

# ENSU Trade Union Newsletter

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[ENSU public media policy](#)

## *In this issue*

Welcome to the February 2024 issue of the trade union newsletter of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU). In it we feature the February 22 international trade union solidarity meeting in Kyiv, organised by the two main Ukrainian trade union peak bodies, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU).

We also ask what the second year of Russian invasion meant for Ukrainian society and its workers and provide our usual updates of worker, community and student struggles.



*Paris, February 24. Banner of eight French trade union bodies: 'Trade union support to the Ukrainian resistance. For peace, the withdrawal from Ukraine of Russian troops. Solidarity with all refugees'*

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## **Feature: Trade union solidarity after two years of war**

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### **Kyiv international trade union solidarity conference**

#### **1. Ukrainian Trade Unions: Two Years in Full-Scale War: challenges, priorities and further support**

*Source: KVPU web site*

*(February 25, 2024)* On the eve of the second anniversary of Russia’s full-scale armed invasion of Ukraine and the tenth anniversary of Russia’s unprovoked aggression against our country, which began with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of some territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) and the Federation of



Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU), with the support of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the International Labour Organisation’s Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, held an international solidarity meeting titled “Ukrainian Trade Unions: Two Years in Full-Scale War: challenges, priorities and further support” on February 22, 2024.

With the support of international trade union centres located in 170 countries around the world, the event was broadcast via video conference to 200 million union members.

The solidarity meeting began with a minute of silence, during which those present in the hall and representatives of international trade unions participating in the event online paid tribute to the memory of Ukrainian soldiers and all trade union members who gave their lives to defend Ukraine, as well as all civilians – children, women, men – killed and tortured by Russian occupiers and workers killed in shelling at their workplaces.

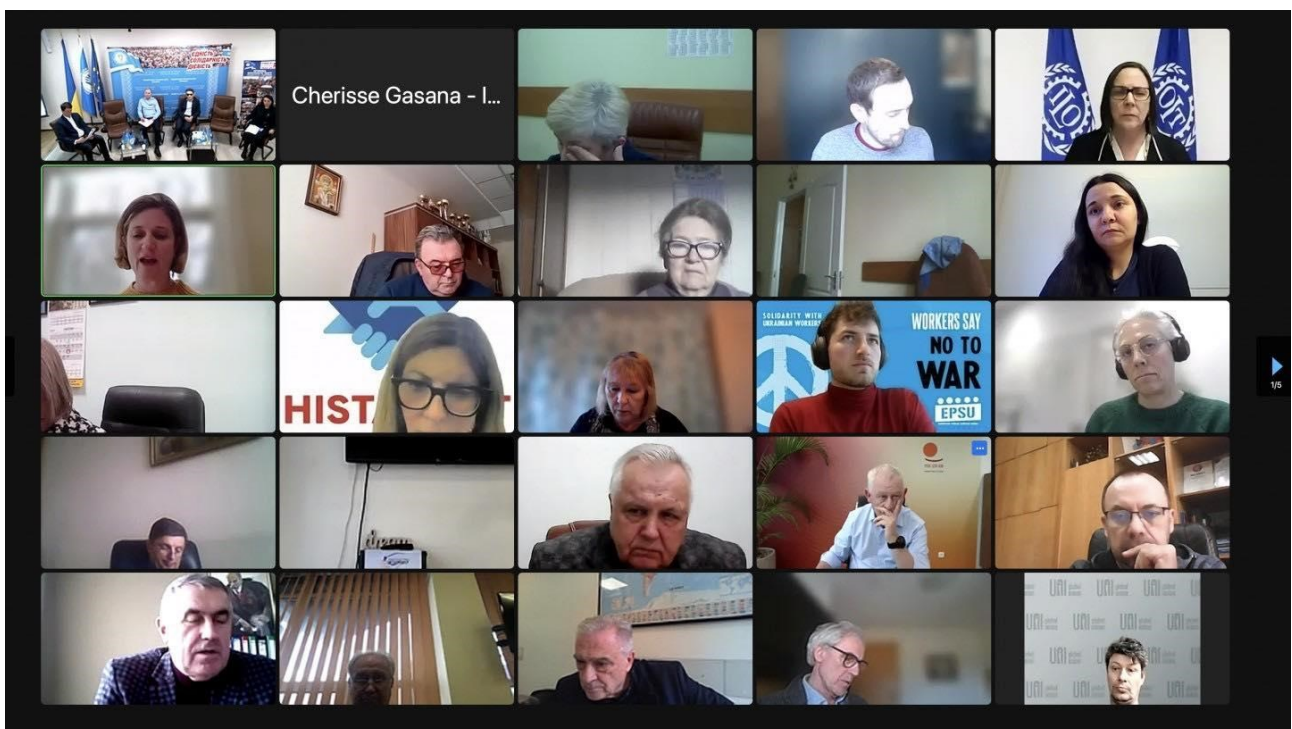
Following the tribute, the hosts of the meeting, Deputy Chairperson of the KVPU Natalia Levytska and representative of the FPU Vasyl Andriiev, invited leaders of the KVPU Mykhailo Volynets and the FPU Hryhoriy Osovyi to speak, who thanked trade union brothers and sisters worldwide for

their solidarity and assistance to Ukrainians in the fight for freedom, territorial integrity, and peace against Russian aggression and brutal war crimes, as well as the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainian trade unions initiated this event to remind the world at large of the price Ukrainians are paying for their independence, defending democracy and European values, and to make the global community aware of the problems facing Ukrainian citizens and trade unions, and all those who, armed and risking their lives on the front lines and in the firing line of Russian occupiers, are approaching Victory.

After the screening of a video prepared by the KVPU about the work of its members during the war, the head of the KVPU, Mykhailo Volynets, emphasised that the Confederation has always fought for the freedom and independence of our country, the decent life and labour rights of workers, and continues this work despite the war and all the difficulties. The leader of the KVPU called on trade unionists around the world not only to continue aiding Ukraine but to strengthen it in order to defeat the Russian occupiers who threaten the entire democratic world.

The videos of the KVPU and the FPU with speeches of trade unionists currently serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine defending the country with weapons in hand also moved those present at the meeting and the online audience in our country and abroad.



No less emotional were the speeches of the head of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of the Donetsk region Dmytro Zelenyi, the head of the primary organisation of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine at the Toshkivska mine of PJSC “Pervomaiskvuhillya” in the Luhansk region, Lydia Halkina, and the deputy head of the Trade Union “Metallist” in Kamyanske, Dnipropetrovsk region, Svitlana Kuzminikh.

From the FPU, the following spoke about life and work in wartime: the head of the primary organisation of the Union of Metallurgists and Miners of Ukraine at PJSC “ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih” Natalia Marynyuk, the leader of the Donetsk regional committee of education and science workers of Ukraine Tetiana Zamorska, the head of the Trade Union of Workers of Nuclear Energy

and Industry of Ukraine Valeriy Matov, and the head of the Association of Trade Unions of the Kharkiv region, Serhiy Teslenko.

Representatives of international organisations addressed the event participants via video link, in particular: the general secretary of the ITUC, Luc Triangle; the general secretary of the ETUC, Esther Lynch; the confederate secretary of the ETUC, Ludovic Voet; the director of the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Maria Helena Andre; Director of the AFT-CIO International Department, ITUC Deputy President, Cathy Feingold; the Assistant General Secretary of IndustriAll, Kemal Özkan; Britta Lejon, President of The Union of Civil Servants (ST) in Sweden; President of the Public Services International Jan Willem Goudriaan; European Public Service Union general secretary Bea Bruske, president of the Canadian Labour Congress; Lone Ilum Christiansen, director of the Danish Trade Union Development Agency; the international secretary of the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT), Hélène Debore, and others.

The speech by the head of the International Department of the French General Confederation of Labour (CGT), Pierre Coutaz, who concluded his speech in Ukrainian, promising, like all previous speakers, comprehensive assistance and support in achieving Victory over the enemy, was particularly well received by Ukrainian trade unionists.

Ukrainians also gratefully received the address to the world community from the international coordinator of the General Workers Union (UGT) of Catalonia, Catalina Llibre. She emphasised, that UGT Catalunya works for peace, firmly rejects and condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and is convinced that the right of people to defend themselves from external aggression is an inalienable natural right and that all of us here must work to help our fellow union members who are suffering.

At the end of the event, the leaders of the KVPU and the FPU thanked all participants for their participation in the meeting, for solidarity and joint work, as well as effective assistance. They appealed to the world trade unions to use their capabilities to widely disseminate the Statement of the FPU and the KVPU on the second anniversary of the beginning of Russia's full-scale military invasion.



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## 2. Speech to conference of UGT Catalonia international coordinator, Catalina Llibre

Sources: [UGT web site](#). [YouTube](#)

The UGT of Catalonia is a trade union organisation with over 135 years of history and we are affiliated with the UGT of Spain. We are one of the major trade unions in Catalonia as well as in the Spanish state, with one million members in our organisation nationwide.

From the UGT, we want to demonstrate our support and solidarity with Ukrainian workers as well as with the entire Ukrainian people by being here in person during this event.



**Catalan delegation to Kyiv meets with KVPU leaders and activists. From the left: Alfons Bech (ENSU trade union coordinator), Catalina Llibre (UGT international coordinator), and Carlos de Pablo (UGT secretary of institutional policy). KVPU international coordinator Olesia Briazgunova at head of table**

In Catalonia, we have called on our members to attend the demonstration on February 24 in Barcelona, and we have endorsed the manifesto of the Ukrainian community of Barcelona.

From the outset, we have supported the idea of significant action by the global labour movement in solidarity with the working people and the people of Ukraine on the second anniversary of the war.

We work for peace, firmly reject and condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We are convinced that the right of people to defend themselves from external aggression is an inalienable natural right and that all of us here must work to help our fellow union members who are suffering.

We must discuss how we can help them and work together to remove barriers that limit this aid and tie our hands. Even if it means revisiting positions of international unions that may have seemed valid in times of peace but events in recent years have made a review necessary.

If aggressors do not respect international treaties and at the same time we impose limits on the type of aid we can give, we are leaving a wide path for imperialism, barbarism and fascism to spread throughout the world.

