

Call to Action

The sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls and marginalized populations affected by the conflict in Ukraine

As local and global women's rights, human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights organizations working in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine, we call on decision makers across Europe and the broader international community to take swift, effective and coordinated action to protect the human rights and address the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls and marginalized populations affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is having devastating consequences for the people of Ukraine. We condemn the atrocities, human rights violations and attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure that are being perpetrated by the Russian Federation and we express our solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The invasion is having a severe impact on women, girls and marginalized populations in Ukraine and is jeopardizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).¹ Military strikes that harm civilians and civilian infrastructure, including maternity hospitals and other health-care facilities, have killed and gravely harmed women and children in Ukraine, including pregnant women and newborn babies.² The risk of maternal and infant mortality and morbidity will increase rapidly in the coming months.³ The health system is collapsing and access to essential health services including sexual and reproductive health care is drastically reduced in those

parts of Ukraine that are under severe attack and is acutely jeopardized in other parts of the country.⁴ The war is rapidly increasing the risk of gender-based violence in Ukraine, including sexual violence, and is exacerbating risks of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and trafficking.⁵

There are now over 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and over 3 million refugees, the majority of whom are women and children, who are fleeing their homes and leaving Ukraine.⁶ They face increased risks of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and their sexual and reproductive health and rights are under threat.

In Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia a range of pre-existing legal and policy restrictions on SRHR and cost-barriers are severely impeding access to urgent and essential sexual and reproductive health care for those fleeing Ukraine.⁷ In particular, these barriers are undermining

access to emergency contraception and other contraceptive methods, abortion care including medical abortion, antenatal care, post-exposure prophylaxis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. As a result, the Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health in crisis situations (MISP for SRH)⁸ is not being fully provided in many settings in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. For certain groups of refugees, including Romani women, African women and women of African descent, the risk of sexual and reproductive health and rights violations is exacerbated by racism and other forms of

discrimination. In Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia local SRHR, gender equality and women's rights organizations and human rights defenders are being called on to provide frontline support to women and girls in need of sexual and reproductive health care. Many of these organizations are operating in extremely challenging climates and have very limited financial and human resources.

Robust financial support, political will and policy guidance is now imperative to address these concerns.

We urge the European Union, donor governments and the broader international community to:

- › Ensure that all humanitarian response plans, financing and assistance respect human rights and prioritize the SRHR of all women and girls and marginalized populations in Ukraine and in transit and refugee host countries, including in the European Union.
- › Ensure that humanitarian packages and convoys to Ukraine and to transit and refugee host countries include adequate numbers of inter-agency reproductive health kits, including a full range of essential sexual and reproductive health goods and medicines. Kits should include emergency contraception, contraceptive goods and medicines, menstrual hygiene products, lactation-assisting products and formula and postpartum care, post-exposure prophylaxis and mifepristone and misoprostol for medical abortion. It is also critical to provide adequate supplies of antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV and hormonal treatment for trans people and to ensure that clinical, psycho-social, and other support for survivors of sexual violence, is made widely available.
- › Offer urgent political support, guidance and technical assistance to the Governments of Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to facilitate the removal of legal and policy barriers that are impeding the provision of essential sexual and reproductive health care.
- › Immediately facilitate cross-border access to sexual and reproductive health care where necessary to overcome national legal barriers and severe restrictions in transit and host countries. In particular, take swift and effective measures to facilitate and support urgent access to early medical abortion, through supporting cross-border and telemedical service-provision, for key populations.

- › Provide rapid, direct political and financial support to gender equality, SRHR and women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who are providing frontline support to refugees in transit and host countries and populations in Ukraine, including IDPs. Ensure that financial assistance reaches local organizations providing legal advice and healthcare to women and girls and marginalized populations. Verify that financial assistance is not provided to anti-SRHR and anti-equality organizations and actors in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia or Ukraine.
- › Ensure that all investigations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law, including the investigation by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the independent international commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council,⁹ fully encompass and address the gender and intersectional dimensions of these crimes.

We urge the Governments of Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to:

- › Ensure that quality sexual and reproductive health care and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities (WASH) are made available to all those fleeing Ukraine without discrimination. To this end, provide urgent financial assistance to those gender equality, SRHR and women's rights organizations who are providing frontline protection, support and legal advice to those fleeing Ukraine and ensure this assistance includes coverage for the costs of menstrual hygiene products, emergency contraception and other contraceptive methods, and abortion care.
- › Issue policy guidance clarifying that sexual and reproductive health care, including emergency contraception, contraception and abortion care, and all forms of maternal health care including antenatal care, is essential health care that should be provided free of charge and that health-care providers will be fully reimbursed, under existing regulations, for the provision of this care to all those fleeing Ukraine.
- › Ensure that emergency contraception can be provided without a prescription and free of charge without delay to all those fleeing Ukraine, including by moving national policies on emergency contraception into line with international and regional best practice and EU guidelines.
- › Ensure that medical abortion in early pregnancy is legal and accessible for all those fleeing Ukraine, including by removing barriers to abortion care and aligning national policies on abortion with WHO guidelines.

