

The War in Ukraine and the Urgent Need for Diplomatic Solutions

Since February 2022, the world has witnessed brutal war and horrific human suffering following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) urges Congress and the Administration to play a constructive role in ending the violence. Our Quaker faith calls us to always seek nonviolent solutions, even amid violence, and to help repair the wounds of war. The U.S. has a responsibility and an opportunity to champion a just and secure peace in the region, which can only be achieved through peaceful means.

The Continued Toll of the War in Ukraine

The February 2022 full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a devastating conflict, causing catastrophic harm. For more than 18 months, the U.S. has focused on a battlefield solution to the war in Ukraine, pouring more and more weapons and money into the war and doubling down on a counter-offensive. **This militarized response has not gotten Russia, Ukraine, or the world any closer to ending the conflict. It is time for a different approach.**

The human toll of the conflict has been staggering. Eleven million Ukrainian civilians have been *displaced*, with at least **25,000 civilians killed or injured**, while an *estimated* 190,000 Ukrainian and *Russian* soldiers have been *killed* and over 270,000 wounded.

In addition to the egregious suffering and loss of life, the war has deepened the militarization of society in both Ukraine and Russia, with *conscription* and the rights of conscientious objectors being *restricted and denied* in *both countries*. Freedom of speech and the press has been *dramatically curtailed* in Russia, with *extreme censorship* and the *criminalization of public opposition* to or *independent reporting* about the war.

The conflict has also led to the expansion of NATO, with *long-time neutral states* Sweden and Finland—which *shares 830 miles of its border with Russia*—joining the organization in 2022. This expansion has increased tensions between Russia and NATO, risking the war's escalation into a more global conflict. Indeed, the rising tensions between nuclear powers have increased the catastrophic risk of nuclear escalation. Senior United Nations disarmament officials *warn* that the risk of nuclear arms use today is higher than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, global food insecurity has sharply risen as a result of the conflict, impacting hundreds of millions of civilians beyond Ukraine and Russia. Millions of tons of grain were *trapped* in Ukraine, leading to a significant increase in the costs of wheat, maize, fertilizer, and fuel around the world. The World Food Programme (WFP) *estimates* that in 2023, more than 345 million people face high levels of

food insecurity, more than twice the number in 2020. The considerable role of food insecurity as a driver of conflict has been *well-documented*, making clear the urgent need to address disrupted global food supply chains in order to both respond to the war in Ukraine and prevent further conflict around the world.

The international community's inability to prevent or reverse the course of escalation of this war has brought to the fore the critical need to reassess how we approach peace and security concerns. It underscores the urgent need to move from military-centric approaches to diplomatic and peace-focused resolutions and to invest the resources and strengthen the capacities to effectively do so.

U.S. Assistance to Ukraine

The United States has provided critical development and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the war began. This has included support for *civilian protection efforts, psycho-social programs, independent media and civil society*, and the *documentation of war crimes* for accountability efforts. This assistance is vital to protecting Ukrainian civilians and democratic norms and institutions, as well as advancing peace in Ukraine and the region.

However, the **\$9.9 billion** provided for these essential programs pales in comparison to the massive amount of U.S. military assistance provided to Ukraine, which has failed to bring the warring parties closer to peace.

Since the war began, Congress has *pledged* more than \$67 billion to Ukraine in security assistance, weapons and equipment, and funds for additional materials. Earlier this year, the Department of Defense *reported* that aid to Ukraine had been overvalued by \$6.2 billion, highlighting significant challenges in establishing responsible oversight.

Military aid packages have contained controversial weapons, including *cluster munitions*, which were *first sent* in July 2023. These weapons, comprising of shells of hundreds of thousands of smaller bomblets that scatter over large areas up to the size of several football fields, often fail to detonate on impact, leaving small, unexploded ordinances littering the ground. Cluster munitions *severely threaten civilian populations* and have been banned by more than 120 nations.

Threat of Escalation

As tensions between nuclear powers have increased, so too has the risk of nuclear escalation. In November 2022, Russia *postponed* planned nuclear arms control discussions with the United States and, in February 2023, suspended its participation in the *New START Treaty*, the last major bilateral arms control treaty between the two nations. If the two sides fail to produce a follow-up agreement before New START expires in 2026, both could *double* the size of their deployed nuclear arsenals in a matter of months.