As UGT members, as unionists, faithfulness to our tradition of fighting for human rights, freedoms and democracy obliges us to make the struggle of the workers of Ukraine for their freedom our own.

*Long live the working class!*

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### **3. International solidarity: Spanish trade unions are open to cooperation with the FPU**

*Source: Press centre of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine*

*(February 24, 2024)* On 22 February, on behalf of the President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, Vasyl Andreyev, Deputy President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, met and held talks with a delegation of one of the largest Spanish trade unions, the General Union of Workers (UGT, *Unión General de Trabajadores*).



***UGT representatives Carlos de Pablo Torres and Cati Llibre (centre) with ENSU trade union coordinator Alfons Bech (left) and FPU Deputy President Vasyl Andreyev (right)***

The UGT representatives from Catalonia, Carlos de Pablo Torres and Cati Llibre, and ENSU trade union coordinator Alfons Bech took part in an offline conference of friends of Ukraine held in Kyiv at the Trade Union House on February 22.

They had a substantive discussion on expanding contacts between the UGT and the FPU. First of all, our partners were interested in how they could help trade unions and the people of Ukraine.

They emphasised that they wanted to join those organisations that support Ukrainians, as well as help our migrants who are now living in Spain.

During the talks, the Spanish colleagues reported that the UGT, as well as other Spanish trade unions, have established partnerships with representatives of the authorities and in the country's diplomatic circles. The head of the delegation, Cati Llibre, had established business contacts with the Consul of Ukraine in Barcelona. She emphasised that the organisation she represents is ready to organise high-level meetings that will contribute to the formation of a positive attitude and policy towards Ukraine in Spain.

Along with the invitation to send a delegation of the FPU to Spain to meet with the UGT leadership and the union's secretary-general Pepe Álvarez (also ETUC vice-president), it was proposed to expand political and diplomatic contacts in order to spread truthful information about the war in Ukraine among the people of Spain and increase the number of supporters of Ukraine in the country.

Vasyl Andreyev stressed that in their speech at the Kyiv conference, the UGT delegates made a key point that in the war waged by Russia against Ukraine, the aggressor has no limits—neither in terms of means nor in terms of methods of warfare. However, the defending country is subject to restrictions and obligations, in particular with regard to the use of weapons, etc. This, of course, encourages the bloodthirsty enemy to continue its violence, not only in Ukraine but also in other EU countries. Therefore, Ukraine needs help to defend itself and protect Europe from a bloody war.

Our Spanish friends stressed that the results of the meeting between representatives of our respective trade unions could strengthen the position of the Spanish government, in particular through the participation of its representatives in the Ukraine Recovery Conference, which is to be held this summer in Berlin. This includes advocacy at the conference of the trade unions' position on the need to create appropriate working conditions for workers who will be involved in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine as well as in addressing a number of other issues important to workers.

The Spanish colleagues also suggested that further cooperation should include the development of inter-sectoral ties, for example, between the metalworkers' unions of Spain and Ukraine and between the energy and agriculture sectors and others, as well as through assistance to Ukrainian trade unions in acquiring new knowledge and skills for their work in the framework of the European Union.

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## **4. Ukrainian working people need international aid to survive**

**Eyewitness report by Alfons Bech, ENSU trade union coordinator**

Source: [Sin Permiso](#)

*(February 24, 2024)* I have been in Kyiv for four days. I am part of an international solidarity delegation organised by the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) and Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU). On February 22, two days ago, we held a conference, half virtual and half face-to-face, at the FPU headquarters. It was supported by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and many national unions participated. The list is long and I don't have it handy where I am right now but, for the record, a total of 191 people took part.

The only international delegation physically present in the hall of the trade union house in Maidan Square was that of the General Workers Union (UGT) of Catalonia, sent with the support of the UGT of the Spanish state. The secretary general of UGT, Pepe Álvarez, is also vice-president of the ETUC.

All the interventions of the international delegates showed their support for Ukraine and its trade unions. From Europe, North America and Australia, they conveyed messages of solidarity with wishes that working people can achieve better conditions soon.

At the end of the event FPU president Hryhoriy Osovyi held an initiative of his own and asked his delegates to wait. He then produced a suitcase containing a drone and said that as a union the FPU was donating this device so as to help save the lives of colleagues from his union and other workers who are on the frontline defending Ukraine. It was an intimate and solemn act, with photos and videos taken of the drone and those present.

### **Meeting railway workers**

Today, Saturday, February 24, two years after the invasion and start of the full-scale war, I went to see the railway workers, specifically comrade Oleksandr Skyba, the head of the KVPU-affiliated Free Trade Union of Railway Workers of Ukraine (VZU) at Darnytsia (Kyiv) depot. We had met for the first time in Lviv in May 2022, and he had promised to introduce me to other railway comrades when I was next in Kyiv. There was VZU leader Oleg Shkoliar and his colleague Natalia Zemlianska from the FPU-affiliated Union of Manufacturers, Small Business Owners, and Migrant Workers, which organises workers in railway services and auxiliary businesses, mostly casual, especially women, workers.

They all wanted to know what railway workers in Catalonia and Spain are doing, and how they see the situation in Ukraine. For them, life under the war has changed a lot. First of all, they have to continue their work of public service, which is essential, both for the transport of people and for the army, because air transport does not operate in Ukraine. But the unionists must also defend their members in a situation where the war is sometimes exploited to allow the company and the state to abandon their responsibility to their workers. Not to mention the plight of displaced families and workers fleeing from the destroyed areas.

One example of the extent of this critical situation of neglect is the lack of equipment in many places on the front lines. Basic items such as bullet-proof vests, gloves, hand warmers or thick coats have to be found by the soldiers themselves. They explain to me how necessary some electronic devices are for survival in the current war. As they cannot protest or strike because of martial law, they have no tools to complain to the government, especially when they are on the front lines.

They tell me about the case of a fellow railway worker who died a few days ago because on the front where he was, they didn't have a simple device to connect to the internet. That's why they did not know that missiles were being fired at their position and that as a result several young soldiers were killed. And they ask me to help, to explain to our trade unions why they need this kind of material. It is not directly offensive, but weaponry needed to save the lives of those who are resisting an enemy that is far superior in material and numbers. Without that help from international unions, I am told, "we are doomed".



## **Morale boost**

The conference of trade unions and trade unionists was a good boost to the morale of all Ukrainian participants. However, today Natalia Zemlianska was telling me that it was not enough to make a good statement every now and then—more than good words are needed. The military situation dominates the scene and the workers are the first to realise that they must resist and drive out the imperialist Russian enemy. That is why Natalia wants us Western trade unions to reach out to touch the hearts of our government to give them the weapons they need and do not have. That we do something, that working people are dying every day and the first right workers have is to defend their own lives and those of their families. Without that right, can they defend others?

Perhaps the international coordinator of the Catalan UGT, Cati Llibre, put her finger on this sore point when in her speech, the last one before closing the event, she said:

“We work for peace, we firmly reject and condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We are convinced that the right of a people to defend itself against external aggression is an inalienable natural right and that all of us here must work to help our trade unionist brothers and sisters who are suffering from it. We must put on the table how we can help them and work together to remove the barriers that limit this help and that tie our hands. Even if this means revising trade union positions at the international level which may have seemed valid in times of peace but which the events of recent years are making it necessary to revise.

“If the aggressors do not respect international treaties and at the same time we set limits on the kind of aid we can give, we are leaving a very wide path for imperialism, barbarism and fascism to spread throughout the world.

“As UGT members, as trade unionists, in loyalty to our tradition of struggle for human rights, freedoms and democracy, we are obliged to make the struggle of the Ukrainian workers for their freedom our own.”

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## **5. Joint statement of the FPU and KVPU on the second anniversary of the beginning of Russia’s full-scale military invasion of Ukraine**

February 24, 2024 marks two years since the start of the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which has turned into the largest war in Europe since the Second World War.

The full-scale invasion in February 2022 was a continuation of the crime against peace, fundamental principles and norms of international law when it temporarily occupied the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and certain regions in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in 2014.

Russia has demonstrated the true face of the “Russian world”: aggression, barbaric murders, rape, terror, nuclear blackmail, acts of genocide and other heinous crimes that are beyond the imagination of any human being. The only reason for all this is the attempt to revive the “Russian Empire”.

The Russian regime’s war of aggression has destroyed the lives of millions of Ukrainians, levelling their homes and workplaces to the ground and forcing them to seek safety and refuge in other regions of Ukraine and beyond. Continued missile and artillery shelling and destruction of Ukrainian towns and villages, civilian energy and transport infrastructure, residential and maternity

homes, kindergartens and schools, stadiums and hospitals, theatres and museums, trade union buildings, and industrial facilities have caused grief and pain to hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians. Ukraine's economy has suffered a huge blow. According to a joint assessment by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank Group, the European Commission and the United Nations, Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction needs, covering the one-year period from the date of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 to February 24, 2023, amounted to about \$US 411 billion USD (equivalent to € 383 billion).

Defending itself and the entire democratic world from the Russian aggressor, sacrificing the lives of its best sons and daughters every day for freedom, democracy and the rule of law, Ukraine has withstood and not only stopped the Russian invasion, but is successfully holding it back.

Currently, the parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Kherson regions temporarily occupied by Russia, as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, are awaiting their liberation.

We are sincerely grateful to the International Labour Organization, in particular the ACTRAV, the International and European Trade Union Confederations and all national trade union centres that have stood shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainian trade unions, providing humanitarian, political and financial assistance to Ukraine, Ukrainian internal refugees and all those who have found refuge in your countries.

The bitter/painful second anniversary is also an opportunity for all those who believe in freedom and reject violence to reaffirm their commitment to support Ukraine's brave defenders and to remind them that the war is not over and that Ukraine needs help.

At this critical juncture in the war, we call on our international friends to step up their comprehensive and critically needed support for Ukraine to accelerate peace after the aggressor's defeat.

Only by defeating the Russian aggressor, can we ensure a just and lasting peace in Ukraine and Europe and prevent such aggression from happening again in the future.

Ukraine will continue to move towards victory over the Russian aggression, as well as continue its path to full membership in the EU and NATO.

We pay tribute to the bravery and heroism of Ukrainian men and women in the defence and security forces who are defending Ukraine.

