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UNA LASER Special Campaign Alert: The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

We have uploaded the article below – by UNA LASER's Campaigns Officer, Valeria Minisini – onto [our website](#). Please share it widely and encourage people to take action.

On February 24th, Russian troops invaded Ukraine. This has left a significant trail of destruction and a growing humanitarian crisis. At the time of writing, more than 1 million Ukrainians have been forced from their homes with many still living in heavily shelled areas. Many Ukrainians have sought refuge in neighbouring states: Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, and in Germany.

There are fears that the fighting may spill over into other former Soviet republics – including Georgia, who have called for additional support to prepare for a possible Russian invasion themselves. In addition, Russia's actions violate international law and risk horrific human suffering. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, it has been estimated that close to 300 civilians have been killed and almost a thousand injured, with many more unaccounted for. Many Ukrainians who have been unable to flee the war have inadequate access to crucial needs such as food, water, and medication. UNA-UK has called on all parties to "both protect civilians and to facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access". The UK has pledged another £80m in aid both to protect vulnerable people inside Ukraine and also, in the wider region, to tackle the growing humanitarian crisis: a move which has been welcomed by organisations including UNA-UK.

At the UN level, there have been positive developments to tackle the crisis. Firstly, the UN Human Rights Council voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution calling to establish a Commission of Inquiry on Russian human rights violations in Ukraine. The resolution, tabled by Ukraine, was voted in favour by 32 countries with 13 voting to abstain and only two, Russia and Eritrea, voting against. The result of the vote has left Russia increasingly isolated at the international level with few nations backing their actions in Ukraine.

In addition, the UNHRC resolution came two days after the UN General Assembly voted to adopt a resolution condemning Russian action in Ukraine and demanding that they stop their aggression and withdraw all military from the country. The resolution passed with 141 voting in favour, 35 abstentions and only 5 votes against (from Belarus, Russia, Syria, North Korea and Eritrea). As the Ukrainian Ambassador said after the resolution's adoption, the overwhelming vote says to Putin "The whole world is against you."

However, there are a few outstanding actions that the UK must take, and you can help us create awareness of these urgent priorities by writing to your local MP to lobby the government or promoting the message across social media.

The UK should:

1. Clearly set out its intention to uphold its international obligations by offering to accept a significant number of

refugees.

2. Outline a further package of robust sanctions including increasing individual sanctions on oligarchs with direct links to President Vladimir Putin; this will increase the pressure on Moscow.
3. Support the initiative led by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown to create a [special criminal tribunal to try those responsible for aggression in Ukraine](#).

In addition, the Disasters Emergency Committee, a coalition of 15 humanitarian NGOs, have launched a special appeal on Ukraine. The UK Government has confirmed that it will match pound-for-pound the first £20m donated by the public. Funds raised from the appeal will enable the DEC and their local partners in Ukraine and the surrounding region to provide those fleeing with food, water, health assistance, protection, and trauma care. You can donate to the appeal [here](#).

This act of hostility has grave implications for the safety and human rights of tens of millions of peaceful Ukrainian citizens whose country is under attack, while also threatening peace and security in the region and beyond.
