

24 February, 2022

Dear Colleague:

The undersigned American Foreign Service Officers (FSOs), Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), and other employees write to elevate our collective concerns regarding the lack of responsiveness to date to the questions, concerns, and requests raised by U.S. Embassy and USAID Kyiv locally employed staff (LE staff). Please find the letter from the LE staff Committee below.

The unspeakable events unfolding in Ukraine have deeply shaken and impacted the entire U.S. Embassy Kyiv community, but none more than our local Ukrainian staff who remain in harm's way and face the uncertainty that the coming hours and days will bring.

Over the past several weeks, as tensions built, as American staff and families were evacuated, and as the US Embassy in Kyiv was closed, local staff were regularly invited to express their concerns and communicate their needs during multiple town halls and in other formats. They were told repetitively that their safety and wellbeing was a top U.S. government priority.

Sadly, a majority of the issues they raised have gone unaddressed, including during a February 23 Embassy Kyiv Townhall with top Department of State Leadership. Accordingly, the prevailing sentiment among local staff is that they have been disregarded and left on their own.

Our Ukrainian colleagues deserve better. Now is the time they most need our help. We are concerned their needs have not been prioritized. They have stood loyally by our side for the last three decades helping us to advance American interests in Ukraine and to build the foundations of our strong bilateral relationship. We will need to rely on them again and they will undoubtedly lead our support to Ukraine in the future.

We, therefore, urge leadership across the interagency, as a top priority, to respond to the questions and concerns of local staff, demonstrating flexibility and empathy where possible and provide life-saving assistance. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and our actions regarding their safety and wellbeing should go beyond mere words at this crucial hour.

We stand by ready to support.

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Letter from LE Staff Committee to Leadership

Dear Department of State Officials,

This is a letter from the Kyiv LE Staff Committee. We ask for your urgent attention and response to 618 LE Staff. Yesterday, on February 23, 2022 we had a town hall, during which DOS officials at very high level, failed to provide specific answers to over 30 questions, raised by LE Staff. Most answers were negative and referred to threats to LE Staff being "theoretical". This was yesterday, and today, February 24, 2022, LE Staff were waken up by the sound of exploding bombs in multiple cities around Ukraine. The situation is critical, and our questions remain

unanswered. We also have no communication from Post Management from the start of the attack at 5 a.m. till 11:45 when this email is being drafted. There was no announcement from the SAFE system, no word from the leadership, which yesterday claimed that they care about our safety.

We ask for your immediate answer and action on following items as there is no safe place in Ukraine anymore:

- **Establish a communication channel**, which would reach all LE Staff and provide credible information to help LE staff to make decisions to protect themselves and their families.
- **Assistance with immediate relocation and TDY to neighboring Posts.** Right now there is already a shortage of gas, no flights out of Ukraine, lines at the border, etc. Some LE Staff can drive to the borders and need assistance with lodging in neighboring countries. We need to have POCs, phones and emails in U.S. Embassies in neighboring countries.
- **Financial support.** An average salary of LE Staff is \$1,500 per month. Most people have lived paycheck to paycheck for years since sequestration and as result have zero savings. Right now there are already lines at ATMs and Banks. We ask for financial support to be disbursed to all LE Staff to allow them mobility and relocation.
- **Providing SIVs to LE Staff.** We need a clear and simplified SIV procedure for LE Staff. We also ask to lower the requirement for SIV in the same way as it was done in the past for Afghanistan LE Staff. Before, we were told that Ukraine is not Afghanistan. We don't want it to be, but if the difference is in size of bombs flying over our heads, it is not fair.
- **Provide Embassy transportation to get those who want to leave Ukraine through the borders.** We know there is a fleet of vehicles both in Kyiv and in Lviv, and there are LE Mission staff, who have no cars, but would be ready to leave either big cities or Ukraine by car. Can access to vehicles be authorized, or organized transportation be arranged.
- **Banking procedures.** We ask that immediate actions are taken to negotiate with the Credit Agricole Bank (International) to ensure security of our bank accounts and provide details on how LE Staff can access money both inside Ukraine and outside.
- **Washington helpdesk for LE Staff.** Provide POC contacts for LE Staff in the Department of State in Washington, so that LE Staff can send their questions and ask for assistance.

We have worked side by side with you for two decades, and always had strong faith in the work the U.S. Government was doing. We need your help now. This is not a time to wait and research. This is time to act. Your actions can save our lives.

LE Staff Committee, Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine
(Signed by over 500 mostly USAID employees, as of 2/25, 3pm Eastern)