With Russia's *shelling* of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, munitions from the conflict *hitting* NATO-member Poland, *drone strikes* in Russian territory, and *worsening rhetoric* about the potential use of nuclear weapons, the war risks spiraling into a larger conflict between global nuclear powers.

A New Approach

The United States has a critical role to play in backing efforts to bring an end to the war in Ukraine and mitigate risks of nuclear escalation. To be an effective partner in this effort, Congress should reconsider its approach to the conflict and reject the false dichotomy of either supporting Ukraine via unchecked military aid or providing no support at all. This reductionist narrative overlooks vital elements of effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

In alignment with Quaker values of achieving peaceful ends through peaceful means, FCNL urges all parties involved to seek an immediate ceasefire, the full withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine, and work towards a negotiated settlement to secure a just and sustainable peace for the region. To do that will require engaging with Russia, Ukraine, and other world leaders. As noted in the global *Quaker Statement on the Peace Testimony and Ukraine*, "almost by definition, peacemaking often involves engaging with people making war and understanding the reasons they do so."

While the United States cannot and should not dictate terms of peace, it must support multilateral diplomatic approaches that can establish a ceasefire, bring all parties to the table, and open space for a comprehensive peace process. The U.S. should support an inclusive peace process that allows those most impacted to play a central role in shaping the outcome. Decades of *experience* and *research* have shown that inclusive processes better ensure more durable peace, security, and stability. The peace process should also seek accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by any party to the conflict.

To ensure ongoing regional peace and stability, the U.S. should support new, more sustainable *security arrangements* for the region that are not based on military power but are firmly rooted in multilateralism, diplomacy, economic cooperation, human rights, and the rule of law. Finally, the U.S. should support peacebuilding efforts to rebuild relationships in communities fractured by the war and between the Russian and Ukrainian people.

We strongly advocate that Congress increase its support for a diplomatic resolution to the war and respond to the humanitarian and refugee emergencies it created while working to protect civilians, support nonviolent civilian responses to the conflict, strengthen oversight on security assistance to Ukraine, and increase restrictions on the transfer of cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons.

Actions for Congress

In response to the war in Ukraine, Congress needs to realign its strategies towards deescalating the war and the global tensions it continues to fuel. To that end, FCNL makes the following recommendations:

- **Require the Administration to provide a diplomatic strategy.** Congress should hold the Administration accountable to provide its diplomatic strategy for supporting an end to the war. Congress should provide robust appropriations and political support for multilateral diplomatic approaches that establish a meaningful ceasefire, get all parties to the negotiating table, and open space for a comprehensive peace process.
- **Increase restrictions on cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons.** Congress should increase restrictions on the transfer of these weapons to any party, including Ukraine.
- **Increase funding for humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.** Congress should increase funding for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, regional countries hosting Ukrainian refugees, and those impacted by food insecurity and other secondary impacts of the war. Congress should also invest in locally-led peacebuilding efforts to help rebuild relationships in communities fractured by the war and between the Russian and Ukrainian people.
- **Ensure arms control is an integral part of the U.S. response.** Congress should ensure that conventional and nuclear arms control form an integral part of the U.S. response to the conflict. Congress should support full implementation of the New START Treaty and support the Administration's commitment to engage in arms control dialogues with Russia to develop a post-2026 arms control framework.
- **Fully fund and support international institutions.** Congress should reaffirm a commitment to multilateralism and the rules-based global order by fully funding U.S. dues to the United Nations' regular budget and associated agencies. Congress should also continue to provide assistance for the International Criminal Court's collection of evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity and support the prosecution of such crimes perpetrated by any party to the conflict. Finally, Congress should support sustainable security arrangements for Europe beyond those that are solely contingent on military power, such as NATO, but are firmly rooted in diplomatic negotiations.
- **Strengthen oversight on military aid.** Congress should bolster its commitment to oversight of military aid, including through enhanced end-use monitoring of U.S. weapons and other equipment transferred to Ukraine to prevent the theft, diversion, or other misuse; enhanced oversight and funding for the Departments of Defense and State Inspectors General; and requiring the appointment of a Special Inspector General for Ukraine assistance.

Collectively, these actions would help set a path toward deescalating the conflict and supporting a long-term diplomatic resolution to the war. FCNL urges Congress to urgently realign its efforts to increase its support for diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and sustainable peace in the region.

September 2023