Ukraine celebrates Independence Day and the Coalition of the Willing meets again

President Zelenskyy with Prime Minister Burnham in front of St. Sophia Cathedral today.

A number of European leaders in addition to British Prime Minister Burnham attended today's celebration in Kyiv of Ukraine's Independence Day notwithstanding the threat of Russian missiles and drones. Among the other leaders participating in the celebration in Kyiv were European Council President Costa and Prime Ministers Karis of Estonia, Frieden of Luxembourg, and Sandu of Moldova. In addition to celebrating the 35th anniversary of Ukraine's Declaration of Independence, those leaders, along with the leaders of the other states that are members of the Coalition of the Willing, participated in a video conference to discuss their preparation for the activity of the Coalition if and when there is a ceasefire in Russia's war against Ukraine. The Coalition consists of 37 states that have agreed to provide defensive support for Ukraine and guarantee the security of its territory and air space once a ceasefire is agreed. Today's video conference was chaired by Prime Minister Burnham, President Macron, Chancellor Merz, and President Zelenskyy.

Following the meeting, the leaders issued the following statement: "The leaders of the Coalition of the Willing convened today in Kyiv and by video conference to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the restoration of the Independence of Ukraine. They were united in their continued support of Ukraine's fight to defend its sovereignty, freedom and territorial integrity. Prime Minister Andy Burnham, President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Friedrich Merz chaired the meeting alongside President Zelenskyy."

“The leaders condemned Russia’s systematic and escalating strikes against Ukraine’s cities, critical infrastructure and civilians, causing the highest number of civilian casualties since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, and damaging a children’s hospital in Kyiv the previous week. They also condemned Russia’s attacks on Ukraine’s cultural heritage sites, which form an integral part of Ukraine’s national identity, including the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.”

“Leaders reiterated Ukraine’s clear and inherent right to defend itself against the Russian war of aggression, in full compliance with international law and Article 51 of the UN Charter and confirmed that they would not be deterred from their support for Ukraine by irresponsible Russian threats. They expressed their determination to increase military support to Ukraine, strengthen its air defence as a matter of urgent priority, enhance cooperation with its defence industry, and share relevant technologies, including through the Anti-Ballistic Missile Coalition. They also committed to ratchet up sanctions on Russia’s military industrial complex and those supporting it.”

“Leaders also agreed on the urgency of providing immediate assistance for Ukraine’s energy sector ahead of the upcoming winter, including through the Ukraine Energy Support Fund and provision of specialist equipment. They emphasised the need to continue to support Ukraine’s economic resilience in the face of Russia’s intensified attempts to renew their maritime blockade on Ukraine’s ports.”

“The leaders agreed to continue efforts to constrain Russia’s war chest through the use of sanctions, wider economic measures, and clamping down on sanctions circumvention and Russia’s Shadow Fleet. This joint action to date has deprived Russia’s war chest of at least $495 billion since February 2022. The leaders welcomed the US Senate’s efforts to apply further economic pressure on Russia and committed to working closely with the US over the coming months on coordinated action to drain Russia’s means to continue its illegal war.”

“The leaders commended President Zelenskyy’s continued readiness to enter into meaningful peace talks, in order to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, and reiterated their call for Russia to agree to a full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire starting from the line of contact.”

“The Coalition would continue to prepare the Multinational-Force Ukraine to deploy once a credible cessation of hostilities was in place, as part of a wider set of robust politically and legally binding security guarantees to ensure Ukraine’s future security and prosperity once a ceasefire enters into force.”

“Concluding, the leaders once again reaffirmed their commitment to support Ukraine’s independence, as part of Europe’s wider peace and security. They offered President Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine their steadfast solidarity today on the 35th anniversary of the restoration of Independence, and every day, for as long as it takes.”

David R. Cameron
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