



To: The Right Honourable Boris Johnson MP,  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

28 February 2022

By e-mail

Dear Prime Minister

As the Children's Commissioners for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, we are charged with protecting the human rights and needs of all children in our respective nations and upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Russian Federation's military actions in Ukraine clearly violate international law. We welcome your condemnation of these actions and continued efforts to ensure peace.

We write to you concerning the devastating impact that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is having on children and young people.

The Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, a fellow member of the [European Network of Ombudspersons for Children](#), is monitoring the evolving situation in Ukraine. They have asked us to call on you to take all actions to stop the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and to ensure a peaceful settlement to the current conflict to protect children and young people.

As we are sure you are aware, war is never in children's best interests and has disproportionate, long-term effects on their rights, life, development, and wellbeing. Armed conflict breaches the full range of children's human rights, including but not limited to: the rights to life, family, physical and mental health, education, protection against all forms of violence and exploitation, including sexual abuse, and to receive humanitarian assistance.

Children in Ukraine have already been injured and killed and are unable to access critical infrastructure, including water and sanitation, healthcare and educational facilities, which have been the targets of military strikes. Furthermore, the conflict has already caused significant numbers of children and their families to flee, with the

likelihood of mass displacement as the conflict intensifies. There are also reports that unaccompanied children are being sent across borders alone or taken and left before parents return to join the conflict.

Over the last eight years, children in the conflict zone [have said](#) that is important for them that education continues during war. Education and schools provide a sense of safety and permanence for children at a time of immense insecurity and stress. Children need to be able to access places of safety and crucial infrastructure, including psychosocial support, healthcare, water and sanitation facilities, have clear communications and access to information, and be able to seek safe passage and asylum elsewhere far from danger.

The protection of civilians, particularly the 7.5 million children in Ukraine, must be prioritised in the UK government's response to the conflict.

We call on the UK government to take the necessary steps to protect and promote children's human rights, to:

- Continue to call on the Russian Federation to halt immediately its military actions in Ukraine and withdraw in order to protect the lives, safety, and wellbeing of children in line with its obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law.
- In line with obligations under international human rights and refugee law, take the necessary steps to welcome asylum-seeking and refugee children and their families from Ukraine without delay and facilitate their safe passage. This includes, at least, the immediate waiving of visa restrictions irrespective of family status and swift and effective reception and processing to ensure that children and their families can reach safety.
- Continue to take urgent action to continue to condemn and sanction the Russian Federation's actions, including through the applicable international mechanisms.
- Work to ensure that humanitarian aid urgently reaches children and families in need without obstruction, including through supporting the relevant international organisations. This must include critical healthcare and psychosocial support. Reiterate that all independent organisations providing aid should be able to function and deliver aid without obstruction or intimidation.
- Ensure that independent monitors, including the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and international organisations, should be able to continue to monitor the situation, investigate and report any breaches of the fundamental rights of children during the armed conflict, and disseminate relevant information about violations against children in situation of armed conflict.
- Call on all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law and refrain from any action that would endanger children's lives,

safety, and wellbeing, and compromise their human rights, including from recruitment into armed forces or groups.

The United Kingdom has historically defended the rights of children and young people in conflict, welcoming them and providing them with much-needed safety and hope. This is another such moment and the UK must play its role to protect children from the scourge of war. More than anything, children need peace and safety.

We stand ready to support the government as it takes these steps, welcomes Ukrainian children and their families, and continues to push for peace. We will also support the children in our respective countries who are affected by this conflict.

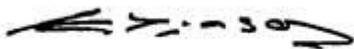
Yours sincerely,



Dame Rachel de Souza DBE  
**Children's Commissioner for England**



Bruce Adamson  
**Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**



Koulla Yiasouma  
**Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**



Professor Sally Holland  
**Comisiynydd Plant Cymru/Children's Commissioner for Wales**