For Immediate Release

South Africans Protest Against Russia's War Crimes and to Demand Just Sustainable Peace for Ukraine on the Third Anniversary of The Full Scale Invasion

Cape Town – 21 February 2025 (Friday) | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- Thibault Square, Riebeek Street (in front of the Russian Consulate)

Durban – 23 February 2025 (Sunday) | 4:00 PM
- Whale Bone Pier, Umhlanga

Pretoria – 24 February 2025 (Monday) | 8:30 AM
- 316 Brooks Street, Menlo Park (in front of the Russian Embassy)

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Johannesburg, South Africa, February - On 24 February 2025, the world will mark three years since Russia launched its unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine—an escalation of the war that began in 2014 with the military annexation of Crimea.

Despite Ukraine's extraordinary resilience in reclaiming nearly 50% of the territories occupied since February 2024, Russia's brutality continues to intensify.

Since 2024 the targeted attacks on civilians have intensified. At the Russia-occupied territories civilians face restricted freedom of movement and expression, no right for peaceful protests and are targeted if they are suspected of opposing the occupation.

"Occupation is not peace – occupation means more death!" says Svitlana Sheremet, a member of the Ukrainian Association of South Africa, whose family remains in the Zaporizhzhya region.

"People in the occupied territories live under constant pressure. Arbitrary detentions of civilians, torture, and rape are widespread. Many are too afraid to leave their homes. They are forced to accept Russian citizenship—if they refuse, they risk having their children taken away. Occupation is not peace; everyone under Russian control lives in constant fear."

This unprovoked war has resulted in immense human suffering, systematic human rights violations, and an ongoing threat to global stability, driven solely by Russian imperial ambition. **Over 140 000 war crimes committed by Russian forces have been documented.** These include executions of civilians, torture, sexual violence and deliberate destruction of critical civilian infrastructure.

To honour the victims, demand accountability and just sustainable peace for Ukraine, peaceful protests will be held in Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria.

These demonstrations will call on South Africa and the international community to take a firm stand against Russia's aggression and ensure a just and lasting peace for Ukraine that prevents further war crimes.

Russia's full-scale invasion is not just about territorial conquest—it is an assault on sovereignty, democracy, and international law. Through the tactics of "burned land", brutal occupation, forced deportations, and suppression of Ukrainian culture, Russia is attempting to erase Ukraine's identity.

Russian aggression launched in February 2022 resulted in:

- 11 million Ukrainians have been displaced.
- Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed, including hundreds of children.
- Entire cities such as Mariupol, Vovchansk, Bakhmut have been reduced to rubble.
- More than 20,000 Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported to Russia Illegally given new identities, and separated from their families.

Russian forces systematically execute Ukrainian prisoners of war, with 147 documented cases, 127 of which occurred in 2024.

While Russia wages war in Ukraine, its mercenaries—particularly the Wagner Group—continue to destabilise Africa. In Mali, Russian forces have been implicated in mass civilian killings.

In the Central African Republic, Russia-linked militias have committed war crimes, including extrajudicial killings and torture.

Beyond military actions, Russia fuels violence, corruption, and authoritarianism in Africa, supporting military coups and oppressive regimes to further its geopolitical and economic interests.

This is not about security; it is about control, resource extraction, and the suppression of democracy. South Africans must ask: Is this the kind of influence we want in Africa?

For photo and video

21 February, 11am Cape Town protesters will stage a symbolic act to highlight the ongoing violence perpetrated by Russian forces—not just in Ukraine, but globally.The act will depict the destruction of Ukrainian culture and identity under occupation, the suffering of war victims, particularly women and children, and the silencing of voices under Russian-controlled territories.

24 February 9 am Pretoria protesters will perform a symbolic act by holding up keys, highlighting that thousands of Ukrainians remain in captivity. South African dancer

Ukrainian Association of South Africa (NPO # 189 – 705) unites South Africans and Ukrainians living in South Africa and aims to build a dialogue between the two countries. www.uaza.co.za email: info@uaza.co.za

Tsholo4elo will stage a dance to draw attention to the plight of Ukrainian forcefully deported children.

Journalists, photographers, and TV crews are invited to cover this event. Speakers will be available for interviews.

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#StandWithUkraine | #StopRussia | #RussiaIsATerroristState