

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE TO RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

OCTOBER 2022



PEACE
SUPPORT
UKRAINE

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, resulted in the largest war on the European continent since 1945. Paralleling the armed resistance of Ukraine to Russia's aggression, a process of great importance has taken place in territories occupied by Russian forces. In nearly all occupied territories of Ukraine, Russian forces have been confronted by a clear rejection of their actions on the part of ordinary Ukrainian citizens. To a great extent, civil nonviolent resistance has blocked the Russian armed forces from achieving their objectives, which rely on cooperation and acceptance from the local population. This has played a key role in preventing Russia from achieving its aims in these territories.

Nonviolent resistance to Russian aggression has taken many forms, including:

- Confronting occupiers by nonviolent means – organizing demonstrations, roadblocks, picketing
- Demonstrating Ukrainian identity through leaflets, writing pro-Ukrainian signs, playing Ukraine's national anthem, wearing Ukrainian traditional clothes, holding inter-faith religious services in Ukrainian language
- Refusing to cooperate with the occupying force – refusing aid from the Russian forces, setting up alternative administrative centers, refusing to communicate with occupying forces in Russian, refusing to accept Russian currency
- Refusing to organize educational programs according to Russian standards, providing education according to Ukrainian programs
- Demoralization campaigns towards Russian soldiers
- Mutual support and self-organization – patrolling streets, preparing shelters, delivering aid and providing psychological support, setting up alternative internet hubs
- Hiding pro-Ukrainian activists
- Delaying deliverables and services; farmers refusing to sell grain and other produce to occupying forces
- Warning about Russian troop advancements
- And much more

CHANGES IN THE OCCUPYING REGIME

As the occupation has continued, the regime of the occupiers has become much more repressive, characterized by intimidation, threats, “disappearances” of civil activists, cases of torture, bringing people for interrogations, arrests of relatives of civil activists, violently dispersing protests. The need to survive, safety concerns, the need to earn a living in the very difficult circumstances of Russian occupation, uncertainty regarding the future, has driven people toward accepting some of the rules imposed by the de-facto occupying authorities, affecting the forms and intensity of nonviolent resistance. While nonviolent resistance continues, its format, as well as its level of visibility have changed. Open, demonstrative activities were replaced other forms of nonviolent resistance, such as:

- Supporting Ukrainian identity among the population in the occupied territories
- Noncooperation with the occupiers, sabotaging their efforts and events
- Information resistance – helping people overcome the information vacuum imposed on them
- Efforts to continue education according to the Ukrainian curricula



ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND SUPPORTING NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

If the Ukrainian state and society expects its citizens in areas under Russian occupation to continue to resist the regime of the occupying force it needs to properly understand the huge challenges and serious dangers that people in such areas face in their daily lives. Ukrainian government policies need to better address the realities faced by people in areas under temporary Russian occupation. In order to survive under Russian occupation and maintain their Ukrainian identity, and in order to maintain their capacity and willingness to resist, these people need to receive active moral support, material support, support in obtaining information and practical assistance to address very real safety concerns. Steps can be undertaken in order to address these needs of people in temporarily occupied territories and support nonviolent resistance, including:

- Provide people living in occupied areas with realistic information and practical advice on how they can respond to the concrete challenges they have to deal with under occupation
- Provide clarity on what is considered 'collaboration' and what is acceptable forms of continuing to work in institutions to provide necessary services, care and support for the population under occupation;
- Openly and actively recognize the value and demonstrate support of any forms by which people in occupied territories express their Ukrainian identity and refuse to accept or cooperation with the occupation (using relevant clothing, language, currency, symbolic forms of resistance, etc.)

- Use the capacity of volunteer networks to provide direct support to people in occupied territories
- Use every possibility to improve communication with people in temporarily occupied territories, for example – by enhancing the capacity of cell-phone transmitter stations located near the contact line
- Ease access, on the Ukrainian side, for crossing the contact line by volunteers carrying medicines, and other important items
- Set up mechanisms (such as special advisers in key state institutions) to bring the concerns of civil activists and ordinary people in occupied territories to the attention of the Ukrainian government and society
- Have national politicians mention cases of nonviolent resistance in occupied territories and encourage foreign political leaders, Ukrainian and international celebrities to do so, encouraging people to continue their efforts and offering clear moral support
- Provide practical support to civil activists from occupied areas who continue to work remotely with their communities, including physical hubs and communications infrastructure to support resistance efforts
- Support Ukrainian education in temporarily occupied territories. Introduce a position of an adviser on education in the temporarily occupied territories in the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Develop special educational modules for people in occupied territories. Organize exchange of experience between educators, working with people in various occupation zones and provide locations for teachers from occupied territories to work to support children and youth in areas under occupation

CHALLENGES EXPECTED DUE TO CHANGES IN RUSSIA'S POLICIES TOWARD THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The decision of the Russian leadership to officially annex the territories of Ukraine under Russian occupation will definitely have significant consequences for the lives of people in the occupied areas. It is likely that due to new restrictions, travel of Ukrainian citizens across the "contact line" will become practically impossible and highly dangerous, with recent examples of Russian shelling of civilians. It may also be expected that in the near future Russian authorities, in cooperation with local collaborators, will start mobilizing Ukrainians into the ranks of their military or security services. In these new realities, key objectives of nonviolent resistance in occupied territories may be linked to maintaining communication with other parts of Ukraine and preventing the involvement of Ukrainians in Russia's occupation administration, military and security institutions.



WAYS TO ASSIST NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE IN THE COUNTRY'S TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES BY UKRAINE'S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

**1) HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE AND
ROLE OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE AND
PROVIDE MORAL AND DIRECT SUPPORT**

**2) ASSIST UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT
INSTITUTIONS TO DEVELOP THE
CAPACITY TO ADDRESS THE REALITIES
FACED BY PEOPLE IN OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES, INCLUDING CREATING
ROLES FOR SUPPORT FOR
NONCOOPERATION AND NONVIOLENT
CIVIL RESISTANCE AND THE POPULATION
IN AREAS UNDER OCCUPATION IN KEY
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

**3) PROVIDE TRAINING TO CIVIL
SERVANTS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND
JOURNALISTS TO IMPROVE THEIR
UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITIES OF
LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION AND OF THE
POTENTIAL AND METHODS OF
NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE**

**4) SUPPORTING CIVIL INITIATIVES AND
VOLUNTEER NETWORKS THAT ASSIST
PEOPLE IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.
WHEN WORKING WITH THEM - PUT
SAFETY CONCERNS OVER TRANSPARENCY
REQUIREMENTS**

**5) USE ALL AVAILABLE MECHANISMS TO
PROTECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE
LIVING IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.**

**6) SET UP A SPECIALIZED FUND TO
SUPPORT NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE IN
TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF
UKRAINE, IN COOPERATION WITH BOTH
UKRAINIAN AND INTERNATIONAL
ACTIVISTS**