

GOVERNMENT MUST EXPEL RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS

Australian Ukrainian Congress Monday, April 18th, 2022

Contact Profile

20 APRIL 2022

The Australian Ukrainian Congress calls on the Australian Government to expel all Russian Federation diplomatic staff and keep Australia open as an avenue of escape for dissidents.

Australian Ukrainian Congress spokesperson, Mr Andrew Olexander, challenged the Caretaker Government to remove all diplomats in the wake of the atrocities that have been uncovered in the Kyiv region.

Mr Olexander also stated that Australia should remain available to Russian and Belorussian dissidents who are otherwise likely to be persecuted by their criminal governments.

“There is scope for the Australian Government to take a bipartisan approach to its diplomatic relations with the Federation since the Opposition has already called for Russian diplomats to be expelled,” Mr Olexander said.

“Numerous countries have already expelled more than 350 Russian diplomatic staff and Australia should do likewise.

“Staff within the Russian Federation Embassy in Canberra have been known to post propaganda and misinformation on social media. Most recently it suggested that it was Ukraine’s troops who carried out the acts of horrific violence and genocide in Bucha, Mariupol and other locations”.

“These lies cannot be tolerated and those staff members who perpetuate them here have no business remaining in Australia”.

“These activities are an insult to war victims and refugees, Australian Ukrainians and Australians generally. They threaten the cohesion and harmony built up over generations of Ukrainian community settlement in Australia.”

Mr Olexander noted that there is some debate as to whether tourism or family

Australian Ukrainian Congress

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reunion visas to Russian and Belorussian citizens should be cancelled or denied.

“This blanket approach without offering any alternative ignores the fact that many people have stood up to their authoritarian governments and have been imprisoned or are at risk of further persecution,” he said.

“The Government has the ability to issue Global Special Humanitarian visas where holders can move to Australia if they face discrimination or human rights abuses and, if they have a proposer, may stay in Australia with their immediate family.”

He said that unlike family reunion or tourism visas, this visa removed any doubt as to how long a person could legally remain in Australia.

This visa permits them to study and work here for the duration of their stay.

“I urge the Government to expedite Global Special Humanitarian visa requests and permit those currently holding family reunion or tourism visas in Australia to convert them to this more appropriate one that will offer holders peace of mind.

“We have no idea of how long the war in Ukraine will last nor how long the governments of Russia and Belorussia will manifest their ill-will to those who defied them once it concludes.”

Mr Olexander pointed out that the Australian Government has already sanctioned individuals and has the capacity to ensure that Australia does not become a safe haven for those yet to be sanctioned.

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