

#standwithUkraine

STANDING WITH THE PEOPLE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN UKRAINE

Council of European Municipalities and Regions

CEMR's Declaration on the second anniversary of the outbreak of the Russian war against Ukraine

24 February 2024, Brussels

We, as European local and regional leaders, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the start of the illegal and unjustified full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and having regard to our declarations adopted on 24 February 2022¹, 13 October 2022² and 24 February 2023³, reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine and its people.

We strongly condemn the full-scale war waged by Russian forces against Ukraine targeting innocent children, civilians and elected representatives and occupying illegally Ukrainian territories. The abduction of Ukrainian mayors by the Russian forces represents a violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.



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We support the call of the Association of Ukrainian Cities and demand the immediate release of the mayors still being detained⁴, among them:

1. **Oleksandr Babych** – Hola Prystan city mayor (Kherson region)
2. **Oleksii Vynnychenko** – Head of Hrebennykivka starosta district of Boromlia village municipality (Sumy region)
3. **Ihor Kolykhaiev** – Kherson city mayor
4. **Yevhenii Matvieiev** – Dniprorudne city mayor (Zaporizhzhia region)
5. **Anatolii Siryi** – Head of Novi Borovychi starosta district of Snovsk city municipality (Chernihiv region)

Russia's aggression against Ukraine underscores the vulnerability of children. Daily, Ukrainian children endure rocket attacks and shelling targeting civilians and infrastructure with over 500 children⁵ killed and more than 1200 injured. In addition to the 19,500 forcibly displaced children, Russian occupation authorities continue to separate children from their families, placing them in orphanages, foster care, or camps in Russia or the illegally occupied autonomous republic of Crimea, where they undergo pro-Russian indoctrination.

We reaffirm our full commitment to support the Ukrainian people and their local and regional elected representatives in their pursuit of victory, peace and reconstruction. We intend to continue empowering local and regional governments in Ukraine through international municipal partnerships and other decentralised cooperation instruments. This support is provided within the context of the Bridges of Trust project, the Eastern Partnership programme, and the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine.⁶



In confronting the aggressor, Ukraine not only safeguards its own freedoms but also the freedoms of Europe as a whole. We are confident that our efforts will ultimately contribute to Ukraine's successful and speedy accession to the European Union as a full member and, as European Local and Regional Leaders, fully support the Ukrainian nation in the pursuit of this objective.

We emphasise the importance of upholding European and universal values rooted in democracy, peace, and adherence to the rule of law and international principles. We stand in solidarity with the international community in supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and urge the Russian Federation to cease this illegal war.



Vince Maple
Chair of the
Financial Management
Committee



Philippe Laurent
Co-President



Christoph Schnaudigel
Co-President



Gunn Marit Helgesen
President

¹ [Declaration of 24 February 2022 on the support of the European local and regional governments to their peers in Ukraine](#)

² [Declaration of 13 October 2022 on the escalation of war against Ukraine](#)

³ [Declaration on the anniversary of the outbreak of war against Ukraine](#)

⁴ [Abducted mayors as of 29 September 2023](#)

⁵ [Children of War](#)

⁶ [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#)

