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Russian Opposition Figures Form Anti-War Committee from Exile

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Lyubov Sobol / YouTube

Some of Russia's leading opposition figures have launched an anti-war committee to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine from exile.

In videos shared on social media Wednesday, eight of the country's leading opposition voices — including former oil baron Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Alexei Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol and former chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov — called on Russians to resist Kremlin propaganda and push back against the war on Ukraine.

"We all represent different political movements. But we have merged into one anti-war committee, because we believe that our country does not need this war," said Khodorkovsky.

The initiative marks a rare moment of unity in Russia's opposition, which is known for bitter division and infighting.

"We united so that the voices of Russians who are resisting this war could be heard all around

the world," said former lawmaker Dmitry Gudkov.

Embed:

"The Kremlin sees us as extremists and enemies of the nation — like hundreds of thousands of Russians who have been silenced or forced to flee under the threat of being imprisoned," Sobol said in the video.

State polling agencies' surveys have shown a majority of Russians supporting President Vladimir Putin's "special military operation" in Ukraine — though the research has been criticized by opposition and independent figures as not accurately reflecting society's views.

Putin himself has publicly attacked Russians who emigrate or oppose the invasion as "traitors and scum," and public protests against the war have been met with a tough response and thousands of arrests.

Related article: 'No to War': Thousands Detained in Russian Protests

Veteran campaigner and opposition strategist Maxim Katz — not featured in the video — said 95% of people contacted for an opinion poll he commissioned refused to answer questions about the war.

The group also accused Russia of committing war crimes in Ukraine amid widespread reports, photographs and videos of civilian areas being shelled. The United Nations has recorded at least 925 civilian deaths during the first month of the conflict.

"Putin is committing war crimes in Ukraine in the name of Russian citizens. It is crucial to speak up against this war, and to do so loudly, so that everybody can hear us," said opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has been poisoned twice.

The video comes a day after Putin's most prominent domestic critic Alexei Navalny was sentenced to an additional nine years in a prison colony in a fraud conviction that has been widely criticized by rights groups and Western governments.

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