

23 mrt. 2022

Open Letter from Ukrainian Community to the Organisers of Manifestation nationale / Nationale manifestatie - Europe for Peace

Dear organisers of the [Manifestation nationale / Nationale manifestatie - Europe for Peace](#),

We are writing to you from the NGO [Promote Ukraine](#) and hosted by the European Parliament in the building "Station Europe" on behalf of the Ukrainian civil society and Ukrainian refugees in Belgium.

We are glad to know that you are organising a rally against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We are grateful for your intentions to stand for peace in Europe. This is what we are also asking for. However, the Ukrainian community and Ukrainian refugees in Belgium are extremely disappointed by your approach to the organisation of this manifestation as well as your demands.

First, we regret that Ukrainian community in Belgium has not been involved in the organisation of nor invited to the manifestation as speakers. Instead, an individual that has been promoting Russian propaganda and supporting Putin's action in Crimea and Donbas is promoted on the official page of the event. We are deeply concerned about the lack of Ukrainian voices and views. We believe that Ukrainian organisations, volunteers and diaspora in Belgium should be entitled to be at least consulted as Ukrainians are those who suffer the most about this situation. **Otherwise, you undermine our agency and fall victim to post-colonial approaches which intentionally exclude Ukrainian voices and perspectives from your manifestation.**

Second, it is extremely disappointing that narratives that reinforce Russian imperialism are included in the description of your event. In our view, your protest against weapons for Ukraine and in favour of a generic ceasefire is offensive, particularly towards the Ukrainians that are currently suffering a brutal invasion aimed at wiping off the Ukrainian people from the territory of Ukraine. Moreover, your position ignores the recent history of our country. By 2014 Ukraine was largely demilitarized and had no military and logistical support from European or Western countries. Yet, this did not save us from being invaded in Crimea and Donbas by Russian troops. As a result, thousands of people were killed and almost 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens had to flee Crimea and Donbas and became internal refugees in our country. **Therefore, any form of solidarity with Ukraine without advocating for a stronger military support perpetuates the view that we should not defend ourselves from the Russian aggression and accept to become a colonial entity within the Russian Federation.**

Third, your protest largely ignores the responsibility that the many Western societies have vis-a-vis the current invasion in Ukraine. For many years, European states created and maintained solid economic and political ties with the Russian regime. As a result, the Kremlin has used these ties and the money that West has provided to him to consolidate his military power and to destroy peace and security of Ukraine and of the whole European continent. As of today, more than 250 Belgian businesses refuse to leave Russia and Belgium is still importing huge quantities of gas and oil from the aggressor. In Brussels there are more than 20 gas stations owned by Lukoil (the largest Russian non-state enterprise in terms of revenue) which Belgians keep using for refueling their cars. Yet, none of this is mentioned in your messages. A big movement for Peace that advocates for security in Europe cannot ignore these facts. If you do not call for Belgian society to cut these ties with Russia through sanctions, you are ignoring your own responsibilities. **In other words, you are advocating to maintain Western privileges at the expense of Ukrainian people and promote a hypocritical message that having economic cooperation with an imperialistic totalitarian regime is simply fine.**

We sincerely hope that you can reconsider the organization and messages of your event and make it more inclusive to the Ukrainians in Belgium and Ukrainian refugees in Belgium.

In case you are interested to learn more about Ukrainian needs and experiences, we would like to invite you to visit our upcoming protest **"EU, NATO: ACT FOR UKRAINE NOW!"** which will take place tomorrow at 15.30 – 18.00 on 24 March 2022 in Schuman. Alternatively, you can also visit us at our Ukrainian Hub at Station Europe (Place Luxembourg).

Thank you for your attention.

Kind regards,
Anna Melenchuk
Advocacy Team

Promote Ukraine on behalf of Ukrainian community and Ukrainian refugees in Belgium