

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

May 19,
2023
(first issued
May 20,
2022)

statement by Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

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

It is particularly concerning that 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.

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 between Russia and Ukraine need to commence, including a plan for independence and security of both nations.
- 5- In support of such a cease-fire and peace plan, sanctions should be lifted. Sanctions mostly harm the ordinary people and not the governments they are supposed to be directed toward, 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.
- 8- No further expansion of NATO. The addition of Finland and Sweden to NATO in early 2023, the proposal to add Ukraine itself to NATO, and the opening of an office of NATO in Japan, a country that sits in the Pacific Ocean, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are unnecessary escalations.



Protestors in St. Paul, MN call for "No Cold War with Russia" and "No US Weapons for Ukraine"... in February, 2015 (Fight Back News 2/19/15)

The US continues to conduct warfare in Syria and Somalia, and to support the Saudi side of the conflict in Yemen. The US has for years bombed those three countries by drone and conventional aircraft, as it has in 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 their military spending to address the climate crisis and human needs, and all nuclear weapons need to be abolished. In the US, this means no more weapons contracts for arms merchants, and putting money into COVID relief, infrastructure, housing, education and more. As of January, 2023, the US had spent \$46.6 billion on military support to Ukraine, 14 times more than the next highest recipient, Israel (Council on Foreign Relations, February 22, 2023). This is equivalent to 17% of the US' bloated \$817 billion military budget.

—The structure of the United Nations, which allows the five countries which won World War II to maintain permanent seats and veto power in the Security Council, 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 all the people working for peace both in Russia and in Ukraine. We can make a difference by demanding changes to our own government's policies.

This statement was created by the
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Influenced 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).