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**See further conference coverage here:**

- **IndustriALL: [‘Solidarity still strong with Ukraine’](#)**
- **FPU presentation to conference: [‘Ukrainian trade unions: two years in wartime – challenges, priorities, support’](#)**

## 6. Two solidarity greetings to the conference

### **a. Swiss Trade Union Confederation (SGB-USS)**



Via email:  
Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine  
(FPU), Mr. Grygorii Osovyi, FPU President

Confederation of Free Trade Unions (KVPU)  
Mr. Mykhailo Volynets, KVPU President

Copy:  
Igor Zubcu, President PERC  
Esther Lynch, General secretary ETUC/PERC  
Luc Triangle, General secretary ITUC

Bern, 21 February 2024

#### **Solidarity Letter from SGB to Ukrainian Trade Unions FPU and KVPU**

Dear colleagues,

On the solemn occasion of the 22nd of February 2024, marking two years since the onset of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, we, the Swiss Trade Union Confederation (SGB), extend our unwavering support and solidarity to the Ukrainian trade unions, specifically the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions (KVPU).

In these trying times, as Ukraine bravely confronts the genocidal onslaught orchestrated by Russia, we stand firmly by your side. The struggle for freedom, democracy, and social justice in Ukraine is not just your fight; it is a fight for the fundamental rights of all people. Your resilience in the face of adversity serves as an inspiration to the European and global labor movement.

SGB reaffirms its commitment to support Ukrainian workers and trade unions in every possible way. We condemn the unjust aggression perpetrated by the Russian regime and call for an immediate end to the Russian violence and the restoration of peace and full Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The international community must unite in solidarity with Ukraine to uphold the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and human rights.

As colleagues in the struggle for democracy, peace, justice and equality, we pledge to continue amplifying your voices, raising awareness, and mobilizing resources to aid the Ukrainian people in their pursuit of dignity and freedom.

In solidarity

#### **SWISS TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION**

Pierre-Yves Maillard  
President

Luca Cirigliano  
Head of international affairs

# **b. Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC)**



To the trade unions and people of Ukraine

22 February, 2024

The Victorian Trades Hall Council, the peak body for trade unions in Victoria, expresses its solidarity with the people of Ukraine on the second anniversary of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and ten years after Russian forces illegally occupied Crimea and the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. We especially stand in solidarity with Ukraine's trade unions and workers in their struggle against Russian aggression and against efforts by parts of Ukrainian society to take advantage of the current conflict to weaken workers' rights.

There is no justification for Russia's murderous assault. Ukrainians are entitled to make their own decisions about the future of their nation and to claim their sovereignty independent from Russian imperialism.

As trade unionists we oppose all forms of imperialism and the global far right that provides so much support to Putin. The victory of Ukraine will be a victory against the far right, and thus is in the interests of unions and workers around the world.

We express our solidarity and sympathy to all those Ukrainian workers and families who have had loved ones injured or killed, and their homes destroyed and communities devastated.

We pay tribute to the bravery, determination and sacrifice of the Ukrainian people.

The ongoing Ukrainian resistance is an inspiration for the global workers' movement, providing hope that by working together we can overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges and build a better world. We pledge to help ensure that Ukraine's workers receive all the support they need in their struggle for independence and peace.

In solidarity

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luke Hilakari", is written over a horizontal line.

Luke Hilakari

Secretary, Victorian Trades Hall Council

**LUKE HILAKARI**  
Secretary

**AMANDA THRELFALL**  
Assistant Secretary

**WILHELMINA STRACKE**  
Assistant Secretary

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**THE VOICE OF WORKING VICTORIANS**

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## Trade union declarations on second anniversary of full-scale war

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### **Declaration of French Intersyndicale de solidarité avec l'Ukraine**

**A just and lasting peace:**

**Solidarity with the resistance of Ukrainian workers!**

*Source: Intersyndicale de solidarité avec l'Ukraine, France*

(Early February) On 24 February 2022 Vladimir Putin ordered a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, accelerating the destruction and dismemberment of this country that he has been carrying out since 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of the Donbass.

His hopes of a lightning victory having been dashed by the resistance of the Ukrainian people, Vladimir Putin then embarked on a war of attrition in which anything goes, in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights.

The economic consequences of this war are being felt around the world, threatened alternately by a nuclear conflagration, an environmental catastrophe, galloping inflation, particularly in energy prices, or cereal famine. The lives of hundreds of millions of people have been turned upside down by Putin's tragic decision to relaunch large-scale war on European soil.

In Russia and Belarus, repression is muzzling the voices of those who denounce the war and the totalitarianism of Putin and Lukashenko. The independent trade union movement in Belarus has been wiped out, its leaders have been given long prison sentences, and there were further raids on the country's factories at the end of 2023.

Faced with the tragedy experienced by the people of Ukraine, the French trade union organisations [CFDT](#), [CGT](#), [FO](#), [CFE-CGC](#), [CFTC](#), [UNSA](#), [Solidaires](#) and [FSU](#) reacted immediately by setting up a cross-union solidarity organisation (*Intersyndicale de solidarité avec l'Ukraine*) which, in July 2022, transported two new vehicles to Ukraine for our comrades in the FPU and the KVPU, who have since been using them to distribute humanitarian aid to workers and civilians in Ukraine.

The action continued at the beginning of 2023, with the delivery of more than a hundred pallets of humanitarian aid (heaters, generators, food, medical and hygiene equipment, etc.). These goods were obtained in the form of donations, or purchased through collections organised by French trade union organisations.

The third trade union convoy to Ukraine is in the process of transporting electrical equipment to help cope with the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

French trade union support does not stop at organising humanitarian aid. The French trade union organisations are standing shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian confederations FPU and KVPU, which are opposing the adoption of an ultra-liberal labour code that is contrary to the country's and international commitments on social rights and trade union freedoms.

For the past two years, the *Intersyndicale* of solidarity with Ukraine has been vigorously campaigning for the following demands:

- Recognition of Putin's Russia's responsibility in the war of aggression against Ukraine
- Recognition of the legitimacy of the Ukrainian people to defend themselves against this aggression
- The demand for a just and lasting peace, the precondition for which must be the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine
- Concrete solidarity with the workers of Ukraine and their trade union organisations in their struggle against the reforms that are undermining social and trade union rights in Ukraine and in their fight against Russian imperialism
- Active support for freedom and for those fighting for peace and their rights in Russia and Belarus

The French *Intersyndicale* of solidarity with Ukraine calls for participation in the united initiatives organised in France on 24 February 2024, in particular the march for Ukraine, in Paris (leaving from Place de la République at 2 pm).

***Solidarity with Ukraine's resistance!***

***Solidarity with Ukrainian workers who resist!***

***Respect for workers' rights!***

***No to Putin's war! Russian troops out of Ukraine!***

***Peace in Ukraine - Freedom in Russia and Belarus!***

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## **Two years of war: EPSU in solidarity with Ukrainian workers**

*Source: EPSU web site*

(23 February 2024) After two years of Russian aggression, the European Public Service Union (EPSU) reiterates its support to the Ukrainian people. At the international solidarity meeting with Ukrainian and international trade unions held on 22 February 2024, EPSU General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan recalled: “We express our full solidarity with Ukrainian workers, the unions and the people. Health and care workers, firefighters, civil servants and utility workers are working in incredibly difficult situations. Russia is brutally attacking them. Without Russian troop withdrawal, peace is out of reach.”

During these 730 days of war, more than 10 million Ukrainians have been displaced, either within the country or as international refugees. Many thousands of civilians and public service workers have been killed in Ukraine, and many more have been seriously injured. The Russian bombardment of Ukrainian territory is making the economic and social situation more than

precarious. Ukraine is now one of the countries in the world with the highest food insecurity due to inaccessible soils. Millions have lost their jobs and have fallen into critical poverty.

EPSU has [nine affiliates](#) in Ukraine representing tens of thousands of members. These workers



are facing the destruction of their workplaces, their union facilities, and their homes. Workers are being injured and killed. As public service workers, many of our members continue to work in often extreme conditions, in health and care services, in water and energy, in education and in other key sectors. Nearly 1550 attacks on health care facilities have been documented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) since February 2022, resulting in countless deaths and injuries.

In this regard, we call on all to respect and protect in all circumstances health facilities, civilian and military medical units in line with International Humanitarian Law. Reiterating the words of the WHO, we stress that health providers must be protected so they are allowed to treat the injured, and to save lives.

Crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Russian forces must be unequivocally prosecuted at the International Criminal Court (ICC). We are convinced that this war is not what the majority of workers in Russia want if they were able to express themselves freely and democratically. EPSU wants the war to end as soon as possible but considers that only a withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory can bring this to a stop. We support the Ukrainian trade unions who joined the national efforts to counter the imperialist aggression, and we are calling for economic and humanitarian aid for Ukraine to be stepped up.

Ukraine's future is European. In this spirit, Ukraine will need unity for national reconstruction built on respect for labour rights and social dialogue as the basis for a new industrial and employment policy and therefore of the necessary relaunch of its industrial relations. We regret that actions by Ukrainian authorities and employers systematically violate workers' and trade union rights that can make the path to the European Union (EU) more complicated and time-consuming. [The new draft labour code proposal](#) must be withdrawn immediately.

EU leaders must make clear to the Ukrainian government that the accession process must be based on adhering to social dialogue, involving social partners, as well as ensuring the full respect of trade union rights and social rights. The increase in Ukraine's level of debt must be addressed through debt cancellation. The EU and International Monetary Fund (IMF) must not repeat the same privatisation mistakes of the past. Ukraine's future cannot be limited to structural reforms that will increase inequalities, lead to regional imbalances, and undermine public services. Consequently, social cohesion and the general well-being of the vast majority of the population will only be possible through a comprehensive social investment program. On that matter, Jan Willem Goudriaan is very clear: "The workers and the trade unions must be involved in building the future of the economy and society. International aid must be tied to social conditionalities and decent

working conditions and collective agreements. Under no circumstances should this aid benefit the oligarchs and create more inequality.”

