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WOEMA Statement on Ukraine Invasion and Resulting Humanitarian and Occupational and Environmental Health Crisis

The Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association(WOEMA) strongly condemns the unprovoked acts of aggression being waged by the Russian military on the sovereign country of Ukraine. We are deeply troubled by the increasing casualties among innocent civilians, including pregnant women, children, and the elderly, as well as the targeting of medical facilities, all of which are war crimes. We wish to express solidarity with the citizens of Ukraine and with the healthcare providers and staff who remain in their hospitals to treat patients, while bombs continue to hit their cities and even their facilities. We join medical colleagues around the world as we express our strong support of the people of Ukraine, condemnation of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and concern about medical care.(1)

Nearly three million Ukrainians, half of them children, have become refugees, and the number is increasing. The United Nations estimates there are an additional 1.85 million displaced people inside Ukraine. For those who remain, the situation is desperate, with increasing indiscriminate attacks, inadequate access to food, water, medical supplies, basic shelter, and sanitation are creating an expanding humanitarian crisis for the trapped civilian population.

Importantly, as Occupational and Environmental Medicine specialists, we are extremely concerned about the multiple growing environmental and occupational threats of this highly destructive war.(2, 3) Attacks on military infrastructure and urban areas are causing air, ground, and water pollution, the full impacts of which may take years to fully comprehend. Also extremely distressing is the threat posed by attacks on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest and home to six reactors, and the recent power loss at the Chernobyl site, the world's worst nuclear disaster to date. There is the real possibility of chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare waged by Russia.

We are already observing troubling occupational health impacts of war (4) as deaths, severe physical injuries, and high work demands increasingly take their toll. We expect that other occupational illnesses, including mental health consequences such as PTSD and long-term disability, will occur among combatants, health care providers, and other civilians.

We stand with the people and workers of Ukraine, and especially support our Ukrainian medical colleagues who continue to provide life-saving measures in dire circumstances. We are willing to provide expertise on occupational and environmental health issues when the time is right.

We urge an immediate end to the conflict to prevent further harm on human and environmental health, protection of those who work to defend and preserve environmental and occupational health,(5) safe corridors for patients and providers, allowances for humanitarian organizations to ship medical supplies to Ukraine, and for those whose care cannot be completed in Ukraine, safe travel to other countries.

We encourage WOEMA members to consider supporting relief efforts. Resources for helping the people of Ukraine are listed below:

[Charity Navigator \(lists and ranks several charity organizations\)](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

[International Committee of the Red Cross](#)

[International Rescue Committee](#)

[Médecins Sans Frontières \(Doctors Without Borders\)](#)

[National Bank of Ukraine: Humanitarian Assistance Account](#)

[Razom](#)

[World Central Kitchen](#)

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And the members of the WOEMA [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(JEDI\) Committee](#)

(1) [American College of Physicians](#), [American College of Emergency Physicians](#), [American College of Radiology](#), [American Society of Anesthesiologists](#), [American Association of Neurological Surgeons](#), [European Society for Endocrinology](#), [European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy](#), [University of Illinois Center for Global Health](#), [World Medical Association](#)

(2) [Conflict and Environment Observatory](#).

(3) [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)

(4) [US Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

(5) [Environmental Peacebuilding Association](#)