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Reactions to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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Smoke and flame rise near a military building after an apparent Russian strike in Kyiv, Ukraine. **Efrem Lukatsky / AP / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Thursday, killing dozens and forcing hundreds to flee for their lives in the pro-Western neighbor.

Russian air strikes hit military facilities across the country and ground forces moved in from the north, south and east, triggering condemnation from Western leaders and warnings of massive sanctions.

Here's our round-up of global reaction:

U.S. President Joe Biden

"The prayers of the entire world are with the people of Ukraine tonight as they suffer an unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russian military forces," the U.S. president said shortly after the operation began.

He warned that "Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring."

"The world will hold Russia accountable," he added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy

Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky said the country's allies were building a "coalition" against Russian President Vladimir Putin and urged the world to take measures to force Moscow to stop its attack.

"We are building an anti-Putin coalition," Zelensky wrote on Twitter, after talks with the leaders of the U.S., EU, Britain, Germany and Poland.

"The world must compel Russia to peace," he wrote.

"Putin has just launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Peaceful Ukrainian cities are under strikes," Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted.

German Chancellor Olaf Scolz

Germany blasted Russia's military operation in Ukraine as "a day of shame" and warned that the political and economic consequences for Moscow would be severe.

"Germany condemns in the strongest possible terms this unscrupulous act by President (Vladimir) Putin. Our solidarity goes out to Ukraine and its people," Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in a statement.

"We will react together with our partners," she said in a statement.

The head of the German Economy Ministry said that after the military operation of Russia in Ukraine, Germany will have to buy gas and coal from other countries.

French President Emmanuel Macron

French President Emmanuel Macron strongly condemned Russia's military action against Ukraine, vowing Paris would work with allies to end the war.

"Russia must immediately put an end to its military operations," Macron wrote on Twitter, saying Russia had made the decision to "wage war" on Ukraine.

"France stands in solidarity with Ukraine. It stands by Ukrainians and is working with its partners and allies to end the war," he added.

EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel

"In these dark hours, our thoughts are with Ukraine and the innocent women, men and children as they face this unprovoked attack and fear for their lives," wrote EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel on Twitter.

“We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprecedented military aggression

against Ukraine. By its unprovoked and unjustified military actions, Russia is grossly violating international law and undermining European and global security and stability. We deplore the loss of life and human suffering," noted an EU press release.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg

The NATO head said Russia had "chosen the path of aggression against a sovereign and independent country."

The attack "puts at risk countless civilian lives," Stoltenberg said in a statement, describing it as a "grave breach of international law, and a serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security."

Russia's Central Bank

Russia's Central Bank said it was introducing measures to stabilize the ruble and markets after Moscow announced a military operation against Ukraine.

"To stabilize the situation on the financial market, the Bank of Russia has decided to start interventions in the foreign exchange market," the central bank said in a statement, adding that the bank and other financial institutions "have clear action plans for any scenario."

China

China said it was monitoring the situation in Ukraine and called for "restraint" on all sides after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a military operation on its European neighbor.

"China is closely watching the latest situation, and we call on all parties to maintain restraint and prevent the situation from getting out of control," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regularly scheduled press briefing.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko

Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko said:, "Our armed forces are not taking part in this operation," Belarusian state media reported. Moscow has stationed tens of thousands of troops in Belarus.

RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan

"I don't worry about sanctions, isolation, bans and the dollar exchange rate. We used to live without Iphones and can do without Paris if we need to. It's wildly inappropriate to discuss such things when the fates of nations and the future of the world and peace are being decided," Margarita Simonyan wrote on Twitter.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison

Prime Minister Scott Morrison condemned Russia's "illegal invasion" as he announced sanctions against 25 individuals, four entities involved in developing and selling military gear, and put restrictions on four financial institutions.

"Vladimir Putin has fabricated a feeble pretext on which to invade. Russia's disinformation and propaganda has convinced no one," Morrison said.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kashida

Russia's attack on Ukraine "shakes the foundation of the international order," Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

"The latest Russian invasion shakes the foundation of the international order, which does not permit unilateral attempts to change the status quo," he told reporters after a meeting of the country's security council.

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine as "unjustified and unjustifiable," saying Europe and NATO were working on an immediate response.

