

ISEE Statement on Ukraine



March 3, 2022

The International Society for Environmental Epidemiology is a professional organization of scientists with expertise in understanding the ways that the environment affects human health. We condemn the recent invasion of Ukraine by armed forces from Russia. The deaths and casualties among innocent people, including children, are tragic. We also are deeply concerned about the invasion's impact on the health and environment of the Ukrainian people. We note that critical infrastructure, including hospitals and civilian facilities have been targeted. The disruption of essential electrical, sanitation, and water supply systems means that clean/potable drinking water for the population cannot be assured. This will cause immediate health problems but the infrastructure also will take a long time to be re-established. In addition to the destruction of critical infrastructure, the disruption of necessary trade chains has occurred and this, too, has enormous implications for health and health care in Ukraine. The invasion will have immediate consequences for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Also, as environmental epidemiologists we are concerned about potential exposures from disruption of nuclear sites in Ukraine including the Chernobyl site.

The invasion is resulting in devastating consequences for mental health. People who have suffered and continue to suffer from the invasion face psychologically-challenging situations and the constant fear of death and injury for themselves and their loved ones. Already, more than 1,000,000 Ukrainian people have been forcibly displaced (1, 2) and are seeking refuge in other countries. (3)

The invasion is a clear threat not only to the democratically-elected government of Ukraine, but to the whole world. The invasion will have health, mental health and environmental consequences for years to come. A peaceful environment is crucial for healthy social development. Moreover, the invasion is a clear violation of treaties and trust. Trust is an essential foundation for health.

We call for:

- a) An immediate cessation of the invasion followed rapidly by a withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine, supervised by international monitors from either the United Nations or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and
- b) Respect for the human rights and health of the people living in Ukraine.

We stand in solidarity with the people living in Ukraine. We also stand in solidarity with scientists (4) and citizens (5) in Russia who have spoken out, at great personal risk. This invasion violates human rights and is destructive of health. The invasion is therefore a global threat to public health and the environment.

References

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