

An Open Letter to the Russian Leadership

Russian Congress of Intellectuals

Our position is simple: Russia does not need a war with Ukraine and the West. Such a war is devoid of legitimacy and has no moral basis.

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Dimitar Dolkoff/AFP via Getty Images

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow, Russia, January 27, 2022

There is an ever-increasing flow of alarming news about a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine. Reports are emerging about stepped-up recruitment of mercenaries within Russia and the transfer of fuel and military equipment to Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In response, Ukraine is arming itself and NATO is sending additional forces into Eastern Europe. The tension is not abating, but rather mounting.

Russian citizens are becoming de facto hostages of a reckless adventurism that has come to typify Russia's foreign policy. Not only must Russians live with the uncertainty of whether a large-scale war will begin, but they are also experiencing a sharp rise in prices and a devaluation of their currency. Is this the sort of policy Russians need? Do they want war—and are they ready to bear the brunt of it? Have they authorized the authorities to play with their lives in this way?

But no one asks Russian citizens for their opinion. There is no public debate. State television presents only a single viewpoint—that of the warmongers. Direct military threats, aggression and hatred are aimed at Ukraine, the US, and the West. But the most dangerous thing is that the war is being depicted not only as permissible, but as inevitable. This is an attempt to deceive the population, to impose upon them the idea of waging a crusade against the West, rather than investing in the country's development and improving living standards. The cost of the conflict is never discussed, but the price—the huge, bloody price—will be paid by the common Russian people.

We, responsible citizens and patriots of Russia, appeal to Russia's political leadership. We openly and publicly call out the Party of War that has been formed within the government.

We represent the viewpoint of those in Russian society who reject war, who consider unlawful the use of military threats and the deployment of a blackmailing style in foreign policy.

We reject war, whereas you, the Party of War, consider it acceptable. We stand for peace and prosperity for all Russian citizens, whereas you put our lives on the line for the sake of political games. You deceive and manipulate people, whereas we tell them the truth. You do not speak in the name of the Russian population—we do. For decades, the Russian people, who lost millions of lives in past wars, have lived by the saying: "if only there were no war." Have you forgotten this?

Our position is quite simple. Russia does not need a war with Ukraine and the West. No one is threatening us, no one is attacking us. Policies based on the idea of such a war are immoral and irresponsible and must not be conducted in the name of the Russian people. Such a war is devoid of legitimacy and has no moral basis. Russian diplomacy should take no other position than a categorical rejection of such a war.

Not only does such a war not reflect Russia's interests, but it also threatens the country's very existence. The senseless actions of the country's political leadership, which is pushing us in this direction, will inevitably lead to a mass anti-war movement in Russia. Each of us will naturally play a part in it.

We will do everything in our power to prevent this war, and if it begins, to stop it.

Signed,

Lev Ponomaryov, human rights activist
Valery Borshchev, human rights activist
Svetlana Gannushkina, human rights activist
Leonid Gozman, politician
Liya Akhedzhakova, actress and People's Artist of the Russian Federation
Andrey Makarevich, musician
Garri Bardin, director
Viktor Shenderovich, writer
Tatiana Lazareva, TV presenter
Andrey Zubov, historian and politician
Andrey Nechaev, politician
Alina Vitukhnovskaya, writer
Alexander Belavin, physicist
Nikolai Rozanov, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Natalia Evdokimova, executive secretary of the Human Rights Council of St. Petersburg
Efim Khazanov, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Ilya Ginzburg, physicist and professor
Zoya Svetova, journalist
Grigory Yavlinsky, politician
Lev Shlosberg, politician
Boris Vishnevsky, politician
Lev Gudkov, sociologist and professor
Igor Chubais, philosopher
Tatyana Voltskaya, poet and journalist
Boris Sokolov, historian and writer
Mikhail Krieger, civic activist
Veronika Dolina, poet
Vladimir Mirzoev, director
Ksenia Larina, journalist
Andrey Piontkovsky, publicist
Mark Urnov, professor, National Research University Higher School of Economics
Mikhail Lavrenov, writer
Nikolai Prokudin, writer
Elena Fanailova, poet and journalist
Grigory Mikhnov-Vaytenko, clergyman
Lev Levinson, human rights activist
Sergei Germann, member of the Writer's Union of Russia
Vladimir Alex, civil activist
Yuri Gimmelfarb, journalist
Yuri Samodurov, human rights activist
Evgeniy Tsymbal, civil activist
Vitaly Dixon, writer
Natalya Mavlevich, translator
Ashraf Fattakhov, lawyer

Viktor Yunak, writer
Valeria Prikhodkina, human rights activist
Elena Grigorieva, children's poet
Vera Shabelnikova, editor
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Sergei Krivenko, human rights activist
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Anatoly Tsirlin, professor
Karen Hakobyan, professor

A full list of signatories is available [here](#).