

Public statement by the Friends of Free Russia and Czech civil society on Western measures and sanctions against Russian violations of international law and illegal invasion on the territory of Ukraine

The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation have been striking against several parts of Ukrainian territory since Thursday morning, mainly from the east, but also from the north through Belarus. Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko is fully cooperating with the Russian regime in this regard and should be held accountable for these actions. The strike from the south over Crimea and operations from the Black Sea also became a reality.

As an excuse, the Kremlin chose unsubstantiated and largely absurd "protection of the Russian and Russian-speaking populations", as the President Vladimir Putin pronounced. However, as may be seen from Putin's statement on the invasion, the video has been pre-recorded and the Russian leadership has been committed to this course of actions for quite some time.

It is important that the decision on another invasion does not have the support of the Russian population, because it was not even consulted. On the contrary, this aggressive step was taken by a narrow circle of Vladimir Putin's closest allies, who are directly responsible for it and will be held accountable for their steps.

Peaceful protests are currently rising throughout Russia, which the regime is severely punishing. A free and democratic Russia does not turn a blind eye to these matters and makes it clear that it does not want to proceed with the aggression against the brotherly Ukrainian nation. This is also evidenced in an open letter from more than 2,000 Russian intellectuals to President Putin urging him to end the escalation and prevent violence.

It is not clear where Russian troops will stop, or what they want to achieve in Ukraine in the short term. In the long run, however, it is clearly the "neutralization" of Ukraine, under which we may imagine the end of cooperation with the West and a stop on the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, which is beneficial for the Kremlin.

At the same time, the crucial reaction at the moment is the response of the West, which must quickly find a strong enough punishment that will react resolutely to the next Russian invasion of Ukraine. The key sanctions and measures to support Ukraine include ten steps.

That is why we, the undersigned, call on the representatives of the West, in particular the European Union and NATO, to take action in the following areas:

- 1) Russia's disconnection from the SWIFT payment platform - blocking of other platforms, including Visa and Mastercard, which would be felt by Russian citizens, should also be considered, and the US approach to the area should generally be a model,
- 2) Strong financial sanctions against the Kremlin and Russian banks and energy companies - including consideration of all major Russian banking houses (Sberbank, VTB, VEB, etc.) as well as the Russian Central Bank,

- 3) International isolation of the Russian Federation - coordination within the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE, but also the UN, where the General Assembly (not only the UN Security Council) should also take place,
- 4) Targeting Russian oligarchs and friends of Vladimir Putin and their family members as well as Russian officials with property and funds in the West - seizure of assets, freezing of accounts and also a ban on movement within the EU and the West (in coordination with the UK and US),
- 5) Ukraine's support in the military, financial and humanitarian fields - the provision of additional macro-financial assistance, weapons systems - including small arms and ammunition for guerrilla warfare, but also a comprehensive medical assistance program (MEDEVAC),
- 6) Increasing the defence and resilience of Western countries, including the relocation of additional troops to Central and Eastern Europe (within the so-called NATO Enhanced Forward Presence), which also suffers from this aggression and insecurity,
- 7) Further reduction of the dependency on Russian oil and gas supplies from Russia and promotion of diversification from Russian sources to other partners (USA, Qatar, Azerbaijan, etc.), but also long-term reduction of dependence on this type of raw materials,
- 8) Visa liberalization to neighboring countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Baltic States) in order to provide humanitarian protection and assistance to vulnerable civilians,
- 9) Strengthening our European resilience to cyber threats and disinformation, for which the EU should allocate additional funding and be prepared,
- 10) Finally, the European Union and the West should not even give up on their own principles and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, which Russia has long sought. Ukraine, like any democratic state, should be able to choose its path on the international stage and Russia should respect that choice!

As we claim, Czechia must also play an active part in this and it should insist on harsh sanctions and spend adequate resources and capacity to support Ukraine. In addition, it must strengthen the protection of its own critical infrastructure, which Russia may also try to attack.

We, the undersigned,

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Evropské hodnoty z.s.

EUROPEUM, z.s.

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