

National Democratic Institute

UKRAINE PROGRAM

TO RESIST AUTHORITARIANISM

For those of us who watch with horror Vladimir Putin's brazen violence against the people of Ukraine, it has been a chilling wake up call. Putin's war has lifted the veil on his authoritarian agenda — an agenda that did not start and will not end with Ukraine — and his willingness to use brutal tactics against those whose only offense is to choose freedom, independence and democracy.

The best way to counter authoritarianism is through powerful and consistent advocacy for democracy; to relentlessly support free people everywhere struggling to sustain their democratic rights and liberties.

There is nothing Putin dreads more than an empowered citizenry.

That's what the National Democratic Institute (NDI) does. NDI has become a leader in the democracy field for four decades by prioritizing creativity and innovation, and crafting programs that account for the unique context of each country. NDI promoted democratic reform in the Philippines and Chile in the 1980s; in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall; and across Africa, Asia and Latin America in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War. More recently, NDI has supported activists whose homegrown efforts inspired the Arab Spring in 2011, and the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity in 2014.

NDI polling over many years — including as recently as January 2022 — has repeatedly shown Ukraine's commitment to democracy. The question now for those of us committed to Ukraine's future, who support the rights of all people to control their destiny in the interest of international peace and security, is what we do now.



NDI has trained thousands of women candidates in Ukraine and, of those trained, 687 ran for office and 225 were elected.

The National Democratic Institute remains a powerful beacon of hope in these dark times. NDI has been working in Ukraine for more than 30 years to help develop its democratic institutions, and weave democratic values into the very fabric of Ukrainian life. In this effort, NDI has worked in partnership with the government of Ukraine, political leaders, civil society activists, women's groups, and young people to engage them directly in the practice and process of democracy.



NDI helps Ukraine youth find their voice, advocate for democracy and take action in their communities.

In doing so, we promote government responsiveness, dialogue across political and social divides, community building and civic advocacy. We leverage an unparalleled array of trusted relationships built over decades, as well as deep first-hand knowledge of Ukrainian politics and society. Our bottom up approach, which responds to the needs of local democracy activists, enables us to have maximum impact where and when it is needed most, and to steward precious resources effectively and efficiently.

We see today the fruits of those years of work in the resolute and unified Ukrainian response to an unprecedented, brutal attack on their country and values. Ukrainians once again are putting everything on the line to defend their rights, freedoms and democratic way of life.

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We could not be more proud of our Ukrainian partners, and we continue our work with them even under current conditions. In the coming weeks and months, our Ukraine program will:



Fight Disinformation

The Kremlin is running a massive disinformation campaign both in Russia and around the world. We have learned over the years that Putin often uses Ukraine as a testing ground for the techniques he later rolls out on a more global scale. Our **Democracy and Technology (DemTech) programming** provides cybersecurity training and tools to protect websites and the overall digital security of vulnerable civic groups and activists. To help Ukrainians build resilience to Russian disinformation, NDI supports civic technology organizations that track disinformation trends. NDI then works with nongovernmental and governmental partners to develop evidence-based messages that can mitigate the impact of those attacks, testing both the messages and the impact of the countermeasures using cutting-edge public opinion research tools.

Bolster Marginalized Communities

There is an urgent need, and scant resources, for supporting such **marginalized groups** as the LGBTQI+ and Roma communities in Ukraine. During this crisis they are uniquely vulnerable, and are reported to be on Kremlin “kill” lists. Our ongoing programmatic work with these groups enables NDI to provide an extraordinary level of support that is unique in the civil advocacy arena.



Support Women’s Civic Advocacy

We are leveraging our long-standing global campaign to promote women’s political leadership to meet this moment. NDI’s **Changing the Face of Politics** campaign in Ukraine has had an outstanding track record. In 2019, NDI worked directly with political parties and civic groups to train thousands of women candidates for local office. Of those trained, 687 ran for office and 225 were elected. We are now working closely with these same Ukrainian partners and their networks today to document and publicize human rights abuses, and track where humanitarian support is most urgently needed. NDI will also assist Ukrainian women through the formation of gender-focused caucuses in local councils.



Support Young People's Voices

Youth voices are a critical part of Ukraine's fierce resistance, and NDI continues to work closely with some of the most effective youth groups in the country. Through our global **Speak Youth To Power campaign**, NDI addresses the challenge of engaging young people by helping them find their **political voice**, engage in **politics**, and run for office, as an essential investment in democracy's future. In Ukraine, we help bridge the gap between youth and politics by supporting youth political party wings and youth-focused civil society groups. Before the war, NDI had worked with 25 youth-led groups who assessed how their local governments were, or were not, prioritizing their needs through municipal budgets.

Aid Border Countries

There is no better way to hold the line on Putin's ambitions than by strengthening the quality of surrounding democracies in the region, in most of which NDI maintains country offices and project staff. We are on the front-lines of providing democracy assistance to **neighboring countries** as they deal with the impact of refugees flooding their borders. Across the region, we are raising the level of our work to counter disinformation, strengthen legislatures, foster dialogue, and promote the political leadership of women and youth as fresh voices of resilience and resistance.



JOIN US

While the war rages on, those of us who long for peace can be clear on one shared goal – the insistence on democracy over authoritarianism and the will of a people over the will of a brutal strongman. We have found over the past four decades that, whatever its shortfalls, democracy works. Through transparent processes that affirm basic human dignity, democracy allows nations to settle their internal differences peacefully through elections, open debate, accountable governance and rule of law. Perhaps most importantly, it is the single best way to combat authoritarianism and the rise of fascism. Join us in the fight for democracy.



NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all.

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