



**Psychologists for Peace**  
An Interest Group of the  
Australian Psychological Society

## **Psychologists for Peace Statement on the Ukraine Situation**

Psychologists for Peace affirms the importance of finding non-violent alternatives to violence, military action and war. As with all wars, the current situation in Ukraine is producing tremendous suffering, loss of life, damage to physical and psychological well-being and threats to global security, and the trauma experienced will likely reverberate through generations.

The broad conflict resolution model we espouse includes finding ways to prevent and de-escalate violent conflict by examining interests and needs of all parties. The aim is to generate non-violent methods for addressing the root causes of conflict to enable movement forward towards peaceful solutions. While rights-based approaches (such as arbitration and adjudication) and power-based approaches (such as targeted sanctions) may be methods to affirm human rights and move parties to the negotiating table when more peaceful means are unsuccessful, ultimately the deeper needs and interests of all sides need to be thoroughly considered and addressed - preferably through discussion, negotiation and mediation.

While whole-heartedly denouncing the use of force by Russia, we are concerned by the tendency, in the media and general public, to demonise individuals and groups in simple black-and-white terms as the “evil enemy”. A solution will not be found without consideration of all the fears, hopes, needs and beliefs behind the conflict for all parties (for example, security threats, historical memories, and a need to regain pride).

The current situation in Ukraine also clearly highlights the importance of seriously addressing the global and humanitarian threat of nuclear armaments. The world needs to move rapidly to nuclear disarmament. Australia is not yet a signatory to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (<https://icanw.org.au>), which is a step towards this goal.

As psychologists it is important for us to be aware of the international context and work towards promoting more peaceful methods for resolving conflict. At the same time, we need to consider local responses of our community and help to address them. The current situation in Ukraine, combined with other global stressors such as climate change and the pandemic, are likely affecting the wellbeing of those in our close circle, our community, our clients and children. As psychologists we have a role to play in being alert to these concerns and supporting those around us.

Adaptive methods for addressing such concerns include providing and seeking support and taking action, such as through expressing peace-promoting perspectives, becoming educated about the issues and ways to move forward, making donations to relevant organisations, writing to politicians, and ensuring we are supporting all in our own community and not ostracising certain groups.

## What actions can you take?

- Read the Psychologists for Peace *10 Ways You Can Promote Peace* brochure, which describes methods for supporting peace and avoiding mindsets and actions that promote violence, including the temptation to portray others in black and white terms as “the enemy”.  
(<https://groups.psychology.org.au/GroupContent.aspx?ID=8533>).
- Find options for political action.
  - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2017) campaigned successfully for an international nuclear weapons ban treaty (now the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons). ICAN advocacy continues to increase awareness of the issues, including in the Ukraine context. <https://www.icanw.org.au/>
- Explore how other health professionals are responding.
  - Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) has been addressing health and nuclear issues arising from war in Ukraine.  
<https://www.mapw.org.au/>
- Use and share psychologically based strategies for talking to others, including children, about war and conflict resolution.
  - American Psychological Association provides tips related to speaking with young people about the war in Ukraine and other useful links.  
<https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2022/children-teens-war-ukraine>
  - Psychologists for Peace resources for children can form a basis for discussing nonviolent approaches to conflict.  
<https://groups.psychology.org.au/pfp/resources/>
- Donate to support refugees and others affected in Ukraine or elsewhere in the world.
  - UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency Australia for UNHCR) -  
<https://www.unrefugees.org.au/>
  - Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) Australia -  
<https://msf.org.au>
  - World Health Organization - <https://who.foundation/en>
  - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) -  
<https://www.icrc.org/en/support-us>
  - UNICEF children-focused support – <https://www.unicef.org.au/appeals>