EPSU reiterates its demands:

- An immediate end to the hostilities of Russia in Ukraine and the withdrawal of the Russian troops from all the occupied Ukrainian territories in accordance with international law and the UN Charter guaranteeing the sovereignty of Ukraine. Diplomacy must achieve this rapidly rather than an escalation of the war.
- That the reconstruction of Ukraine must have labour and union values at its centre and must contribute to social justice, democracy and an inclusive society. At the end of martial law, full labour and trade union rights must be restored. We support the Ukrainian unions and social movements in their resistance to liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation of public services.

EPSU calls on its members to continue to express their concrete solidarity with the workers and citizens of Ukraine by contributing to our solidarity fund. Donations will be used to support local unions in their humanitarian efforts.

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## Looking back on the second year of war

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### Interview with Denys Gorbach

### Ukraine: new social divisions are emerging as the war drags on

Source: [Alternatives Economiques](#)

*(February 24, 2024) The fact that the war in Ukraine is getting bogged down raises new questions for the countries and political currents that want to support Kyiv. It also poses new challenges to Ukrainian society itself, with new divisions running through it, some of which are likely to deepen.*

*To better understand this, and to try to clarify what the rapprochement with the European Union means for Ukraine, we spoke to Denys Gorbach (pictured), teacher-researcher and author of a thesis on the politicisation of workers in Ukraine.*



**At a time when Western aid plans for Ukraine are becoming increasingly difficult to get through, both in the United States and in Europe, is there any way of helping Kiev other than sending more and more weapons? What could the international left do to support Ukraine?**

**Denys Gorbach:** Sending arms is still the surest way of helping Ukraine. In this respect, it should be pointed out that the declarations made by Western countries are not always followed up by action. The German think tank the Kiel Institute, which compares promises and actual shipments, has even shown a growing divergence.

But there are other ways of supporting Ukraine. For example, by providing more assistance to Ukrainian refugees, who remain largely marginalised within their host societies—even though most of them have given them preferential treatment compared to other exiles. In addition, some European countries, including France, have not taken in many refugees since the start of the war.

The Left could also raise public awareness of the Ukrainian cause. Although the conflict has been going on for almost two years now, the answer to the question “why does Ukraine deserve as much solidarity as Palestine?” is not obvious on the left of the French political spectrum, for example.

We could also think about easing the burden of Ukraine's debt, which would be in line with the traditional left-wing fight to cancel the debts of poor countries.

#### **What would this relief achieve?**

Today, the financial aid sent to Kiev is used for the ordinary running of the country, for civil life: payment of salaries, pensions, social benefits, etc. European financial aid can never be used to finance military expenditure.

It is therefore the Ukrainian state that is mobilising a large part of its state budget to serve its war effort. In return, the Europeans—and to a lesser extent the Americans, whose aid consists more of military equipment—provide it with aid to cover civilian expenditure.

At present, the volume of financial aid is not sufficient. But there is also the question of its nature: most of it is in the form of loans rather than grants, and therefore gives rise to interest repayments.

In addition, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is planning to open a new conditional aid programme, on the model of what was done—and subsequently criticised by the IMF itself—as part of the structural adjustment programmes that followed the European debt crisis in the early 2010s. Ukraine, in turn, risks falling victim to this kind of imposed austerity.

Today, the Ukrainian left is demanding that aid to the country be granted unconditionally and without interest. The benefits of this approach are fairly obvious. In the summer of 2024, the suspension of interest payments by Ukraine decided in the summer of 2022 by the Paris Club, which brings together the main creditor states, is due to end. Ukraine will therefore start servicing its debt again in a few months' time, which is likely to put a heavy strain on its budget.

### **A bill to massively mobilise the military is currently being debated in the Ukrainian parliament. How is Ukrainian society reacting?**

New divisions are emerging within society as the war drags on. The main one concerns mobilisation, because in the hope of making a difference militarily, Ukraine is seeking to send more soldiers to the front.

The government has therefore introduced a bill to broaden the conditions for mobilisation, lowering the age of enlistment from 27 to 25 and increasing the penalties for those who try to evade it. The bill passed its first reading in the Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, but is not unanimously supported by society.

One group, the families of soldiers currently on active service, is in favour of this new mobilisation, which would allow their loved ones to be replaced. But others are against it. This antagonism is likely to get worse: those who have not yet gone to the front are increasingly singled out and portrayed as cowards.

The other major divide concerns the emigrants who fled the war and who, in some cases, ended up returning home. Refugees, especially women, testify that they felt unwelcome on their return to Ukraine.

The resentment of those who stayed behind is even stronger towards the men of fighting age who fled the country, and therefore the mobilisation.

### **Can Ukraine revive its defence industry, which has been considerably weakened since the end of the Soviet era?**

In my opinion, it is more the army that has been weakened since the fall of the USSR than the industry itself. However, the industry is currently facing a number of challenges.

For one thing, until now it has produced more for export than for domestic consumption. Contracts have been signed with Thailand, Pakistan and Kenya, for example. The industry now needs to redirect its production, while at the same time undergoing a transformation from the Soviet standards on which it was previously based to Western standards.

The industry has also suffered a certain amount of destruction, particularly in Kharkiv, where it had a strong presence. Today, the new companies in the sector are in the west of Ukraine. Many of them specialise in drones, which are of major importance on the battlefield.

This industry is still fairly new, even to Westerners. In the near future, Ukraine is also aiming to develop production of tanks and more conventional equipment.

Is there enough manpower to keep this growing industry going?

**That's the big problem. The Ukrainian population was already shrinking before the war, for a number of reasons, including a poor economic situation that has driven millions of people to emigrate, particularly since 2014.**

Added to this today is the pressure of military mobilisation. Among the working-age population that has remained in Ukraine, there is competition between the army and industry.

Moreover, Ukraine has never had any immigration. Poland supplied a lot of labour to Germany and England in the 2000s, then Ukrainians arrived in Poland in the 2010s, but no one has come to compensate for the loss of population in Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, the immigration debate is gaining momentum in Ukraine, but for the moment only in the form of a moral panic. People are saying that the emigrants must be brought back at all costs, at the risk of seeing the arrival of other populations perceived as less desirable.

**Fears are growing in France and elsewhere in the EU of unfair competition and social dumping if Ukraine is integrated into the European common market. How is the prospect of EU membership viewed in Ukraine?**

Since 2014, Ukraine has largely opened up and liberalised its economy. That's why even the left doesn't take a dim view of integration into the common market: there's no protectionist legislation left to save. So the prevailing mood is one of extreme optimism. And I think that some of the hopes are well-founded. Although the European Union is not exactly a social paradise, certain regulations are more advanced there than at home and impose welcome thresholds in terms of human and socio-economic rights.

One example: in 2014, the Ukrainian government wanted to abolish the last Soviet regulations in the agri-food sector, just as Kiev was preparing to sign an association agreement with the EU. There was a belief that the European Union would enable us to free ourselves from the constraints, perceived as residues of the Soviet era.

Brussels, however, opposed this, stating that without these regulations, it would not accept Ukrainian products entering the common market. It was through this episode that liberal officials realised that regulations would be necessary as part of the rapprochement with the EU.

During the recent farmers' crisis, the Ukrainians were a little surprised by the talk of Ukrainian chickens invading the French market. But I'm more in favour of closer ties with the European Union allowing us to conduct well-targeted campaigns, for example to denounce the wage and environmental practices of the oligarch Yuriy Kosiuk, who almost single-handedly controls the Ukrainian chicken industry. Provided, of course, that such criticism does not conceal xenophobic rhetoric.

**The European Union is calling for progress on corruption and the rule of law. Are we already seeing progress on these issues, despite the fact that the country is at war?**

In my opinion, this is the wrong subject to focus on. Everyone likes to fight against the oligarchs and corruption. But that can quickly lead to populist, ideology-free politics, for better or for worse.

The Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev has written extensively on the representation of Eastern Europe as an area of exorbitant corruption. At the same time, France does not suffer from such a reputation, despite the fact that some of its political class are wearing electronic bracelets!

Clearly, there are dangers in over-focusing on this issue. I'm thinking of Romania: the fight against corruption has led the country to set up a myriad of non-elected, non-electorally accountable agencies that enjoy the trust of the people. Except that this technocratisation raises questions from a democratic point of view.

I hope it won't come to that in Ukraine, especially as the concentration of power in the hands of the presidency adds to the danger. The fight against corruption must remain within the democratic framework.

### **What will be the conditions for successful social and environmental reconstruction?**

People often refer to the Marshall Plan as a model to follow. Except that it only became a reality after the end of the war. In Ukraine, the issue at the moment is not so much reconstruction as how to keep the country going during the war, which threatens to drag on.

New factories are opening up, but they are concentrated on the western fringes of Ukraine. Nobody wants to invest near the front, in the south-east. Historically, however, this has been a highly industrialised area, home to millions of people. These people cannot be abandoned. But how can this be done?

What's more, some of the industry in question is obsolete because it pollutes so much. Finding answers to this problem in the coming months is a crucial issue.

### **The French Left is quick to criticise American imperialism, but sometimes reluctant to denounce Russian imperialism. Why is this?**

To put it simply, let's say that France is an empire, the latest edition of which, under the Gaullists, incorporated the Left. In this respect, the Thirty Glorious Years [post-war boom] represent a social-democratic golden age that is seen as an ideal to return to.

What's more, a whole strand of socialist thought came to a halt in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was a traumatic episode for left-wing intellectuals. As a result, there is now a shortage of new ideas on this subject on the left, which leads politicians and activists alike to recycle the old analytical frameworks dating from the Cold War, according to which there is only one hegemon to fight: the United States.

Yet the world has changed. Russia is not the USSR. And those who are now campaigning for a multipolar world need to realise that those who are benefiting from it are the regimes of Putin in Russia and Modi in India, which are not exactly models of democracy.

I can see the critics coming, accusing me of being in the pay of the liberals. But let's not forget that by clinging to this geopolitical interpretation, we are sacrificing entire countries that have had the misfortune of being supported by the United States.

