(2 March 2022) Ukrainian trade union leaders addressed a group of over 265 concerned trade union colleagues in a hearing organised by EPSU and PSI.

The meeting was attended by colleagues from Europe and across the world, from Australia to Canada. As they listened to the harrowing accounts from Ukraine, messages of solidarity were shared and can be read here. Yurii Pizhuk, President, Ukrainian State Workers Trade Union expressed his thanks for the solidarity, describing them as “a ray of sunlight for someone who is hiding in a basement.” With sirens echoing in the background, he described the ongoing damage being witnessed in Ukraine but emphasised that it is impossible to “shoot and exterminate” freedom.
Viktoria Koval, Ukrainian Health Workers Union, praised workers for persevering through the destruction of their workplaces: while hospitals are bombed, they continue to provide care; while schools are destroyed, they continue to teach in cellars. The particularly precarious nature of the energy sector in Ukraine was also highlighted. Russian troops are nearing Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe’s largest nuclear power plant, but have thus far been held back by trade union activists and town people at roadblocks. Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was captured by Russian forces, forcing the now-hostage workers to continue under surveillance as radiation levels rise. Workers are exhausted and risks of accidents are high.

Trade union leaders from neighbouring Moldova, Romania and Lithuania shared their readiness to receive refugees. They emphasised the need for special zones to allow the passage of refugees and essential goods, and in particular for material donations: children’s clothes, warm clothes, medicine, and food for infants, to name a few.

Above all, the Ukrainian leaders called for an immediate ceasefire. Public services are often the first targets in conflict, and this situation is no different. There can be no progress for worker’s rights or even human rights without peace. The leaders urged the EU to continue to exert pressure on Russia, highlighting the importance of no-fly zones and accession discussions. They called on comrades across the world to share the realities of what’s occurring on the ground, and to exert pressure on governments to ensure that the maximum level of pressure is placed on Russia.

The particularly precarious nature of the energy sector in Ukraine was also highlighted by the President of the Ukrainian Nuclear Workers trade union Valeriy Matov. Russian troops are nearing Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe’s largest nuclear power plant, but have thus far been held back by trade union activists and town people at roadblocks. Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was captured by Russian forces, forcing the now-hostage workers to continue under surveillance as radiation levels rise. Workers are exhausted and risks of accidents are high.

EPSU and PSI yesterday joined ETUC and ITUC in launching a solidarity fund to support workers and union members fleeing their country. Learn more here.
For unionists and workers that want to make an individual donation

For EPSU Materials: Workers say "no to war"

For the video of the event

Messages of solidarity shared during the event

For more on EPSU positions on the war in Ukraine

Ukraine

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