

Kathleen Collins
Remarks at the “Stand With Ukraine” Rally
Minnesota State Capitol
Sunday, March 6, 2022

My Ukrainian-American friends, my fellow Americans, and all those who have gathered here today to support Ukraine:

I am deeply honored to be with you. I stand with you now as an ordinary American. I have no birth connection to Ukraine, but as a human being, I grieve with you. As a mother, I could not help but cry this past week when I saw the photo of a Ukrainian soldier saving an infant from the rubble of a building hit by a Russian missile. As an American, I understand Ukrainians’ longing for freedom from tyranny. I share their desire to “live in truth,” as Vaclav Havel said – not under a regime that forces its citizens to write and speak lies to hide its grotesque abuses. And as a student of Russia, I understand too well the atrocities perpetrated against Ukraine by the Soviet Union, *and* the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the 22- year dictatorship of Vladimir Putin.

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Many in the West do not realize that Putin first invaded Ukraine in 2014, when Putin seized Crimea and began a war for the Donbas. Ukrainians stopped Putin from advancing further then, and they did so courageously, with all too little western aid. The weak Western response in 2014 only led to more aggression from Putin. This latest, this second, Russian invasion is an even more egregious violation of international law. And it is an attack on all humanity! Now, Putin seeks to eliminate Ukraine’s very statehood!

Our unity today is about defending Ukrainians’ identity as the “Ukrainian people.” This is about defending their right to live in a democracy, with the right to speak freely, and to choose their own government. This is about their independence as a civic nation-state, with full sovereignty over their land. This is about their right to be part of Europe and the free world. This is about not returning to Russian rule, especially 70 years of Soviet totalitarianism – a rule that starved millions of Ukrainians to death in the Holodomor, and that left millions more to die between the forces of Hitler and Stalin in WWII. This is about their right to live in peace. We stand together now because this is about the very survival of Ukraine.

3

As Putin’s Russia unleashes unspeakable devastation upon Ukraine’s cities, Americans must recognize that Putin threatens not just Ukraine, but also NATO, Europe, and the free and civilized world!

As we speak, strong sanctions are finally in place. The US, the EU, and NATO are increasing military and humanitarian assistance. But fellow Americans, let us not take our freedom for granted! Let us use our voices as citizens to press our government to do MORE to stop Putin’s military aggression. Ukraine’s military has been valiantly fighting for 8 years already! And now the whole population has mobilized to defend itself. But Ukraine needs significantly more military aid. The West needs to act now, *WITH URGENCY* to provide such assistance. And the West needs to cut off Putin’s war machine by sanctioning ALL Russian energy!

The West must be RESOLUTE in supporting Ukraine, not just today, and not just tomorrow, but over the long-term!

In the end, I hope and pray and believe that Putin faces defeat, and that his horrific assault on Ukraine will ultimately bring down Russia's destructive state power.

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Let me close by quoting President John F Kennedy, as he stood in Berlin in June 1963. He said:

“Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free... We look forward to that day when... this country and this great Continent of Europe [are joined] in a peaceful and hopeful globe.”

Слава Україні !

**Stand With Ukraine MN
Rally
MN State Capitol on Sunday, March 6 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m
Updated program**

Prayer

Anthems

Minute of silence

Luda Anastazievsky, chair, MN Ukrainian American Advocacy
Committee

Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota

Lt. Governor Flanagan

Message from Senator Klobuchar

Erika Nelson, the State Director

Minneapolis Mayor, Jacob Frey

Consul General Ariel Delouya, Canadian Consulate in
Minneapolis

Bruce Karstadt, Honorary Consul for Sweden in the state of MN

Barbara Muller, Honorary Consul for Germany in the state of MN

Paul Gavriluk, professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas

Jacob Millner, regional Director Minneapolis-St.Paul American Jewish Committee

Kathleen Collins, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Minnesota

Steve Hunegs, Executive Director Jewish Community Relations Council of
Minnesota and the Dakotas

Edyta Dudek, President of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota
(PACIM)

Živilė Norvilaitė-Petersen, President, Lithuanian American Community of MN

Stefan Iwaszkewycz, Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Ensemble