



August 21, 2023

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C., 20500

RE: UKRAINE AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF FOOD

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you very much for your moving words in Lithuania at the NATO summit. Your administration's unwavering support of Ukraine's efforts to repel the invading Russian forces and serve as a bulwark to future aggression against NATO members is much appreciated by the communities we represent.

Since the summit in Vilnius, however, Putin feels emboldened to escalate by: pulling out of the grain deal, attacking Odesa, attacking the port of Deni on the Danube, and so on.

In 2014, as power in Ukraine passed into the hands of pro-European forces, Russia began a war that it does not wish to end, and which it regularly refuels with military personnel, conscripts, mercenaries, and thousands of tons of equipment and ammunition. As Ukrainian writer Andrey Kurkov writes in "Grey Bees:" "Putin's calculation is simple: a Ukraine with a permanent war in its eastern region will never be fully welcomed by Europe or the rest of the world."

Now, Russia has sabotaged Ukraine's grain staples, withdrawn from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and gone on a rampage destroying food storage centers. In holding the world's food supply hostage to its imperialistic demands, Russia is trying to recreate the "Holodomor" genocide from the 1930s.

Russia is using the weaponization of food to gain leverage aimed at removing Western sanctions. We agree with David Root, who writes in the "Kyiv Post," "instead of removing sanctions, the U.S. and its allies should demolish the Kremlin's playbook and call Russia's bluff." We cannot be victims of Russia's aggression.

Mr. President, we encourage you to:

1. Remove more Russian banks from the SWIFT monetary system.
2. Ramp up production of various advanced weapons systems and munitions such as ATACMS.
3. Provide escorts for ships transporting grain in the Black Sea.

The U.S. and NATO cannot allow the world to starve, or Ukraine and its allies to have to kowtow to Russian demands. Your leadership is crucial.

Respectfully,
The Central & East European Coalition (CEEC)

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