such a cease-fire and peace plan, sanctions should be lifted. Sanctions mostly harm ordinary people and not governments, and are thus another form of war.
- 6- The US must stop making proclamations about "weakening Russia," name-calling its president, and hinting at regime change.
- 7- The US needs to renew diplomatic ties with Russia to continue downsizing nuclear and conventional arms stockpiles.



Code Pink activists took a message of peace to Senator Bernie Sanders' office on October 4, 2023

8-No further expansion of NATO. The addition of Finland and Sweden to NATO in 2023, the proposal to add Ukraine itself to NATO, and the opening of an office of NATO in Japan, a country in the Pacific Ocean, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are unnecessary escalations.

The US continues to conduct warfare in Syria, Somalia, and Yemen. The US has bombed those three countries by drone and conventional aircraft-- as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Libya-- with no consequences and little media attention to whether US actions constitute war crimes.

More broadly:

— Nations need to redirect military spending to address the climate crisis, human needs, and abolishing nuclear weapons. In the US, this means ending weapons contracts for arms merchants and putting money into infrastructure, housing, education and more. As of May, 2024, the US has spent or set aside over \$180 billion to support Ukraine-- equivalent to 20% of the US' bloated \$886 billion military budget.

—The structure of the United Nations, which allots permanent Security Council seats and veto power to the five countries which won World War II, needs to be revised. While Russia can veto any condemnation of their actions, the United States has the same authority and has been able to take actions which might be considered war crimes.

—The US should join the International Criminal Court, which it signed onto under Bill Clinton but "un-signed" under George W. Bush. Russia, which left in 2016 after its invasion of Crimea, should also rejoin.

The Iraq Affinity Group is in solidarity with people working for peace in Russia and in Ukraine. Let's make a difference by demanding changes to our own government's policies.

Statement created in 2022, updated in 2023 and 2024 by the
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Informed by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center (Boulder, CO), Stop the War Coalition (UK), United National Antiwar Coalition (USA), and Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (New York, NY).