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## Second year of the full-scale invasion: Overview of Solidarity Collectives' Work

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEAtXVC7i0Q>



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## 2023, the return of social struggles

Patrick Le Tréhondat

*Source: Soutien à l'Ukraine Résistante, No 27, Editions Syllepse*

(19 January 2024) 2023 saw the return of social unrest in Ukraine. Despite the martial law ban on public gatherings and demonstrations, social movements reclaimed the public arena to express their demands. In November 2022, students from the Lviv Academy of Printing gathered in a public square with placards to protest against the planned closure of their university. In December, the feminist group Bilkis held protest pickets three Saturdays in a row in front of the shop of a brand of liqueur whose bottles featured nude women. In addition, Bilkis organised collages and leaflet distribution in the streets of the town during the freezing month of December.

However, these outbreaks do not reflect “defeatism” (or, as the Western media cleverly put it, “war weariness”, thus misrepresenting the public mood). According to a survey by the sociological department of the Razumkov Centre, carried out in December 2023, 88% of Ukrainians believe in Ukraine’s victory, with only 5% doubting it. 70% of the Ukrainians questioned by the sociologists consider it important to criticise any erroneous decisions made by the authorities. At the same time, 25% insist on avoiding any political conflict.

## **Social struggles**

It is difficult to measure the extent of social unrest in companies.

The two main trade union confederations, FPU and KVPU, do not communicate much on this subject. What's more, in addition to wartime living conditions that are hardly conducive to militancy or demands, the trade union movement has been weakened by the massive enlistment of trade unionists [1] in the armed forces, many of whom have died in combat. This commitment, with its immediate consequences, will also have a long-term impact on the Ukrainian workers’ movement. However, in December 2023, the KVPU announced that the miners' union had obtained wage increases [2]. Also in December 2023, the Kryvyi Rih regional court ruled that the partial suspension of wage payments by Ukrainian railways (*Ukrzaliznytsya*) was illegal, following a lawsuit brought by the railway workers’ union. This decision affects more than 300,000 workers, who will now receive their full wages [3]. Legal action is also being taken by individual employees, with or without the support of trade unions. There are many reasons for this—unfair dismissal, non-payment of wages, etc. According to labour lawyer Vitaliy Dudin, 44% of these cases end in favour of the employee [4].

Finally, we should mention the long struggle of couriers in Kyiv and Dnipro [5].

Two sectors, health and students, where two militant unions are present, have seen major struggles.

### *1. Struggles in the health sector*

Under the combined effect of neo-liberal reform (begun before February 24, 2022) and the war, the situation in hospitals has deteriorated sharply. According to a report from the Ukrainian Health Centre dated August 10, 2023, since the start of the large-scale Russian invasion, more than 1000 attacks on health infrastructures have been recorded. The Ukrainian healthcare system—medical establishments and other healthcare infrastructure—has suffered around two attacks a day since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. The counter-reform of the healthcare system, done under the guise of decentralisation and “optimisation”, has entrusted local authorities with the management of hospitals, which are subsidised on the basis of declared medical interventions [6]. Moreover, if the wage bill exceeds 85%, salaries can be unilaterally reduced to a minimum [7]. And then there is the endemic corruption (overpriced medicines, bonuses or huge salary increases for management bodies). Countless hospitals have been raided by the police. In such situations, it is not uncommon for medical staff not to receive their salaries for one, two or three months. It is also not uncommon for them to suffer brutal dismissal from one day to the next following authoritarian mergers and restructuring.

In such situations, the trade union organisation Be Like Nina [8] stands out as a strongly combative organisation. In addition to the important humanitarian relief work that it carries out, following the example of the entire trade union movement [9], Be Like Nina fights daily in hospitals to ensure that the rights of healthcare workers are respected [10]. Be Like Nina also denounces the gendered division of labour in hospitals.

Oksana Slobodyana, President of Be Like Nina, explains: “Women, especially Ukrainian nurses, have an excessive workload. In the workplace, they are responsible for patients' health, must react in a timely manner and provide prompt medical care. At the same time, the majority of Ukrainian nurses are denied career development and are not encouraged to upgrade their skills. In addition to her work, a woman has to bring up her children, look after the health of her family and loved ones and look after the running of the home. That’s why Be Like Nina raises this issue time and time again. We’re looking for an equal distribution of responsibilities in society. Be Like Nina has always been supported by feminist organisations such as Feminist Workshop and Women’s Perspectives. Together we organise seminars and public events [11].”

Faced with the way hospitals currently operate, Be Like Nina has come up with a “counterplan”. “It is possible to manage and control hospitals”, says the union [12].

Faced with the crisis: “The most effective way is to create independent unions that can and will be able to clearly understand the situation and control everything from the inside. After all, who knows the situation of their hospital, its capacity and administration better than the employees themselves? So managing and controlling hospitals is possible if we start by electing the director by the staff themselves. Furthermore, members of management must be accountable even after they have been dismissed, so that the union will be able to control all the [legal] processes. Finally, the most important thing is transparent accounting, which clearly shows how much money has been received and what it has been spent on.”

This demand for social control is also present in other sectors (see student struggles and citizens' rallies below).



**Demonstration over unpaid wages by nurses in Kriviyi Rih, July 2023**

On the eve of the New Year, Be Like Nina has won another victory. The nursing staff in the town of Oleksandria, in the Kirovohrad oblast, succeeded in obtaining payment of several months' salary arrears. The total amount was around 4 million Hryvnias (€97,000). Medical staff at the Oleksandria hospital (150 employees) had been facing salary arrears since September 2023. Due to insufficient funding from the Ukrainian National Health Service, their medical establishment had been closed down and the staff transferred to another hospital. However, the problem of the salary debt had not been resolved. One nurse said: “The Be Like Nina movement is playing an important

role in highlighting the problems in the medical sector. It is the only movement in Ukraine that is really fighting for the rights of healthcare workers.”

## 2. Student struggles

In February 2023, the student union landscape (dominated by two “right-wing” union organisations) saw the arrival of a newcomer: Priama Diia (Direct Action) [13]. This new organisation (which followed in the footsteps of [the Priama Diia that had existed previously](#)) was born out of the struggle by Lviv students against the closure of the Printing Academy [14] in November 2022. Since then, the union has won a number of victories, to which it referred in its report for 2023:

“It was on the basis of a major social crisis that the new generation of the independent union Direct Action was born.

- Thanks to the union’s efforts, student Karina Chmeliuk, who is now an active member of Direct Action, was returned from occupied Crimea to government-controlled territory.
- The ‘Students-Academics!’ initiative was launched to draw attention to the problem of state-funded students taking academic leave.
- Students organised an event called ‘Week Against Fascism’, where we reminded people that opposition to hateful ideologies is still relevant today.
- We got together for clean-ups to show that environmental protection is an issue that should concern all social groups, including students.
- Together with the student council of the psychology department at Karazin University, we published a brochure on the fight against psychological violence by teachers.
- We launched an action calling for the occupation of the empty Russian embassy to transform it into a youth centre open to the public.



**Activists from Direct Action staff literature table**

- We took part in demonstrations against the chauvinist Iryna Farion, demanding her dismissal from her teaching post at Lviv Polytechnic.

- We took part in demonstrations against the seizure of the KNUKiT [I. K. Karpenko-Karyi Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema and Television] building by looters, which resulted in a victory for the students.
- We helped set up the ‘October 11 Student Committee’ to inspect the reinstatement of windows and doors at Lviv National University, and then inspected the shelters at the universities.



- We organised a demonstration at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy against the administration's decision to charge students for their absences.”

The union is also growing fast. In several of these mobilisations, the union stressed student control [15].

As mentioned above, it has inspected the condition of many university air raid shelters and published public reports of its inspections. The union explained its approach as follows:

“In a context of war, the question of the safety of studies in educational establishments and accommodation in student dormitories is particularly acute. In order to protect students and staff from the devastating effects of future bombings, the government has proposed recommendations on how to organise shelters in educational establishments. However, how conscientiously are Ukrainian university administrations complying with these requirements, and what is the state of our shelters?

“We are launching a campaign to inspect shelters in school buildings and dormitories in order to draw the public's attention to the real state of safety measures and to create a space for the fight for safe and comfortable shelters.

“To this end, we have created a channel where we will publish information on the results of the audit, so please join us.

“We're calling on anyone who wants to get involved—write to us about the state of shelters in your universities/dormitories using our bot, @priama\_dia\_bot. If you're willing to take part in the audit, drop us a line and join the campaign!”

At present, the union is engaged in a campaign against the closure of the Tauride National University, originally in Crimea, now exiled to free territory [16], which teaches, among other things, the Tatar language. The closure is part of a wider plan to reduce the number of students (including the ongoing reduction in study grants) and make their land and buildings target of real estate speculation.

It is the result of a World Bank-backed audit carried out before February 24, 2022. Seventy other universities are set to close.

### **Citizens' rallies**

The year 2023 also saw a proliferation of citizens' rallies [17] in public spaces in cities from Odesa to Lviv. They were attended by people of all ages, both men and women (the press often questioned the “organisers” about them). Soldiers in their fatigues took part and expressed themselves freely. Depending on the day and the location, between 30 and 1000 people attended [18]. Despite martial law, the police [19] let them go ahead, even when they turned into street demonstrations.

Four types of rallies could be distinguished, depending on the issues put forward.

#### *1. For the return of prisoners of war*

Participants often had family members who had been taken prisoner by the Russians and demanded that there should be more prisoner exchanges. They asked Ukrainian society not to forget them. For example, on Sunday, January 14, 2024, a rally was organised in Dnipro in support of the prisoners of war. On Slobozhansk Square, around a hundred people came out with posters calling for the return of their loved ones from Russian captivity. In Kyiv, 300 people came to remind society and the authorities once again that they have been waiting for almost two years for the return of their

loved ones from Russian captivity, with 120 in Mykolaïv. Rallies were also held in Odesa (30 participants), Cherkassy (100), Potlava (30), Soumy (20) and Khmelnytsky (a street demonstration by 23 women).



**Demonstration in Kyiv, February 11, for the return of prisoners of war (Credit: New Voice of Ukraine)**

## *2. For the relief of soldiers at the front*

These rallies called for the relief of soldiers at the front. For example, again on Sunday, 14 January 14, 2024, in Vinnytsia, military families—wives, mothers and children—took part in a rally in the town centre. They demanded that the authorities demobilise servicemen after 18 months' service. This was the fifth such action in Vinnytsia since the start of the large-scale invasion. The posters carried by the participants read: “It's my turn to hug daddy every day”, “Ukraine is a country of free people. Aren't soldiers people?”, “36 months. Death penalty for the military”, “Let daddy come home! It's time for the others”, “Military families demand demobilisation”, etc. The participants voiced their demands during an hour-long march through the town, which ended near the town hall administration building.

