

The U.N. approves a resolution demanding that Russia end the invasion of Ukraine

The United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday approved a nonbinding resolution condemning Russia for invading Ukraine and demanding that it withdraw its military forces.

The vote came after a series of speeches during which the majority of countries called on Russia to end the violence in Ukraine, which has continued for nearly one week.

Sergiy Kyslytsya, the Ukrainian ambassador to the U.N., urged countries to vote in favor of the resolution in an emotional address that ended with applause from the chamber.

“It’s already clear that the goal of Russia is not an occupation only. It is genocide,” Kyslytsya said.

Vassily Nebenzia, Russia’s ambassador to the U.N., asked members to vote against the resolution and said Western powers were exerting pressure on other countries to vote in favor of it. Belarus and Syria were among the countries that spoke out against the resolution.

There was widespread international support for the resolution

Ultimately, the resolution passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 141-5 with 35 abstentions. The five countries that voted against it were Russia, Belarus, Syria, North Korea and Eritrea.

“The truth is that this war was one man’s choice and one man alone: President Putin. It was his choice to force hundreds of thousands of people to stuff their lives into backpacks and flee the country,” said U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

“Those were President Putin’s choices. Now it is time to make ours. The United States is choosing to stand with the Ukrainian people,” she added.

The measure's passage showed that "a global anti-Putin coalition has been formed and is functioning," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a tweet after the vote.

"The world is with us. The truth is on our side. Victory will be ours!" Zelenskyy added.

Russia's invasion has continued despite diplomatic pressure

The vote came amid multiple efforts to wall off Russia diplomatically, a surge in the number of refugees fleeing Ukraine, an initial estimate that the humanitarian effort within the country will cost more than \$1 billion, and an emergency, often heated debate at the General Assembly. None of the diplomatic activities appeared to slow Russia's attacks Wednesday morning, as new reports said Russian airstrikes had hit a regional police headquarters in Kharkiv, injuring three people.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, singling out Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in her speech to the General Assembly on Tuesday, said the war was based on lies.

"Mr. Lavrov, you can deceive yourself, but you won't deceive us. And you won't deceive our people and you won't deceive your own people," she said.

Russian diplomats, including Nebenzia, have called the attacks against Ukraine a "special military operation" intended to defend two separatist regions.

"Russia is seeking to end this war," Nebenzia said earlier this week.

The resolution "demands that the Russian Federation immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders." It also expresses "grave concern at reports of attacks on civilian facilities such as residences, schools, and hospitals, and of civilian casualties, including women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and children."

Last week, Russia vetoed a similar resolution at the 15-member Security Council. It was mostly isolated: No other nation opposed it, and China, India and the United Arab Emirates abstained. Eleven nations, including the United States, supported it.

“No state should be able to get away with what Russia got away with without facing diplomatic isolation,” Samuel Charap, a political scientist at the Rand Corp. said. “The question is, does it alter the course of the war, really? And there, it doesn’t seem likely.”

The United Arab Emirates assumed the rotating chair of the Security Council on Tuesday, and Lana Nusseibeh, the UAE’s permanent representative to the U.N., became president of the Security Council on Monday. She said Monday that the UAE’s abstention from the Security Council’s resolution would not affect how it chairs the panel.

“We must leave space for a diplomatic off-ramp,” she said. “Those countries that did abstain have those channels with President Putin and will use them to help.”

She did not say whether the UAE would abstain from Wednesday’s General Assembly vote. The United Arab Emirates did not co-sponsor the resolution.

Leaders say the war in Ukraine is creating a humanitarian crisis

Separately, the United Nations said on Tuesday it estimates the initial humanitarian and refugee needs will cost \$1.7 billion. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said humanitarian agencies need \$1.1 billion to fund emergency relief within Ukraine for the next three months. He also requested another \$551 million to help pay for services for Ukrainians fleeing the country, especially in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

The money, he said, would help people access health supplies, safe drinking water, shelter and protection.

“The most effective humanitarian relief is to silence the guns,” he said.

An estimated 650,000 people have fled Ukraine and entered European Union countries since Russia invaded last week. The European Commission proposed on Wednesday to allow them to stay for up to two years under a “temporary protection directive.” If approved by EU member states, Ukrainians would be allowed to work and children would be allowed to attend school within the entire EU.

“All those fleeing Putin’s bombs are welcome in Europe,” said EC President Ursula von der Leyen.

Source:

<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/02/1083872077/u-n-set-to-hold-vote-that-would-dem-and-russia-end-war-in-ukraine>

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