



Medical
Association for
Prevention of War
(Australia)



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Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House, Canberra
By email: senator.wong@aph.gov.au

Copy to the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, the Prime Minister of Australia

22 February, 2023

Dear Minister Wong

MAPW is writing in relation to the devastating war in Ukraine, which enters its second year this week, and for which Australia has made significant military contributions to Ukraine. Most Australians share the sense of outrage at the crimes committed against the people of Ukraine, as their suffering escalates.

It is imperative that this war is brought to a finish. Its prolongation brings only one certainty – many more innocent people being killed, disabled, psychologically traumatised, displaced, deprived of essential needs, or subject to the multiple other crimes for which war provides cover. The fact that attacks endangering civilians are illegal matters little to the victims.

In addition, there is currently the real possibility of escalation to nuclear war, which would cause unthinkable suffering for millions of people, very little humanitarian response available for most of them, and the likelihood of global famine from nuclear winter in the event of even a “small” nuclear war. The stakes could not be higher. Any notion that nuclear war will be averted because “nuclear deterrence” will win out ignores the chilling history of miscalculations, misinterpreted signals and sheer brinkmanship that have resulted in multiple near misses. President Putin’s extraordinarily irresponsible suspension in the last 24 hours of Russian implementation of New Start, the last remaining nuclear treaty between Russia and the United States, is yet another highly alarming signal of the perilous course we are on.

MAPW is aware that a resolution about this war, drafted by the EU at the request of Ukraine, will be presented to the UN General Assembly this week. Like many other Australians we believe that negotiations are critically needed, now rather than when the level of destruction is so great – in Ukraine or globally – that negotiations become virtually meaningless. However negotiations must be conducted in a manner that does not set the

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scene for future instability and even greater violence. This necessarily means taking account of the genuine security needs of both sides, with all the challenges this entails.

Repeated reference to Russia's invasion as 'unprovoked' feeds a narrative that is both historically misleading and doomed to perpetuate the hostilities, regardless of the reality of Russia's unleashing of a brutal and illegal war. The full and far more complex narrative includes a post-Cold War security architecture in Europe that continued to regard Russia as an enemy, Russia's repeatedly expressed fears of Ukraine's entry into NATO, the encouragement given to Ukraine as recently as very late last year – as tensions mounted - to aspire to NATO membership, and the unfulfilled Minsk accords of 2015 (the terms of which are highly relevant to the current war).

Preconditions for negotiations that predictably will be rejected outright by any party would be a barrier to peace, and more akin to a propaganda exercise. There must be a commitment to success, with the same determination and persistence that applies to military fighting. MAPW urges that Australia dedicate its efforts in relation to Ukraine to supporting diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Finally, as we approach also the 20th anniversary of the illegal invasion of Iraq by the US, the UK, and Australia - the AUKUS triad – there is no room for hubris on the part of those same three nations. The ALP to its great credit opposed that war. We commend the increased emphasis on diplomacy that you have now committed Australia to, and urge measures that strengthen all parties' interests in ending the Ukraine war by genuine negotiations rather than further destruction.

Yours sincerely

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