

## **National call to Trudeau government to de-escalate conflict between Russia and NATO over Ukraine**

### **Canada must stop arming Ukraine, end Operation UNIFIER and Operation REASSURANCE, and withdraw all armed forces from Eastern Europe**

January 2022

We, the undersigned Canadian peace groups and civil society organizations, are very concerned about Canada's role in fomenting the dangerous, escalating conflict in Ukraine between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of the Russian Federation.

Thousands of civilians in Ukraine have been injured, killed and displaced due to the intensifying conflict since 2014. The situation could get much worse as Russia and three NATO countries are nuclear-armed and five NATO countries station US nuclear weapons in their territory in Europe. We do not support NATO membership for Ukraine, but call for neutrality and sustainable peace.

We are releasing this open statement to call on the Government of Canada to take immediate steps to de-escalate and demilitarize the conflict, and to engage diplomatically in long-term peace and security with Russia, Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe.

#### **BACKGROUND: OUR CONCERNS**

Between 1990 and 1991, the United States made repeated assurances to the former Soviet Union that NATO would not expand eastward, in exchange for the Soviet Union's acceptance of German reunification. These assurances were described in government documents released by the National Security Archive.

In violation of these assurances, over the past thirty years, NATO has steadily expanded into Eastern Europe. In 2004, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, which all border Russia, joined the transatlantic military alliance. NATO has battle groups now in these Baltic countries. At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO announced plans to extend membership to Ukraine and Georgia, despite Russia's opposition.

In 2014, the U.S. collaborated with the Ukraine oligarchy and far-right nationalists to oust Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich from office in the so-called Maidan uprising. Yanukovich was opposed to the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, a free trade arrangement. The ousting of Yanukovich paved the way for billionaire Petro Poroshenko to become President. The U.S.-backed Poroshenko supported the economic agreement with the EU and Ukraine's membership in NATO, leading to civil unrest and a humanitarian crisis in the country.

Over the past seven years, Canada's increased involvement in Ukraine has intensified tensions with Russia and has aggravated the civil war between forces loyal to Kyiv and the ethnically-

Russian Donbass region of eastern Ukraine. More broadly, Canadian Forces in NATO operations throughout Eastern Europe have also exacerbated the conflict with Russia.

Since 2015, under Operation UNIFIER, Canada has been training and funding Ukrainian soldiers including Ukraine's far-right, neo-Nazi Azov movement, according to a recent study by George Washington University and a report by Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade.

In 2017, the Trudeau government added Ukraine to the Automatic Firearms Country Control List to allow Canadian companies to export firearms, automatic guns, ammunition, and other military technology to Ukraine, as shown in the *Report on Exports of Military Goods from Canada*. On January 11, 2022, it was reported in the Ottawa Citizen that a new Canadian weapons company is planning to open in Ukraine and is being supported by the Canadian Commercial Corporation, a federal agency.

Since 2014, Canada has imposed coercive economic sanctions, not authorized by the United Nations Security Council, against Russian individuals and companies. These Canadian sanctions under the *Special Economic Measures Act* are illegitimate and a part of a hybrid war against Russia.

Canada has been leading a NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Latvia across the border from Russia for the past seven years as part of Operation REASSURANCE, with over 500 Canadian soldiers on rotation. Canada recently set up a permanent military headquarters in Riga.

Canada is regularly deploying its CF-18 fighter jets from a NATO base in Romania to fly along Russia's border and its frigates to the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea. These Canadian contributions to NATO's operations and exercises are extremely provocative and antagonistic to Russia.

Canada's military presence in Ukraine parallels its growing corporate interests in this country. Ukraine has vast natural resource wealth including mineral deposits of iron, titanium, phosphorus, hydrocarbons, rare earth elements and especially its largest lithium deposit in Europe. It must be emphasized that Russia has major oil and gas pipelines that transit Ukraine to supply Europe. The U.S., Canada and other NATO countries want to displace Russian energy supplies to Europe. These corporate interests led to the *Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement* (CUFTA) in 2016 and were the prime focus of the third *Ukraine Reform Conference* that Canada hosted in Toronto in 2019.

Moreover, the Government of Canada and NATO are engaged in inflammatory rhetoric and thus exaggerating the Russian threat. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2020, Russia had a military budget of \$61 billion USD in contrast to the U.S. military budget of \$778 billion USD. As shown in NATO's latest *Defence Expenditures* report, combined annual NATO military spending is \$1.1 trillion USD (including \$26.5 billion USD from Canada). It is not new that Russian troops are positioned on its own borders with Ukraine. The Canadian government and media are ignoring how the massing of NATO forces in Eastern Europe and how NATO's provocative and confrontational exercises, such as *Steadfast Defender* and *Steadfast Noon*, are antagonizing Russia.

Russia has publicly stated that NATO's militarization of Eastern Europe is a direct threat to its security and the membership of Ukraine in the military alliance is a 'red line' that cannot be crossed. Canada with its NATO allies are engaged in a dangerous and destabilizing hybrid war against Russia that risks nuclear weapons use. These concerns have led us to prepare these demands to the Trudeau government. (See **Sources** below).