As with the return of prisoners of war, these rallies do not yet express any specific demands on the government (for example, on mobilisation), but they do demonstrate exasperation with the authorities.

## *3. Challenging municipal budgets*

“Drones before cobblestones” is the slogan that most often dominates these rallies. The participants challenge the spending by local councils on what they deem to be “non-essential” expenditure, such as renovating a stadium or a courthouse, or even repaving an avenue, at the expense of aid that could be given to the armed forces. The participants are also members of the families of soldiers at the front, who are so deprived of the essentials of daily life, as well as drones, for example, that they are asking them to help out.

For example, on September 9, 2023, rallies were held in Odesa and Lviv to demand that taxpayers' money be channelled towards the needs of the armed forces rather than other expenses incurred by local authorities. Around 60 people were present near the Lviv regional military administration building. “Allocate funds to the army, not to cobblestones,” shouted the demonstrators. Sviatoslav

Litynskyi, the author of the petition on limiting non-essential spending and developing Ukraine's defence capability, said that more than 25,000 people had supported his petition. A seriously wounded officer from the 93rd mechanised brigade, Artur Kireev, explained his presence as follows: “I came to the rally to inform our authorities that from now on funds must be allocated to the army, not to paving streets, building new stadiums and anything else.” The rally in Lviv lasted an hour.

On the morning of September 9, more than 1000 people gathered in Odesa. This rally followed



smaller ones held in previous weeks. “We demand that taxes be spent on aid for the military, on tourniquets and evacuation vehicles. Instead, we see calls for tenders every day: courts, Christmas trees, etc”, explains Kateryna Nozhevnikova.

In Cherkassy (population 200,000, located halfway between Kyiv and Dnipro),

#### ***Debate on the municipal budget in Cherkassy. December 2023.***

the residents have held a series of rallies to secure the allocation of UAH 500 million [= €12.1 million] to support the armed forces. A few days before what they consider to be a victory, they organised a public debate on municipal finances in a shopping centre shelter. “The community will send the proposals drawn up at the meeting to the city council”, said Viktoriya Feofilova, one of the moderators of the debate. And the day after the city council’s announcement of the UAH 500 million, at a new rally on December 23, one demonstrator, addressing the 500 people present, said: “Our task now is to monitor and control. From January onwards, it will be necessary to monitor the process of allocating the funds.” Anna Malysh added: “At the moment, the intermediate objective has been achieved: we have fought for the armed forces support programme to be included in the city budget. But the fight goes on, because it’s important to ensure that this aid is actually provided. Our task now is to monitor and control.” A form of popular control. In a neighbouring town (Kanev), Valery Makeev, who organised a rally, declared in early January 2024: “Under martial law It is forbidden to attend rallies. But it worked in Cherkassy, and it could work in Kanev. Because here, with our rally, some of the town councillors will feel that it would be better if they didn’t stick to their guns.”

#### *4. Occupied territories*

In the occupied territories, in addition to the resistance movements, Atesh (guerrilla warfare and military intelligence), the Yellow Ribbon (spreading the colours of Ukraine in public space), Mavka (a women's movement that publishes an underground bulletin—14 issues so far), there are gatherings of Ukrainians fed up with the living conditions imposed on them by the Russian occupiers. These gatherings were attended by fewer than 10 people, because of the serious risks involved in opposing the local authorities. However, the protesters often film themselves and post the videos on social networks, where they express their grievances.



### **Protest rally in occupied Mariupol, December 2023**

At the end of 2023, a Kharkiv sociologist estimated that these rallies would coordinate and could become a force to be reckoned with by the government.

The picture presented here is very incomplete. It does not include the feminist movements [20], LGBT movements, environmental movements, cooperatives and so on. But it does show that Ukrainian society is in the process of moving and making social demands, the satisfaction of which some of its protagonists explain is essential to victory. It is true that national liberation and social liberation are intertwined in Ukraine's contemporary history. The capacity for self-organisation shown by Ukrainian society during the Maidan and especially in the first months of the war has inscribed in the collective memory the possible path to the double emancipation that it has to take.

### **Footnotes**

[1] It is remarkable that the French leftist groups who write column after column calling for the "arming of the proletariat" ignore this reality, preferring to talk about the stranglehold of Western imperialist powers on Ukraine and refusing to show any solidarity with the Ukrainian workers' movement.

[2] Wage increases in the mines, <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2985/augmentations-de-salaire-dans-les-mines>

[3] Railway workers are entitled to their wages! <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2895/les-cheminots-et-cheminotes-ont-droit-a-leurs-salaires->

[4] <https://t.me/trudovikua/60>

[5] "You don't live in a country where you can strike", <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2940/vous-ne-vivez-pas-dans-un-pays-ou-1039on-peut-faire-greve>

[6] A maternity hospital was found guilty of declaring false births in order to increase its subsidy.

[7] This is what happened to nurses at a hospital in the Lviv region, who asked for the hospital's books to be "opened" to check whether the reduction in their salaries was justified. When their request was refused, they set up a union affiliated to Be Like Nina.

[8] Be Like Nina cannot be reduced to a classic trade union organisation. We need to take the time to understand its many facets and explain its trade union strategy, which goes beyond the simple linear development of the organisation.

[9] The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) , for example, which has a large number of facilities (holiday camps, etc.), has made these available to refugees, which has been a considerable help.

[10] "We are creating independent unions in hospitals"

<https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2623/-nous-creons-des-syndicats-independants-dans-les-hopitaux->

[11] Three questions to Be Like Nina, <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2962/3-questions-a-sois-comme-nina> .

[12] Managing and controlling hospitals is possible,

<https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/europe/n/2800/gerer-et--controler-les-hopitaux-est-possible>

[13] Ukrainian student union Direct Action is back, <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/busca/n/2531/le-syndicat-etudiant-ukrainien-action-directe-est-de-retour>

[14] Student mobilisation in Lviv, <https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/busca/n/2405/mobilisation-etudiante-a-lviv>

[15] Priama Diia (Direct Action), for student control,

<https://laboursolidarity.org/fr/busca/n/2922/priama-diia--action-directe-pour-le-controle-etudiant>

[16] Due to Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, the university managed to be relocated to Ukrainian-controlled territories. In 2016, the university reopened in Kyiv.

[17] The Facebook page of the French Committee for Solidarity with Ukraine regularly reports on these gatherings and publishes photos <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087563586225>

[18] It should be noted that the participants take risks because of the concentration of mobile phones they provoke and do not escape Russian radar. In Syria, the Russians have often shelled concentrations of mobile phones in the same way as they do when distributing bread.

[19] The only case of repression that I know of is that of a young demonstrator in Lviv who sprayed red water paint during a rally. She was arrested and acquitted by the court.

[20] To find out more about one of them, see Bilkis, a Ukrainian feminist group

[https://www.syllepse.net/syllepse\\_images/articles/bilkis-french\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.syllepse.net/syllepse_images/articles/bilkis-french_compressed.pdf)

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## **Worker struggles in Ukraine**

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### **Kryvyi Rih: a new protest**

*Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat*

*(February 25)* On 23 February, at 8.30am, a rally was held near the executive committee of Kryvyi Rih town council in support of a petition on the state of the heating supply sector. The demonstrators were calling for the modernisation of the outdated equipment in the networks of the city's heating production companies. The residents of Kryvyi Rih are demanding compensation for their heating bills, as this winter many of the town's houses had almost no heating and the service was therefore not provided.

In a petition, the outraged residents put forward two demands. The first was to set up a group within the provider "Kryvorizka Teplocentral" to assess the efficiency of the company and its ability to provide heating services to its clients, and to draw up a plan for the modernisation of all equipment and decentralisation. The second: to make a one-off refund to "Teplocentral" subscribers of 40% of the total amount of charges for the interrupted 2023-2024 heating season.

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### **2023: wage recovery claims were met in 72.8% of cases**

*Source: Vitaliy Dudin*

*(February 23)* Against the backdrop of all-out war in Ukraine, the number of industrial disputes has fallen sharply, but last year saw a resurgence of fights in the courts. This is shown by the analysis on the website of the High Council of Justice of Ukraine of the annual reports of the courts of first instance on the consideration of cases in civil proceedings for 2021-2023.

In 2022, 5 million people lost their jobs, but only 1683 dismissal cases were appealed!

Why is this? Since the beginning of the invasion, conditions unfavourable to judicial protection have developed:

- Legal fees and legal aid have become unaffordable for many people.
- The broadening of employers' rights under Law 2136 has led to a lack of confidence in the success of appeals.
- In a number of regions, the courts have ceased to function due to occupation or hostilities.

From 2023 onwards, workers began to take legal action more frequently, having recovered from the horrors of war. The chances of winning are gradually increasing; for example, last year, wage recovery claims were met in 72.8% of cases.

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### **Index of change in the social balance of power?**

*Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat*

*(January 24, 2024)* This evening Vitaliy Dudin (who as a lawyer defended the nurses in this matter along with Be like Nina) commented on the unexpected continuation of what happened at the Oleksandriya hospital in Lviv (see ENSU Trade Union Newsletter No. 5, December 2023, "Health workers win payment of arrears").

*In any case, it makes the control and opening of hospital account books more relevant (a demand of the Lviv nurses).*

“The story of the liquidation of the Oleksandriya hospital, whose nursing staff received UAH four million [= € 97,000] in salary arrears last year, had an unexpected outcome.

“On January 10, a local court found the unfortunate hospital manager guilty under Part 2 of Article 41 of the National Labor Service protocol. The offence was described as non-payment of salaries to vulnerable categories of people. Inspectors had found that there were funds in the hospital’s accounts and that among the 264 employees affected were single mothers and mothers of disabled children.

“But the amount of the fine is “impressive”: UAH17,000 [= €413] While the legal ceiling of the sanction is ... onlyUAH 51,000 [= €1236].

“It seems the judge couldn’t help but impose the sentence she thought was fair. As the offender did not appeal the decision, he also acknowledged that the sanction was reasonable.

