

The voice of the WAC-9 region

The WAC Council has democratically decided not to ban colleagues from the Russian Federation and Belarus from their participation in WAC-9. This decision reflects the opinion of a majority of its members and, as such, is an official position of WAC in this regard.

However, as members of WAC originating from different countries of Central and Eastern Europe and serving in its different bodies, we intend to provide an overview of the situation in the region in the context of the current political, military, and political situation in Ukraine in relation to the attack by the Russian Federation. This overview is in line with the official policy of the European Union and the government of the Czech Republic, as well as the impact of this situation upon WAC.

Russian aggression against Ukraine is causing great damage to human lives, state infrastructure, and historical heritage. The Russian dictator, V. V. Putin, is solely responsible for initiating this massive armed conflict, which is fully illegitimate in the light of international law. The war has already claimed thousands of Ukrainian lives and has, in many instances, destroyed Ukrainian National Heritage. Many of the destroyed objects were deliberately targeted by the invader's troops in an attempt to enforce Russian national cultural dominance over the historical lands of Ukraine and to falsely rewrite the history of the entire region.

Prague, the Czech Republic, and many countries in Central and Eastern Europe are enjoying peace and democracy after three decades of freedom from the totalitarian Soviet-induced communist regime. Unfortunately, this is not the same for different parts of the region. The people of Belarus live under an illegitimate dictatorship. The people of Moldova are struggling with the separatist region of Transnistria. Two regions of Georgia are under Russian occupation. Countries like Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland are continuously confronted with the threats of the Russian imperial policy.

The overall situation in Central/Eastern Europe, in general, and in the Czech Republic, in particular, is strongly affected by this unjustifiable act of aggression against a sovereign European country. About 4% of the current residents in the Czech Republic and 8% in Poland are now Ukrainian refugees. The population of some Polish cities almost doubled (Rzeszów: +53%; Gdańsk: +34%; Katowice: +33%; Wrocław: +29%). The population of Moldova raised by 14.3% due to influx of refugees from Ukraine. Ordinary citizens in all countries of the regions are helping the refugees in different capacities - from sheltering refugees in our own homes or fundraising the financial support for both displaced people of Ukraine and the Ukrainian army, to defend their homeland and lives of their citizens. As professionals we support our Ukrainian colleagues and students to continue their careers and study, as well as, to present the damage to their national heritage. We believe it is not enough to claim "we support peace"; we must also say we "defend freedom and democracy in Europe".

The European Union and other democratic states of the world reacted promptly to the Russian invasion and introduced whole packages of sanctions against the Russian Federation. The Czech government currently does not issue any visas to Russian and

Belarussian citizens (apart from humanitarian cases), and the participation of any representatives of the Russian institutions is put on hold, cancelled, or even "banned" at most public, cultural, or sports events. The magnitude of this effort to take a stand against the institutions under the control of the Russian government may be exemplified by the current stand of Switzerland, traditionally a neutral country, which is also putting on hold any cooperation with the Russian Federation. Hence, the WAC Council decision is certainly circumnavigating, if not directly going against the official policy and legislation of the Czech Republic as the organizing country.

Unlike South African apartheid in 1985 (before WAC-1), one cannot expect a UN condemnation of the Russian invasion as the Russian Federation is a member of the UN Security Council and acting in this position can block such a condemnation. Hence, considering all these circumstances, we are convinced that representatives of the Russian state should be excluded from the international community of nations, including scientific associations such as the WAC, until the aggression on the territory of Ukraine is ended.

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