

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
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To: Fridays for Future International

24 February 2022

Re: Why the war over Ukraine concerns everyone that cares about the future of the planet

The crisis in Ukraine has escalated into an all-out war. In addition to the threat to life, the current military build-up and a potential for a broader military conflict in Europe would have devastating impacts on the climate and the environment. We urge climate and environmental youth activists to mobilise for an end to this conflict and the militarisation of our societies. We all need to act to protect the planet, the people, and all the living things from impacts of war, and to work together for environmental justice and peace.

Dear Fridays for Future activists,

Today, on 24 February 2022, Russia invaded the Ukraine. A few days prior, Russia had recognised the breakaway republics which form the Donbass region and moved its armed forces in as ostensible 'peace keepers'. There is a likelihood of widespread and horrific conflict.

Why does this matter for those working to mitigate the climate crisis and reverse ecological destruction?

It matters because armed conflict has devastating impacts on both people and the environment.

The military-industrial complex [is one of the greatest](#) contributors to the climate crisis and environmental destruction. If it were a country, the United States military's emissions alone [would make it the](#) world's 55th largest contributor.

It's not only energy consumption used for using and moving troops and weapons that have devastating impacts on the climate. The impact goes far beyond it. The [entire lifecycle of](#) weapons' production, testing, and use, from small arms to explosive or nuclear weapons,

have [huge repercussions for](#) biodiversity, soil, groundwater, and air. The ever-increasing military expenditure, skyrocketing in 2020 to almost \$2 trillion, diverts crucial resources for ecological regeneration and climate change mitigation, food security, housing, and healthcare.

The environmental impact of nuclear weapons are particularly devastating. Even a “small-scale” use of some 100 nuclear weapons against urban targets would, in addition to spreading radiation around the world, [lead to](#) a cooling of the atmosphere, shorter growing seasons, food shortages, and a global famine.

Ukraine [is used](#) as a pawn by the US and Russia in their geopolitical gamesmanship. These two countries [possess](#) more than 11,850 nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are actively deployed, ready to be used, anytime.

Ukraine also has 15 nuclear power stations [that are vulnerable](#) to deliberate or accidental destruction or meltdowns due to loss of power through cyber-attacks, which would have devastating impacts for people and planet.

[“If we allow militarism to triumph it will lead to the annihilation of all life.”](#)

This is why we need everyone to rally behind this urgent call for peace. We need everyone—but especially the powerful and loud youth voices calling for environmental justice around the globe, calls that are grounded in a deep understanding of the structures of oppression that are inherent to the global world order. The same structures that are now not only threatening to break a country and its people apart but to accelerate environmental destruction.

We need to unite peace and ecological movements now, if we are to stand a chance for survival of this planet and its people.

We hope you share our sense of urgency and importance in rallying for peace.

We are keen to explore this further with you.

Sincerely,



Madeleine Rees
Secretary-General of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)