

April 18, 2023

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Meeks:

On May 27, 2022, Russia was found to be in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention in an independent legal analysis conducted by the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights and the New Lines Institute. We write to ask you to ensure that Congress acts to recognize the invasion as a genocide before we reach the one-year mark of this finding.

The Ukrainian nation is fighting for its right to exist. We are thankful for the support the United States has provided Ukraine, and we are grateful for your leadership in that process. We urge you to support and pass out of Committee **H.Res. 154**, which recognizes Russia's actions in Ukraine as genocide. Although we appreciate that executive-branch processes are also common for such determinations, the Kremlin's genocidal intent and actions are so clear and so evident that a congressional declaration is not only advisable, but absolutely necessary in the spirit of preventing further atrocities.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine unambiguously meets the definition of the term *genocide*, as defined by the Genocide Convention and reflected in U.S. law (18 U.S.C. § 1091). According to that definition, genocide occurs when *any one or more* of the following acts are committed with "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such":

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; *or*
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Russian officials have conducted an incitement campaign and adhered to a policy of attempting to not just conquer Ukraine, but to eliminate Ukrainians as a separate national group. This is all too apparent through the coordinated campaign of eliminationist rhetoric disseminated by state-run media, military campaigns that intentionally target civilian areas and life-sustaining infrastructure, and military occupation regimes that seek to arrest, deport, and destroy members of the Ukrainian nationality.

Russia's rhetoric categorically paints Ukrainians who view themselves as a distinct national group as "Nazis." This rhetoric frames the existence of Ukrainians as a threat to Russia, directly implying that destroying Ukrainians is needed to win a civilizational struggle. Putin has let other officials and state propagandists clarify what the goal of "denazification" means. Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev has

stated openly, “I hate them. They are bastards and degenerates... I will do everything to make them disappear.” Timofei Sergeitsev wrote in the tightly Kremlin-controlled outlet RIA Novosti that “a significant part of the masses” will need to be subjected to “reeducation,” “ideological repression,” and “forced labor,” — or at least “those who will not be subject to the death penalty or imprisonment.”

In addition to indiscriminately shelling Ukrainian civilians during the course of military operations, the Russian military has carried out executions of Ukrainian civilians, tortured them, forcibly deported them, and deliberately targeted them in missile and artillery attacks. The devastating images from Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, and Iziurm are not isolated incidents; they are emblematic of systematic, widespread atrocities perpetrated by Russian occupants. Some of the perpetrators have been publicly awarded by the Kremlin for such crimes. A disturbing and systematic pattern of sexual violence has emerged, with intercepted audio recordings revealing Russian soldiers bragging about raping Ukrainians.

On March 17 of this year, the International Criminal Court issued warrants of arrest for President Putin and Russian children’s rights ombudswoman Maria Lvova-Belova “for the war crime of unlawful deportation of” children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia. Thousands of Ukrainian children are estimated to have been forcibly adopted into ethnic Russian families and compelled to assimilate, a crime that by itself violates Article II(e) of the Genocide Convention. Russian government officials have notoriously spoken about the need to indoctrinate Ukrainian children. Lvova-Belova bragged that after a group of children were forcibly deported to the Moscow region, their love for Ukraine had been “transformed into a love for Russia.” Ukrainian schoolchildren who remain in occupied territories are pressured to reject their own national identity, studying under an imposed school curriculum that denies Ukraine’s distinct history and nationhood.

Russia’s policies in Ukraine undoubtedly point to genocidal intent and genocidal acts. **H.Res. 154** reaffirms America’s commitment to our fundamental principles, underscoring the seriousness of Russia’s crimes. In 2018, a broad bipartisan coalition in Congress found that genocide and similar crimes “threaten national and international security” (Pub. L. 115-441). If we do not recognize this invasion for what it is, we not only fail the Ukrainian people, but we neglect our security interests and our foundational values. We urge the Committees to pass these important resolutions.

The United States must recognize and help end genocide, and not just memorialize it after the ruination and devastation of a nation.

Respectfully,

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