“Severe sanctions for worker suffering must become the norm, not the exception.”

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## **Working during a missile attack?**

*Source: Vitaliy Dudin*

*(February 9, 2024)* Massive strikes by the aggressor state against Ukrainian cities have once again resulted in the deaths of civilians. Unfortunately, individual employer behavior can have even more tragic consequences. This involves managers forcing staff to go to work during rocket attacks.

This outraged even the vice-minister responsible for strategic industries. He said employers should bear criminal responsibility.

Earlier, we wrote about how to counteract situations where the owner reduces pay due to staying in the shelter.

In practice, some employers even fire people who have not worked due to the threat of bombing. But absence from the workplace, caused by the need to preserve life, is not absenteeism without valid reason (clause 4 paragraph 1 of article 40 of the Labor Code)!

However, the court in a trial of an energy company engineer recognised his absence from work as authorised, due to danger.

Please note that according to Article 153 of the Labor Code, the employer does not have the right to require the employee to perform work that presents a clear danger to life!

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## Community struggles in Ukraine

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### Kyiv: 'Money for the Armed Forces!'



Source: Patrick Le Tréhondet

(February 18, 2024) Under the walls of the State Administration of the city of Kyiv, on Saturday, February 17, a rally (pictured) was held in support of financing the armed forces. Rally participants demand that authorities in the capital direct more funds to the military, instead of spending the budget on infrastructure projects during the war. Many demonstrators carried cardboard signs reading “Money for the Armed Forces.”

“The goal of the action remains unchanged. During 18 rallies we demand to allocate more money from the Kyiv city budget to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” said rally organizer Myroslav Havryshchuk.

According to him, event participants have three key requirements. “20% of funds from Kyiv's budget should be allocated to supporting the army,” says Myroslav Havryshchuk. Furthermore, according to the protesters, the city's priority for 2024-2025 should be inclusion, that is, the creation of equal opportunities for people with disabilities, in particular the provision of accessible public spaces. The third requirement is to equip rehabilitation centres where defenders undergo treatment and rehabilitation with modern equipment. These demands were formulated after consultation with representatives of military units, he explains.

**NOTE:** See account of an earlier demonstration with these demands on the [Centre for Civil Liberties website](#).



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## **Student struggles in Ukraine**

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### **‘Frankly pro-Russian and sexist teacher must go’**

*Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat*

(February 19, 2024) Institute of Journalism students have demanded the dismissal of a teacher for sexism and pro-Russian views.

The students officially addressed the director of the institute of Kyiv, Volodymyr Rizun. They complained about the “frankly pro-Russian and sexist stance” of teacher Mykyta Vasylenko and called for her dismissal from the university.

Their letter states in part that "at the time of Russia's large-scale war against Ukraine, this teacher speaks to students about the 'greatness of Russia.'" In addition, “the teacher directs sexist remarks towards female students”, indicates the letter, which has been signed by more than 170 students of the institute.

The student assembly of the National Academy of Sciences also made its position public. It indicated that they categorically condemned the position and statements of Mykyta Vasylenko and considered her work as a teacher unacceptable.

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### **Appeal of Lviv students**

*Source: Direct Action*

(February 19, 2024) Dear foreign students, we are students of the Ukrainian Academy of Printing (UAP) reaching out for support.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has unveiled a Napoleonic plan to merge a number of Ukrainian higher education institutions from different regions of the country. This fact alone is worrying and shows the increasingly authoritarian methods of the Ministry of Education and Science (the list was presented not during open discussions with students of different universities, but at a closed meeting with rectors).

The so-called “mergers” mean the actual liquidation of educational institutions, without a guarantee that the teaching staff, premises and dormitories will be retained. In fact, it is but a way for the government to reduce education costs. There are also no guarantees for the preservation of specialities and university curricula. For many students, this is a real stab in the back.

The Ministry of Education and Science is trying to “merge” our academy as well.

Right now they are trying to merge the UAP and the Lviv Polytechnic National University. This will lead to the loss of Ukrainian book printing and lost opportunities for young artists. Our academy has its own identity and history that will be wiped off if this reorganisation happens.

The Ministry of Education and Science did not coordinate these changes with students of the academy. This decision wasn't discussed with the administration of the UAP. We learned about the reorganisation of higher education institutions through social media, and it was a total surprise to us.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science already tried to merge the UAP with LNU (the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv), but back then radical student resistance halted the Ministry's intentions. Today, the situation is much more difficult, as the new ministers are more rigid in their plans, wartime conditions do not allow for mass protests, and many students have had to go abroad.

We call on you to express solidarity, spread the information and support us as much as you can.

For any contact: [priama.diia@gmail.com](mailto:priama.diia@gmail.com)

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## **Direct Action congress adopts ‘vision of student struggle and a union-building strategy’**

*Source: Press release from Direct Action*

*(February 9, 2024)* We would also like to share with you an event: members of our organisation came from all over the country to attend the Direct Action union conference. In addition, members of previous generations and representatives of European student unions joined the congress.

Together we shared our work experiences at different universities, organised numerous workshops and conferences.

The congress adopted a vision of student struggle and a union building strategy for 2024, which we presented in condensed form in the manifesto “Students are the lifeblood of the university”. The careful preparation of this text has been going on since October. Today, on our union's anniversary, we are ready to share it with everyone.

“Students have always been, are and will be a part of a larger movement – the labour movement. The student movement can rightly be seen not only as a struggle for better learning conditions, but also as an integral part of a broader movement for human liberation.”

[See Direct Action’s manifesto in English here.](#)

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## Other Ukraine news and analysis

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### Anti-LGBT Attack on Cinema

Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat

(February 11, 2024) *New news today.* Vandals damaged the Zhovten cinema in Kyiv because of the screening of a film about LGBT people. They wrote homophobic statements on the walls of the cinema. The vandals left the inscription “LGBT = Russian” on the wall of the building. I assume that other LGBT organisations will react. For the record, the gay film festival in Kyiv last September went well despite fears of interruption.

*LGBT Military, the LGBTQIA union in uniform communicates today:*

“The homophobic attack on the Zhovten cinema is an unacceptable act of vandalism for a European capital.

“The attackers' slogan lacks basic logic: Russia bans the LGBT movement and persecutes human rights activists.

“The screening of LGBT films would not have been possible if Kyiv had been under Russian occupation.

“It would also be impossible to walk around with a Ukrainian flag, speak Ukrainian or listen to Ukrainian music. Is this what the vandals wanted?



“Homophobes forget one thing. LGBT people are also on the front line, defending Ukrainian towns against Russian invaders alongside everyone else and allowing these vandals to paint the facades of peaceful Ukrainian towns rather than serve in the Russian occupying army or be tortured.

“Out of respect for LGBT servicemen and women, who are an integral part of the armed forces, and for human rights, such attacks must be severely condemned and the perpetrators punished.

“To this end, Bill 5488 [against hate crime] is long overdue in Ukrainian legislation, which should strengthen criminal liability for such crimes motivated by intolerance towards fellow citizens.”

***Far-right cinema vandals in action***

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## **Solidarity with Ukraine's workers and unions**

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### **For the worker-soldiers who remove mines**

*Source: International Labour Network for Solidarity and Struggle*

(February 19, 2024) Uranium miners, members of the Independent Miners' Union of Ukraine (NPGU), need international solidarity due to the hard situation and lack of resources in frontline areas in Ukraine!

Two years into a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the organised working class in this war-torn country is continuing its armed resistance in the ranks of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, while those who remain in civilian life, arrange all possible help and backup for their comrades.

Before February 2022, miners from the city of Kropyvnytskyi and the Kirovohrad region worked in the local uranium mines and were active in the local unions. Their professional knowledge of explosives is highly rated in the frontline areas. At the moment, dozens of them are demining the territories (removing the land mines) in the south-east of Ukraine. Their unit is in dire need of cars, which the state does not provide and the workers cannot afford.

We want to buy a second-hand jeep or a pickup truck and deliver it to the fighting workers. For that, we need approximately €7000 EUR. If we manage to collect more or find a cheaper vehicle, we will spend the money on tools and clothes needed for the frontline workers.



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### **‘Thousands of Ukrainian journalists remain in the profession thanks to international journalistic solidarity’**

*Source: International Federation of Journalists web site*

(February 23, 2024) As the war in Ukraine enters its third year, Sergiy Tomilenko, president of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) reflects on two years of unwavering work and relentless determination to support journalists and media workers on the ground, with the help of international partners such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), and UNESCO. On February 24, it will be two years since the war in Ukraine

started and Tomilenko recalls the imperative need to raise more funds in a war that rages on, despite vanishing from the headlines.



**IFJ General Secretary Anthony Bellanger with NUJU President Sergiy Tomilenko at the IFJ headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Credit: IFJ**

**1. It will soon be two years since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which is ongoing despite disappearing from many international headlines. How is the situation on the ground, and how do you feel?**

Unfortunately, that full-scale war, which in the first days of February 2022 seemed like a nightmare that should end in a few days or weeks, has now been going on for two years. We do not see any imminent prospects for its end despite the fact that the Ukrainian army heroically repels all Russian attacks. In these conditions, indeed, it is difficult for the world to maintain the focus of attention on this war for such a long time. Some talk about war fatigue, others say that media audiences want to consume more upbeat news.

At the same time, Ukrainian journalists, like the rest of Ukrainians, cannot close their eyes to what is happening, change the subject, or turn away from the truth of the war. To do so would mean coming to terms with aggression and losing. Hundreds of national and local media journalists have restructured their work and learned how to quickly cover emergencies related to Russian shelling, victims, and destruction of civilian infrastructure.

Of course, the most difficult security situation is in the regions bordering the front and the Russian border. Hundreds of journalists still live and work in these regions. I feel incredibly proud that the absolute majority of Ukrainian journalists, having a sense of professional duty and responsibility to the audience, make efforts to preserve their media – despite shelling, destruction, and the economic crisis caused by the war, most of them without any compromise regarding Russian propaganda.

## **2. What are the most pressing needs for journalists in Ukraine two years after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine?**

The most urgent need is additional safety equipment – bulletproof vests, helmets, and tactical first-aid kits. The [National Union of Journalists of Ukraine \(NUJU\)](#) and our partners try to administer the free rental of such equipment, but it wears out over time.

