

Open Letter to World's Mayors and Local Self-Governance

At dawn on February 24, the Russian Federation attacked independent and sovereign Ukraine. This cruel bloodshed in the heart of Europe was the beginning of a full-scale insane war: civilians are being brutally killed, hospitals and kindergartens are being bombed, while key city infrastructure is being destroyed by the invaders. Various methods of terror are being applied, and the aggressor is grinding Ukrainian cities and villages to dust that until a few days ago were filled with happy citizens investing in their development and prosperity.

During the last decade, we implemented local self-governance and decentralization reforms, and were proud to call them Europe's "best practices". Today, the strength of Ukrainian communities' self-governance is an important element of Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invaders. Regular citizens have self-organized to defend their cities, towns, and villages; they are coming barehanded to the streets to protest and face armed military forces with tanks. City mayors, community leaders and local deputies are doing their best to fulfill basic needs of their citizens under a sky full of Russian rockets. Cities and communities are being savagely bombed by Russian invaders. The city of Pokrovsk in Donetsk region was attacked by forbidden hypersonic cassette missiles. More than four hundred thousand citizens of Mariupol are locked behind a blockade that is provoking humanitarian crisis. Cities like Irpin (Kyiv region) and Volnovakha (Donetsk region) are nearly destroyed from continued bombing by the enemy. Famous universities, historical and cultural and civil infrastructure of Kharkiv have been ruined. Chernihiv, one of the oldest cities in Ukraine and in Europe, is under systemic missile attacks by Russian forces. The whole world was frightened by news of Russia's attack on Energodar (Zaporizhzhia region), the largest nuclear power plant in Europe. In Mariupol, ceasefire agreement was broken by Russian forces and evacuation route for civilians and the local maternity hospital was viciously shelled. Civilian infrastructure and residential areas in Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr remain under heavy shelling. Mykolaiv and Kherson are putting all their forces to defend their citizens and land, Mykolaiv witnessed the cruel shooting of kindergarten teachers. Invaders killed your mayoral counterpart, the mayor of Hostomel, on the outskirts of Kyiv, the city was heroically defending Ukraine's capital.

We are very grateful for your support in this wartime by your humanitarian aid and shelter for Ukrainians escaping rockets and tanks. We also believe there is a larger role for the world's cities and leaders to help bring peace by stopping the aggressor.

Ukrainian cities and communities learned from you that local self-governance is a key pillar of democracy. Now we ask you to apply this principle in your own countries to defend your Ukrainian counterparts and partner cities.

Our President, government officials and parliamentarians have addressed the UN, NATO, international organizations and leaders of the democratic world with one urgent request – to close the sky above Ukraine and help fight the aggressor and defend the European values that Ukrainians are giving their lives for. We understand there might be reasons why this hasn't been done yet, but people's lives are not worth excuses. Politicians and world leaders will not forgive themselves for permitting the unnecessary deaths of children who could become doctors, writers, engineers, economists. We also ask for stricter sanctions against Russia to stop this bloody war against sovereign Ukraine.

You can be a strong voice in your cities and communities that impacts decision-making of your countries' leadership. The appeals and voices of mayors, associations of local self-governance and local deputies representing political parties should be loud to be heard. Help us protect our children and women as we would help to protect yours.

We urge you to mobilize direct contacts with your Ukrainian counterparts in partner-cities and partner-communities or within various international platforms. Allow Ukrainian representatives of local self-governance to address your people asking for support. Talk to your countries' leadership and decision-

makers about our cries for help with our defense. Appeal to your central governments to support Ukraine's European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration under the accelerated accession procedure. Together, we can find solutions that save Ukraine.

Now, as never before it's vital to unite behind European values, democracy and freedom. This is the moment to confirm those values. Today, we are all Ukrainians.

Mayors of big cities, heads of amalgamated communities and representatives of local-self-governance associations representing over 800 communities signed the letter.

Signatories:

Mayors:

Igor Terekhov, Mayor of Kharkiv

Adnriy Sadovyy, Mayor of Lviv

Borys Filatov, Mayor of Dnipro

Vladyslav Atroshenko, Mayor of Chernigiv

Anatoliy Kurtieev, Mayor of Zaporizhzhia

Sergiy Hadal, Mayor of Ternopil

Ruslan Martsinkiv, Mayor of Ivano-Frankivsk

Vadym Boychenko, Mayor of Mariupol

Oleksandr Sienkevich, Mayor of Mykolaiv

Oleksandr Tretyak, Mayor of Rivne

Roman Klichuk, Mayor of Chernivtsi

Sergiy Sukhomlyn, Mayor of Zhytomyr

Oleksandr Symchyshyn, Mayor of Khmelnytskyy

Sergiy Morgunov, Mayor of Vinnytsia

Ihor Polischuk, Mayor of Lutsk

Bohdan Andriiv, Mayor of Uzhgorod

Anatoliy Bondarenko, Mayor of Cherkassy

Hennadiy Trukhanov, Mayor of Odessa

Yuriy Bova, Mayor of Trostyanets

Oleksandr Honcharenko, Mayor of Kramatorsk

Ministry:

Oleksiy Chernyshov, Minister of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine

Associations:

[Association “Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine”](#)

[Association of Amalgamated Communities of Ukraine](#)

[Association of Communities of Ukraine](#)

Local self-governance platform:

[International Mayors Summit](#)

In case you wish to help or support Ukrainian cities, please coordinate efforts with us: Iryna Ozymok, founder of the International Mayors Summit at iozymok@wnisef.org or info@wnisef.org