



NATIONAL RALLY TO SUPPORT UKRAINE

In response to Russia's blatant and illegal invasion of Crimea, Ukrainian Americans took to the streets of Washington D.C. on March 6th to protest the intervention of Russian forces in Ukraine and to strongly encourage the U.S. and the European Union to support the people of Ukraine. The buses from Chicago, Ohio, Detroit, CT, NY, NJ, PA were packed to capacity with anxious Ukrainians seeking to have their concerns over the growing crisis in Ukraine heard and acknowledged by U.S. leaders.

At the rally, organized by the UCCA, over 2,000 protestors amassed in front of the White House, and then again at the Russian Embassy to demand Russia withdraw its troops from Crimea. Protesters stood amid a sea of Ukrainian, Polish, Estonian, Crimean Tatar and other national flags, waving numerous signs denouncing Russian aggression. Many attendees spoke with the press and offered their opinion on the situation in Ukraine. NBC, BBC and ABC were among the many press agencies covering the rally.

UNIS Director, Michael Sawkiw, served as the Rally's MC introducing dozens of speakers which included Congressman Sander Levin (D-MI), Congressman Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH); former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Roman Popadiuk; UCCA President Tamara Olexy; and, former UCCA President Askold Lozynskyj.



L to R: Rep. Marcy Kaptur; Rep. Sander Levin; Rep. Bill Pascrell

Also addressing the rally were representatives from the Polish, Hungarian, Georgian, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Czech, Slovakian, Circasian, Belarusian, and Crimean communities; who wanted to show their support and solidarity with the Ukrainian people. His Grace Metropolitan Soroka, leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy and His Excellency Daniel, leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. led the crowd in prayer.

Protesters sang the Ukrainian national anthem, and shouted "Putin – Hands off Ukraine", "Crimea is Ukraine", as well as other chants, and heartily thanked the numerous speakers who offered their encouragement and support to Ukrainians.

UCCA MEETS WITH PRIME MINISTER YATSENIUK & FOREIGN MINISTER DESHCHYTSIA

On March 13, 2014, members of the UCCA Presidium met with Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk and Acting Foreign Minister, Andrii Deshchytsia. PM Yatseniuk was in New York to participate in a UN Security Council meeting, which was summoned to discuss the situation in Ukraine.



During the cordial and open discussion Prime Minister Yatseniuk updated the UCCA on his meetings held in the US, including one with President Obama on the current situation in Ukraine, particularly the illegitimate referendum in Crimea.

UCCA Executive Board expressed their support for the people of Ukraine and stated that we would never recognize the so-called "referendum" in Crimea. The UCCA also informed the Prime Minister of the various efforts that were being done in the U.S. by the UCCA to support and assist Ukraine.

Attending the meeting from the UCCA Executive Board were: UCCA President Tamara Olexy, Executive VP Andriy Futey; Executive Secretary Marie Duplak; National Council Chair, Stefan Kaczaraj; External Affairs Chair, Roksolana Lozynskyj; UNIS Director, Michael Sawkiw; former UCCA President Askold Lozynskyj and ODFFU President Stefan Kaczurak.

UCCA CONDEMNS CRIMEAN REFERENDUM

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the representative organization for the over one million Americans of Ukrainian descent, strongly condemns the unconstitutional March 16, 2014 referendum in Crimea. The referendum, which was specifically designed to endorse secession, did not provide the estimated 1.2 million voters with a choice. The electorate could either vote “yes” to support Crimea joining the Russian Federation or “yes” to restore the 1992 Crimean Constitution, which the Crimean parliament has already noted will result in union with Russia. Moreover, Russian forces prohibited all international observers from entering Crimea.

Above all, the Crimean referendum was unconstitutional under both the 1996 and 2004 Constitutions of Ukraine. Any changes to Ukraine’s territorial integrity must be resolved exclusively by an All-Ukrainian referendum, which can only be initiated by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) or the President of Ukraine. Thus, the Crimean vote violates Ukraine’s constitution as well as international law.

The UCCA applauds the indigenous population of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars, in their brave decision to boycott the March 16th referendum. We are concerned however for their safety, and the safety of the ethnic Ukrainian population, due to the presence of over 30,000 Russian troops who have invaded the Crimean peninsula. We ask the international community to take steps to monitor and ensure the safety of peaceful civilians.

The March 16th Russian-led Crimean referendum threatens the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The UCCA is reassured by the international community’s decision not to recognize the referendum in Crimea on seceding from Ukraine; and their understanding that annexation of Crimea by Russia would have grave consequences for the future of international order and security.

UCCA PARTICIPATES IN UN BRIEFING

On March 14th at the invitation of Ukraine’s Ambassador to the UN, Yuriy Sergeyev, UCCA’s President Tamara Olexy participated in a press briefing at the UN headquarters in New York together with Jacob Dov Blaikh, Chief Rabbi of Ukraine; Ayla Bakkali, *Leader of Turkish Tatar Community*; and Alexandra Sviridov Russian language independent journalist. The presenters spoke about developments in Ukraine, particularly, in Crimea.

Ms. Olexy provided an overview of the critical situation in Crimea a few days before the planned unconstitutional referendum. She highlighted the fact that Russia’s invasion, which violated Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, was based on the false pretense that ethnic Russians were under threat. Her statement was substantiated by both Rabbi Bleich who stated that the interim government was not fascist and that the Jewish community lived peacefully in Ukraine. Ms. Bakkali relayed personal accounts from the Crimean Tatar indigenous population in Crimea who are fearful of the Russian troops and who vowed to boycott the so-called referendum.



In closing, Ambassador Sergeyev noted that minorities in Ukraine are not in danger. He reiterated the words of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Astrid Thors, who recently visited Kyiv and Crimea and “found no evidence of violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers.”

UCCA SEEKS VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE AS ELECTION OBSERVERS

In anticipation of the upcoming presidential and municipal elections in Ukraine on May 25, 2014, the UCCA is once again actively seeking **volunteers** to serve as International Election Observers.

If you are interested in serving as a member of the UCCA’s Election Observer delegation, we require a completed questionnaire and a copy of your passport (where your photo is) be submitted to the UCCA National Office no later than **May 8, 2014**.

The Observer application and detailed information about the UCCA’s Election Observer Mission can be found on the UCCA website at www.ucca.org