On February 24, OutRight launched a Ukraine Fund because, in times of crisis, LGBTIQ people may face higher risks yet are often left behind or excluded from humanitarian relief efforts. Millions of Ukrainians have fled their homes - and many who have stayed are sheltering in place, with little or no access to running water, power, heating, medical care, or mobile phone service. Activists across the region are also concerned about protecting the rights of LGBTIQ people, since Russia has a long track record of targeting human rights defenders and of state-sponsored homo- and transphobia. In many neighboring countries, governments or politicians have LGBTIQ people’s rights and incited public hostility against them.

In addition, LGBTIQ people often face unique obstacles to reaching safety. Trans people have faced a special challenge, as martial law has barred all men 18-60 from leaving the country and requires them to register for military service. Both trans women and trans men report being turned back at the border or experiencing difficulty getting exempted from the draft when their legal documents do not match their gender identity.

As soon as the Russian invasion began, OutRight’s partners reached out to us for help. These LGBTIQ organizations require immediate and sustained financial support to ensure the survival of LGBTIQ people and the movement itself throughout this crisis.

A CALL TO ACTION

As of August, OutRight has distributed more than USD $1,600,000 to 39 local partners in Ukraine and surrounding countries that are delivering humanitarian aid to LGBTIQ people. Contributions are providing emergency assistance to LGBTIQ people who need safe shelter, food, medical supplies (including medications), financial assistance, transportation for distribution of support and helping people reach hospitals, relocation assistance for those who are fleeing, mental health support, and other types of humanitarian assistance. The Fund is also supporting basic organizational and staffing expenses so that grassroots LGBTIQ organizations can keep their doors open.

OutRight’s Ukraine LGBTIQ Emergency Fund has provided direct financial assistance to the following organizations:

- Trans organization in Kyiv: I would like to thank you and OutRight Action International for offering to help. It is valuable for us at this moment. We survived another night...We are alive and that's what matters!
- Intersex organization in Ukraine: It is very difficult to predict how much food will cost soon under partial Russian siege of the city. But we hope your support will help us to survive.
- Trans organization in Kyiv: Thank you for your help in such a difficult time, we appreciate it and express gratitude from the trans* people of Ukraine. In addition to direct financial assistance to trans people’s bank cards, we also help pay for mobile communications, food, water and hygiene products, all that is still left in our stores.

HOW WE ARE HELPING

A group of LGBTQ refugees pose for a portrait inside a shelter just outside Ukraine run by the organization Gender Stream, March 15, 2022. Photo by J. Lester Feder.
Olena Shevchenko, Insight:
I never thought I would have the refugee experience. I had to move with my family to Western Ukraine and we established two shelters for LGBTIQ people. Most are here for a few days and then we are helping them over the border. Nobody knows where the humanitarian aid is going, but it’s not getting to the most marginalized people. So we are bringing in supplies and medicines from other countries as so many people are dying, or don’t have access to food or water. We are also helping elderly women, women with children, and others left behind.

Andriy Maymulakhin, Nash Mir:
Ukrainian LGBT+ people have been suffering from this war. The office of our organization was attacked twice, our friends/colleagues were beaten, robbed and subjected to severe psychological pressure. I think the LGBT+ community will be at the top of the list of the most vulnerable groups under Russian occupation. Our task now is to survive and protect our land. After the war, we will return to our daily work – to promote LGBT+ rights to make our country a better place.

OutRight is moved by the global outpouring of support and care for LGBTIQ people in Ukraine and the region. More than 7,200 people from over 60 countries have contributed to OutRight’s Ukraine Fund to date, along with partners such as MacKenzie Scott & Dan Jewett, Ukraine DAO, Together Rising, Google.org, Choose Love Foundation, GiveOut, Capital Group, RELI3F, SumOfUs, Looking Out Foundation, Horizons Foundation, The Giving Block, Grindr 4 Equality, Zalando, Endaoment, Elevate Prize Foundation, Pink News, GoFundMe, Gitcoin, The Bobaverse, Magazine Antidote, Kendo Brands Kares, and countless others.

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