Journalists also request psychological support. People lack the skills to relieve the war pressure. There is often no time left for recovery.

The war has destroyed the economy including the advertising market which has traditionally been a source of income for the media. Newsrooms lack financial resources, which leads to mass shutdown of publications. There is a lack of technical equipment, which often breaks down as a result of moving, shelling, and intensive exploitation, and it cannot always be repaired. The media most affected are local publications, which worked brilliantly in the first months after the invasion but are now looking for long-term grant assistance.

## **3. What has your union been doing to help its members? Please provide concrete examples.**

The NUJU has provided the absolute majority of services not only to our members, but also to media workers and newsrooms in general. It includes safety and emergency first-aid training, emergency grants to colleagues who are in trouble (injured, with lost housing or property), and rental of safety equipment. We are also happy to see media workers who have recovered from emergencies and received support from the union, decide to join the ranks of the NUJU.

During the war, we have identified assistance to our regional branches as a priority, including those that, before the war, operated in the territories that are now fully or partially occupied by Russia, in particular in the regions of Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia, as well as Crimea. Our activities are limited over there due to the situation. We have provided support to journalists, helped build partnerships with other regional organisations, obtained and renewed trade union membership cards, and developed a program of access to education services. We need more financial support for these regions. .

## **4. A new Solidarity Centre for Journalists, launched by NUJU with IFJ, EFJ, and UNESCO support, opened in December in Kharkiv. Can you explain why the network of Journalists Solidarity Centres is crucial for journalists? (Can you provide us with quotes from journalists who have used the JSC to illustrate why they are necessary?)**

The NUJU is grateful to our international partners for supporting our initiative to create the network of [Journalists' Solidarity Centres](#) in April 2022.

It consists of a network of five small offices - in Lviv (with a presence in Chernivtsi), Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, and Kharkiv, as well as the headquarters in Kyiv. This is an alternative to the “hotline” for providing the necessary services to help journalists who are in trouble or are overcoming extraordinary professional challenges while working in dangerous conditions.

We advise on evacuation and rescue from occupied and dangerous territories, provide immediate financial support and technical assistance, conduct safety and first aid training events, provide psychological and legal support, and mentor support in improving and modernising the work of the media. In the front-line and de-occupied territories, where electricity and mobile communication are often absent, we managed to restore the print capability of thirty newspapers, which are often the only channel of information for the local population.

With the assistance of the Journalists Solidarity Centres, many colleagues decided to stay in the profession. They dared to transform their editorial practice and restructure it in accordance with modern requirements.

Their feedback (below) can be a confirmation:

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*“The Journalists' Solidarity Centre is a real hub for journalists. Here, not only do we communicate professionally, but we also have material support. In particular, I have the opportunity to wear a helmet and a bulletproof vest, thanks to the Centre. They gave us cameras. This is not only protection for a journalist but also helps in the restoration of our local newspapers,”*

*---Svitlana Karpenko, editor-in-chief of the restored newspaper, Trudova Slava, from Orikhiv, Zaporizhzhia Region.”*

*“After the occupation of Kherson, we stayed in the city for a whole month. It was not possible to publish the newspaper, but we continued to fill up the web site until the occupiers started hunting journalists, which forced us to leave. The support of colleagues from the Journalists Solidarity Centres helped a lot. Legal support helped to correctly record the criminal actions of the occupiers, and colleagues from the Centre helped to find housing. Today, the Journalists Solidarity Centre provides us with a workplace and gives us protective equipment when we go on business trips.”*

*---Anatolii Zhupyna editor-in-chief of the Novy Den newspaper, from Kherson,*

*"At the Journalists Solidarity Centre, I met colleagues who help journalists during wartime, when there is a threat to their work, and they suffer huge economic problems at their newsrooms."*

*---Anna Del Freo, Italian National Press Federation executive committee member and EFJ steering committee member*

*“I repeatedly turned to the Journalists' Solidarity Centre for help. During the blackout, you can work on some topics; you can get a bulletproof vest and a first-aid kit for a business trip to the front-line territory. Such help and support is very important.”*

*---Oleh Baturin, a journalist who survived captivity during the occupation of Kherson*

*"Journalists in Kharkiv every day go to the sites of constant enemy artillery shelling of mostly civilian targets. The Journalists' Solidarity Centre in Kharkiv provides us with protective equipment and conducts security training. Effective cooperation with the Armed Forces of Ukraine is also being established at the Centre. Recently, journalists met for strategic communications at a Journalists' Solidarity Centre with the Deputy Commander of Khortytsia, Serhii Cherevatyi. After the meeting, the communication between journalists and the military improved significantly, and they agreed on further systematic work."*

*---Volodymyr Pavlov, journalist and [fixer](#)*

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## **5. How can unions and the journalistic community help Ukrainian journalists?**

Thousands of Ukrainian journalists and hundreds of editors remain in the profession thanks to powerful international journalistic solidarity. Even in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion, leaders of journalist unions from Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, Norway and other countries gave us technical and financial assistance, studied the needs, and quickly ensured a response. The stability of our network of Journalists Solidarity Centres is ensured primarily thanks to this great international support.

Last year in Paris and Brussels, with the assistance of international colleagues, we held large photo exhibitions about the work of journalists during the war in Ukraine. These days, on the initiative of the Lithuanian Union of Journalists and the Belarusian Association of Journalists, a similar exhibition is being presented in Vilnius. We expect that this year, our exhibition will be hosted in other European countries as well and we would welcome invitations from IFJ/EFJ members to help organise them. This will contribute to new discussions about the importance of further support for Ukraine, Ukrainians, and Ukrainian journalists and about the importance of professional journalism at the present time.

We also welcome any invitation to speak about the situation of journalists on the ground.

## **6. What message would you like to convey to affiliates and journalists on February 24?**

A great big thank you for the support that we, Ukrainian journalists, have received throughout these two years, as well as a big thanks to the media that sent journalists to Ukraine and to the freelance journalists who, through their work, draw attention to the war in the centre of Europe and call for the adoption of democratic decisions to support Ukraine's victory and the end of the war.

We thank you for your solidarity, announce our availability, and call for cooperation!

- **Please donate to the [IFJ/EFJ Safety Fund for Journalists in Ukraine](#) to support Ukrainian journalists in need.**
- **[For information](#) about IFJ-EFJ work to support affiliates and journalists in Ukraine**

**See also: Ukraine: ["In times of war, journalists become targets of information attacks"](#)**



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## Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland: struggle looms at Trade Union Congress

*Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland Facebook page*

(February 7, 2024) The Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) which represents all Scottish Trade Union members has just published the preliminary agenda of its annual Congress which takes place in Dundee 15-17 April 2024. Unfortunately, a number of local Trades Union Councils have submitted motions for discussion calling for the end of military and other aid to Ukraine, the outcome of which would of course be victory for Russia and the end of Ukraine as an independent nation.

One of the long-since refuted lies repeated in these motions is that the then United Kingdom prime minister Boris Johnson “halted” Ukraine's President Zelensky's agreement to a peace deal with Russia in April 2022. See <https://novaramedia.com/.../no-the-west-didnt-halt.../>

While Zelensky listened to Johnson, all the evidence is that he eventually rejected this “land for peace” deal, because (a) Putin was not to be trusted to stick to it as soon as he rearmed after his military defeat at the doors of Kyiv and (b) Ukrainian public opinion would have rejected it, as 82% did in an opinion poll soon after.

But Ukrainians have never been considered as independent agents of their own history, by colonialist Russia, or by members of some Scottish TUCs.

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## Vehicles and Supplies Delivered from Labour Movement in Wales

*Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign*

(February 16, 2024) Mick Antoniw, Welsh Labour Member of the Welsh Government, along with Wayne Thomas Vice-President of the NUM in Wales and Carwyn Donovan, Negotiations Officer of the [Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union \(BECTU\) Sector of Prospect](#), along with a delegation from the labour movement in Wales, have delivered vehicles and aid to the Ukrainian trade union movement, to assist workers in resisting invasion at the frontlines.

The Ukrainians helped the striking miners of Britain and today are being helped to defeat the enemy.

On February 12-13, a meeting of representatives of the Dnipropetrovsk territorial organisation of the Union of Coal Workers of Ukraine with the delegation of the Miners Union of Great Britain—representatives of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM—took place in Kyiv.

These days, events dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the British miners' strike took place in the Ukrainian capital. Why Kyiv? British miners remember help from the Ukrainians in 1984-1985, thanks to which they survived. And today they came to express their immense gratitude to the Ukrainian people and to provide them with assistance, because Ukraine is suffering from the attack of the Russian aggressor.

In addition, the representatives of the British miners wanted to meet the people who directly participated in these events on the Ukrainian side and who provided assistance to the striking miners in Great Britain. Because thanks to this aid, the miners on strike for a year survived, their

families survived, and their children who needed food. For an entire year, miners in Britain did not receive wages. And the help from the Ukrainians was not occasional. It was provided for several months, as long as the need arose.

“Once again, our friends from Wales showed solidarity and handed over two more vehicles to the Ukrainian armed forces,” said Serhiy Yunak, head of the miners’ union in Pavlograd: “Since the start of the war, they have handed over 16 cars to our defenders. This time, a multivan and a pickup truck. These vehicles will go to the front line. The cars are filled with medicines, helmets, walkie-talkies, everything the soldiers on the front lines have asked for.



“The guys once again confirmed that they do not get tired of helping Ukraine in this difficult period (fake information being spread by Russia). On the contrary, the desire of the Welsh to help the Ukrainians defeat the hated enemy has grown.”

**Wayne Thomas of the NUM, Mick Antinow and Carwyn Donovan of BECTU handing over the vehicle to Serhiy Yunak, head of the miners’ union in Pavlograd (Credit: Cymru)**

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## ***Worker struggles in Belarus***

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- Political prisoner Volha Brytsikava will be tried on March 11 in closed mode
- Unionist sentenced to one year in prison for ‘inciting social hatred’
- The head of the pro-regime Federation of Trade Unions becomes a House of Representatives deputy for the third time
- Mass detentions of union activists continue
- Swedish trade unions and Salidarnast discussed the situation of labour rights in Belarus