- › Take effective action to prevent gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and trafficking for sexual exploitation, especially around borders and other main transit points. Ensure free access to comprehensive medical treatment and psycho-social and other support for all those fleeing Ukraine who have survived sexual and gender-based violence and undertake effective human rights compliant investigations into all incidents and threats of gender-based violence within their jurisdiction. This should include the effective investigation of all threats of violence and hate-speech against WHRDs, health workers providing sexual and reproductive health care, and refugee populations.

Signatories

Centrum Praw Kobiet, Poland
DziewuCHy Szwajcaria, Poland
Dziewuchy Berlin, Poland
Dziewuchy Szczecin, Poland
Democracy is OK, Poland
Droga Kobiet, Poland
Era Kobiet Koszalin, Poland
Era Dialogu Koszalin, Poland
Elles Sans Frontières Bruksela, Poland
Fundacja Cicha Tęcza, Poland
Fundacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny (Federa), Poland
Fundacja Feminoteka, Poland
Fundacja Trans-Fuzja, Poland
Grupa Ponton, Poland
Instytut Spraw Społecznych, Poland
International Council of Polish Women+, Poland
Lambda Warszawa, Poland
NIC O NAS BEZ NAS. Ruch kobiecy Gliwice, Pyskowice, Poland
Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet, Poland
Regionalny Kongres Kobiet w Szczecinie, Poland
Różowa Skrzyneczka, Poland
Stowarzyszenie Klucz, Poland
Stowarzyszenie Dolnośląski Kongres Kobiet, Poland
Stowarzyszenie Kobieta na PLUS!, Poland
Asociatia E-Romnja, Romania
Asociatia FRONT, Romania
Asociația pentru Libertate și Egalitate de Gen - A.L.E.G., Romania
Asociatia Plural, Romania

Asociația SEXUL vs BARZA, Romania, Romania
Centrul Euroregional pentru Inițiative Publice, Romania
Centrul de Acțiune pentru Egalitate și Drepturile Omului (ACTEDO), Romania
Centrul FILIA, Romania
Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate, Romania
League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADO), Romania
Mame pentru Mame, Romania
Societatea de Analize Feministe AnA, Romania
Societatea de Educație Contraceptivă și Sexuală (SECS), Romania
Tineri pentru Tineri, Romania
ALEJ poradenské centrum, Slovakia
Amnesty International Slovensko, Slovakia
Centrum pre filantropiu, Slovakia
Feministická organizácia ASPEKT, Slovakia
Inštitút ľudských práv, o.z., Slovakia
Možnosť voľby, Slovakia
MyMamy, o.z., Slovakia
Nebudeme ticho!, Slovakia
Nadácia Ekopolis, Slovakia
Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti Bratislava, Slovakia
Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť, Slovakia
OLYMP, o.z., Slovakia
o.z. ŽENA V TIESNI, Slovakia
Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva, Slovakia
Projekt Neon, Slovakia
Slovenské národné stredisko pre ľudské práva, Slovakia
Spoločnosť pre plánované rodičovstvo, Slovakia
Ženská lobby Slovenska, Slovakia
Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
EMMA Association, Hungary

Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Hungary

NANE Association, Hungary

PATENT Association (Association of People Opposing Patriarchy), Hungary

Reproductive Health Training Center, Moldova

Amnesty International

ASTRA Network

Center for Reproductive Rights

Fòs Feminista

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

Women's Link Worldwide

¹ [In Focus: War in Ukraine is a crisis for women and girls, UN Women, 10 March 2022; UNFPA Press Conference, 10 March 2022.](#)

² [WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF Statement, Stop Attacks on Health Care in Ukraine, 13 March 2022](#)

³ [Ukraine: Conflict compounds the vulnerabilities of women and girls as humanitarian needs spiral | United Nations Population Fund \(unfpa.org\); Ukraine crisis increases risk of trafficking, exploitation and maternal deaths, CARE warns - Ukraine | ReliefWeb.](#)

⁴ [UNFPA Press Conference, 10 March 2022.](#)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](#)

⁷ [See, e.g., European Contraception Atlas, European Parliamentary Forum, 2022; European Abortion Laws, Center for Reproductive Rights, 2020; European Abortion Atlas, European Parliamentary Forum, 2021; The World's Abortion Laws - Center for Reproductive Rights; Perilous Pregnancies: Health Care for Undocumented Migrant Women in the EU \(2020\), Center for Reproductive Rights.](#)

⁸ The MISP for SRH is the minimum, life-saving sexual and reproductive health needs that humanitarian response must address at onset of an emergency. [Minimum Initial Service Package \(MISP\) Resources, Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises \(iawg.net\).](#)

⁹ [Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/49/1 on the 'Situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression', 4 March 2022.](#)