

JEE stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine

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To cite this article: Alberto Arenas, Sally E. Birdsall, Beth A. Covitt, Hilary Whitehouse, Neus (Snowy) Evans, Cae Rodrigues, Ess Page & Kelly J. Smith (2022) JEE stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 53:1, 1-3, DOI: [10.1080/00958964.2022.2050651](https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2022.2050651)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2022.2050651>



Published online: 15 Mar 2022.



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JEE stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine

We, members of the global community of environmental educators and Editors of the *Journal of Environmental Education*, oppose the war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, and stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an egregious violation of human rights and a flagrant contravention of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The military actions authorized by Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Russia's Federal Assembly are illegal and immoral and may lead to a regional and even global conflagration.

As these lines are being written, a human catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes: The world is witnessing the flight of over 1 million Ukrainian refugees to neighboring countries (Voločine, 2022), and the number is expected to increase to several million. Thousands of soldiers and civilians have already been killed and many more injured, as terror and destruction take over Ukrainian cities. The Russian military has engaged in aerial bombardment and indiscriminate attacks against civilian targets, including hospitals and schools (Amnesty International, 2022), while using internationally banned weapons such as cluster and vacuum bombs (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Simultaneously, the prospect of an environmental debacle looms over Ukraine (Kruzman, 2022). Russian troops recklessly attacked the Zaporizhzhia power plant, the largest nuclear plant in Europe, and all 15 nuclear reactors of Ukraine's nuclear power plants are potential sites for intentional or accidental attacks that could result in radioactive contamination spreading across the region. Moreover, the Donbas—one of Ukraine's most polluted regions historically due to industrial toxic waste resulting from coal mining, metallurgy, and chemical manufacturing—has the potential to become a permanent environmental disaster as the ongoing war exacerbates current environmental problems (Carleton, 2022). We also must not overlook the environmental devastation that is being wrought on habitats and agricultural lands and the severe effects this war is having on the lives of sentient animals, domesticated and wild, who have no recourse in the face of dangerous human aggressions.

Meanwhile, we should not forget the various sectors of Russian society that vigorously oppose the invasion at great peril to their personal and professional well-being. The thousands of anti-war protesters who have taken to the streets across Russia and who have been arrested, and the innumerable instances of defiance against President Putin from inside Russia itself—the Russian publication *Novaya Gazeta* decided to print their edition in both Russian and Ukrainian, and its editor Dmitry Muratov wrote: “We will never recognize Ukraine as an enemy, or the Ukrainian language as the enemy's language” (Nichols, 2022), or the Russian artists Kirill Savchenkov and Alexandra Sukhareva who withdrew from the upcoming Venice Biennale and wrote, “There is no place for art when civilians are dying under the fire of missiles, when citizens of Ukraine are hiding in shelters, when Russian protesters are getting silenced” (Marshall, 2022), or Yekaterina Dolinina, who lost her job for signing an anti-war petition (Cordell, 2022)—deserve our recognition and admiration for their brave stand.

As educators who strive for a better planet for present and future generations, and in support of the people of Ukraine, we urge Russia to immediately stop its unjustifiable war, withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory, and in good faith all parties involved should seek a peaceful resolution to the current tragedy.

Afterword: We acknowledge that it is unusual for an academic journal to express its views so openly on a topic that does not directly pertain to the field of the journal in question. In our discussions regarding the appropriateness of this Editorial, we discussed several potential objections: Adopting a strong position that goes beyond simply expressing our solidarity with the people of Ukraine may be viewed as compromising our impartiality; there are so many worthy social and political causes in the world today, should

not we highlight those causes as well? Relatedly, it has been noted that Ukraine is receiving extraordinary worldwide attention because the victims are European and White, and Western mainstream media tend to find it easier to relate to such a group, whereas for groups from Asia, Africa and Latin America racism, classism and (neo)colonial oppression tend to keep them as an afterthought; and finally, and more pragmatically, academic journals are slow moving operations that do not lend themselves to publishing pieces with the necessary speed.

After debating each one of these potential objections, we concluded that we would go ahead with the Editorial without demur. The horror of war is so grave and its consequences so far reaching that we felt justified in raising our voice condemning the invasion, and we hope that whenever new catastrophes occur in other parts of the world, we will have the necessary foresight and sensibility to make similar declarations.

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