"The Italian Government condemns Russia's attack on Ukraine. It is unjustified and unjustifiable. Italy is in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and institutions at this dramatic moment. We are working with European and NATO allies to respond immediately, with unity and determination," Draghi said in a statement.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

"I am appalled by the horrific events in Ukraine and I have spoken to President Zelenskiy to discuss next steps," the British leader tweeted.

"President Putin has chosen a path of bloodshed and destruction by launching this unprovoked attack on Ukraine. The U.K. and our allies will respond decisively."

"The prime minister will chair a government-wide coordination meeting at 7:30 a.m. (local and GMT) to discuss the response to the horrific attacks in Ukraine this morning," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Turkey

Turkey called on Russia to “stop this unjust and unlawful” war.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

"These unprovoked actions are a clear further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and of Russia's obligations under international law and the Charter of the UN," Trudeau said in a statement.

He said he would meet with partners from the G-7 to shape a collective response, "including by imposing sanctions additional to those announced earlier this week."

"These reckless and dangerous acts will not go unpunished."

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki

"We must immediately respond to Russia's criminal aggression against Ukraine. Europe and the free world has to stop Putin," Morawiecki wrote on Twitter.

"Today's European Council should approve the fiercest possible sanctions. Our support for Ukraine must be real."

UN Chief Antonio Guterres

Guterres made a direct and personal plea to Russian President Vladimir Putin after an emergency Security Council session, urging him to stop the attack "in the name of humanity."

"In the name of humanity, do not allow to start in Europe what could be the worst war since the beginning of the century," he said. “The conflict must stop now.”

Guterres said it was the "saddest day" of his tenure.

Ukraine’s UN Ambassador

During the tense UN emergency meeting, Ukraine's ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya implored the council, chaired by Russia, to "do everything possible to stop the war".

He demanded that Russia's ambassador relinquish his duties as chair.

"There is no purgatory for war criminals. They go straight to hell, ambassador," the visibly emotional Kyslytsya said.

Russian police

"The metropolitan police units have stepped up security measures in the city's metro and near the exits of the stations. The police are stopping citizens for document checks," a source in law enforcement said.

Alexei Navalny

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny made an anti-war statement at a court hearing for his criminal case: “I am against this war. This war will cause a great number of casualties, destroy lives and will further impoverish Russian citizens.”

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the highest-ranking Anglican cleric, on Thursday called Russia's attack on Ukraine "an act of great evil." Welby said the attack was "horrific and unprovoked" in a statement also signed by Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell.

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala

“In these dark times, let me express my deepest solidarity and support also directly to Prime Minister @Denys_Shmyhal and his government. Our response to the Russian invasion will be clear, harsh and as swift as possible. We stand with Ukraine and your people, Prime Minister,” Fiala wrote on Twitter.

The President of the Czech Republic called for disconnecting Russia from SWIFT.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda

"Today I will sign a decree imposing a state of emergency," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said after a meeting of the national defense council, adding that "Lithuania would request the activation of NATO's Article 4, which provides for emergency consultations if a member of the alliance is threatened."

Iran

"Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has said Russia's decision to invade Ukraine is rooted in "provocative moves" by NATO," Al Jazeera reported.

Amirabdollahian added that Tehran did not "see resorting to war as a solution" and urged for a "political and diplomatic solution" to the crisis.

Israel

"The Russian attack on Ukraine is a serious violation of the international order," Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said, adding that Israel "condemns" the assault. Lapid added that "Israel has deep, long-lasting and good relations with Russia and with Ukraine," and that "hundreds of thousands of Jews" live in both countries.

Moldova

"We will help people who need our help and support," President Maia Sandu said.

Hungary

Hungary's foreign minister said on Thursday that "war is the worst-case scenario."

"The task now, just as always, is to guarantee the security of Hungarian people," Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on his official Facebook page.

South Korea

South Korea will join international economic sanctions against Russia over its "armed invasion" of Ukraine, President Moon Jae-in said Thursday.

"The sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine must be guaranteed," Moon said, in a statement issued by Seoul's presidential Blue House.

South Korea will "support and participate in the efforts of the international community, including economic sanctions", he added, calling Moscow's military attack on Ukraine an "armed invasion".

South Africa

In a statement, the foreign ministry said South Africa "calls on Russia to immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine." It said the country was "dismayed" at the turn of events but stood behind hopes for "diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the concerns... expressed by Russia."

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