

Brussels, 24 February 2022

Ukraine: European Writers against War and Violence

We condemn Putin's crimes against democracy and humanity

Today's violent attack by the Russian government on Ukraine is a war against all democracies, our values, our convictions of peace, freedom and human rights.

Russian President Putin's despicable war attacks in Ukraine massively violate the democratic freedom won in many states in Eastern Europe after 1989. Putin, who called the dissolution of the totalitarian Soviet Union a "tragedy", aims to destabilise Europe. The military offense on Ukraine on 24 of February 2022 with Russian troops is thus an attack on peace and all democratic values in Europe.

"The bloodshed must be stopped. The people of Ukraine and our fellow writers must be supported at this difficult time", demands Arno Jundze, Chair of the Latvian Writers' Union in Riga. "What is happening in Ukraine is a threat to democracy throughout Europe. If the war in Ukraine is not stopped, it will be a sign that the aggressor can do whatever he wants throughout Eastern Europe."

Already over 1.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes in Donetsk and Luhansk. The belligerent measures are expected to force another 5 million Ukrainians to leave the country if Russia continues to invade.

Putin's recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics could also be only the beginning of a larger, anti-European trend of Russian violent action to conquer more former Soviet territories: The Baltic states see the presence of Russian troops in Belarus as a threat, above all because of the so-called "Suwalki Gap". This term refers to the 100-kilometre-long border area between Poland and Lithuania, which is framed by the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus. Because it is the only land connection between the three Baltic States and the other NATO members, it is feared that Russia could capture the gap in the event of a military conflict, thus isolating the Baltic from the rest of the NATO area. This could allow for a rapid capture of the Baltic. Lithuania, which has borders with Russia's exclave of Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea, has declared a state of emergency.

"The Lithuanian Writers Union stands with Ukraine and with our Ukrainian colleagues — our shared community of writers and translators. We condemn the illegal and unjustifiable Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory. We support Ukraine and will do what we can to help in difficult circumstances." Birutė Jonuškaitė Augustinienė, Chair, Lithuanian Writers Union

"February 24th is Estonian Independence day. On the very same day Ukrainians started to defend their independence against the full scale attack of the aggressor." Tiit Aleksejev, Chair, Estonian Writers' Union

"The European Writers' Council (EWC) and its 46 member organisations from 30 countries stand with their fellow writers from Ukraine", says Nina George, President of the European Writers' Council. "We request from the EU Member States to intervene strongly to the ongoing violence in Ukraine. We appeal to the Ministers of Culture of all EU Member States to support the Ukrainian people, our fellow writers in these difficult and life-threatening war times."

Our solidarity is with our colleagues in Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Nina George – President EWC

Arno Jundze – Chair Latvian Writers' Union

Birutė Jonuškaitė Augustinienė – Chair Lithuanian Writers' Union

Tiit Aleksejev – Chair Estonian Writers' Union