## **OUR CALLS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

To de-escalate the conflict between NATO and Russia and to ensure peace and security in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, we are calling on the Government of Canada to:

- Stop the export of all lethal and non-lethal military goods from Canada to Ukraine. Prevent the opening of a Canadian weapons company in Ukraine and end all support for it by the Canadian Commercial Corporation, a federal agency.
- End Operation UNIFIER, the training and funding of Ukrainian security forces, and withdraw all Canadian soldiers from Ukraine.
- End Operation REASSURANCE, withdraw all Canadian soldiers from Latvia and close the Canadian military headquarters in Riga.
- Withdraw all Canadian fighter jets from Romania, end the 'air policing' operations along Russia's borders and withdraw all Canadian naval vessels from the region.
- Cease all of Canada's sanctions, coercive economic measures, against Russia and do not impose any new sanctions.
- Be transparent about the corporate interests behind the conflict with Russia over Ukraine and in Eastern Europe including weapons sales, pipelines, energy security, access to Ukraine's natural resources and rare earth minerals etc.
- Work through the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations to de-escalate conflict with Russia over Ukraine by supporting the Minsk Agreements and a common security strategy.
- Implement Canada's commitments to the UN Women, Peace & Security agenda that requires a substantial, meaningful role for women's participation in the negotiations and women's leadership for conflict prevention. Ensure that women from all sides of the conflict are invited to mediate a diplomatic resolution to the conflict and an agreement for a lasting peace.
- Oppose membership in the NATO military alliance for Ukraine and support Ukraine's neutrality.

- Reduce Canada's military spending and reliance on armed force. As reported to NATO, Canada has increased military spending to \$33 billion CAD for 2021. Canada must demilitarize and instead invest in diplomacy and nonviolent conflict mediation to help bring about a peaceful resolution to the crisis.
- Sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

This current crisis between NATO and Russia over Ukraine is another important reminder about the urgency for Canada to withdraw from NATO, an anachronistic, nuclear-armed military alliance. NATO is fomenting the conflict in Ukraine as it has done in other countries such as Serbia, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. Canada and Ukraine should be neutral countries with an independent foreign policy of non-aggression and non-interference based on the UN Charter.

**[Français]**

### **Appel national au gouvernement Trudeau pour qu'il désescalade le conflit entre la Russie et l'OTAN à propos de l'Ukraine.**

Les soussignés lui demandent d'arrêter d'armer l'Ukraine, de mettre un terme aux opérations UNIFIER<sup>1</sup> et REASSURANCE<sup>2</sup> et de retirer toutes les forces armées canadiennes de l'Europe de l'Est.

Nous, groupes de paix et organismes de la société civile soussignés, sommes très inquiets du rôle militaire canadien qui foment une escalade du conflit en Ukraine entre l'Organisation du Traité d'Atlantique-Nord (OTAN) et le gouvernement de la Fédération Russe.

Depuis 2014, des milliers de civils ukrainiens sont morts, blessés ou déplacés suite à ce conflit qui pourrait rapidement dégénérer, vu que la Russie, de même que trois pays membres de l'OTAN impliqués, sont armés de bombes nucléaires et que cinq autres pays européens stationnent des bombes américaines sur leurs territoires.

En vue de soutenir la paix, nous appuyons une Ukraine neutre et non-membre de l'OTAN. Nous prions le Gouvernement du Canada d'entreprendre une désescalade immédiate, de

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<sup>1</sup> UNIFIER : contribution canadienne d'appui aux Forces armées de l'Ukraine pour développer leurs capacités depuis 2015. Cet effort des Forces armées canadiennes (FAC) en Ukraine s'inscrit dans une collaboration avec les États-unis (*tiré d'une source gouvernementale canadienne*).

<sup>2</sup> RÉASSURANCE : des membres des FAC prennent part à cette opération en Europe centrale et en Europe de l'Est dans le cadre des mesures d'assurance et de dissuasion de l'OTAN. À tout moment, il peut y avoir jusqu'à 915 membres des FAC déployés dans le cadre de l'Opération REASSURANCE, ce qui en fait la plus importante opération militaire canadienne actuelle. Cela comprend environ 240 marins à bord d'une frégate opérant avec l'OTAN, 540 militaires dirigeant un groupement tactique de présence avancée renforcée en Lettonie, 135 membres de l'Aviation royale canadienne et six avions de chasse CF-18 Hornet participant aux activités de police aérienne renforcées de l'OTAN (*tiré d'une source gouvernementale canadienne*).

démilitariser le conflit et de s'engager diplomatiquement en vue d'une paix durable et sécuritaire avec la Russie, l'Ukraine et l'Europe de l'Est.

17 Janvier 2022

**Groups:**

Artistes pour la Paix

Canadian Foreign Policy Institute

Des montrealais contre les avions de chasse

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Green Left Gauche Verte

Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

International Manifesto Group

Just Peace Advocates/Mouvement Pour Une Paix Juste

Kingston Peace Council

Ottawa Peace Council

Peace Alliance Winnipeg

Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Ottawa Quaker

People for Peace, London

Science for Peace

Socialist Action

Association of United Ukrainian Canadians Winnipeg Council

Victoria Peace Coalition

Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada

WILPF Nanaimo chapter

World Beyond War Canada

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Chandler Davis, Science for Peace

Radhika Desai, Geopolitical Economy Research Group

Judy Deutsch, Toronto

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Bruna Nota, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada

John Price, professor emeritus, University of Victoria

Mary Rawson, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada

Normand Raymond, Artistes pour la Paix

Karen Rodman, Just Peace Advocates

Joan Russow, Global Compliance Research project

Charlotte Sheasby-Coleman, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Richard Sanders, founder, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade and Press for Conversion!  
magazine

Huguette Sansonet, WILPF Canada

Rachel Small, National Coordinator, World Beyond War Canada

Ken Stone, Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

Colin Stuart, World Beyond War Canada

Koozma Tarasoff, Spirit Wrestlers

Rose Marie Whalley, Des montrealais contre les avions de chasse

Marguerite Warner, Peace Alliance Winnipeg

Kathrin Winkler, Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace

Ellen Woodsworth, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada

