



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
LIBERTY COMMISSION  
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 11, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

President Biden,

I serve as the Acting President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Our organization is the ethics and public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest protestant denomination with over 46,000 churches and 15 million members.

Southern Baptists are deeply concerned about President Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and its consequences for regional and international stability. This unjust and illegal action is a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, and we affirm your work with our allies to hold President Putin accountable for his actions and to prevent the spread of this aggression.

I appreciate your recent announcement that the United States will be banning Russian oil, natural gas, and coal imports. The humanitarian aid that has already been sent to the war-torn region and the inclusion of additional aid in the FY 2022 appropriations package will also be immensely helpful for the brave Ukrainians defending their homeland.



I am also deeply grateful for the administration's decision to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Ukrainians who are currently in the United States. This is an important way for us to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine by ensuring these neighbors need not fear deportation but can stay and work in the U.S., at least until the conflict is resolved.

While these steps are helpful, I am also writing to encourage your administration to continue taking steps that will address the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Southern Baptists are particularly concerned about these areas and wish to see proactive action taken.

- **Protecting religious freedom for religious minorities.**

As Southern Baptists, we believe that religious freedom is essential for all people to be able to live out their faiths fully. We are deeply concerned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be detrimental to the religious freedom enjoyed by Christians and other religious groups in the country. Reports of a Russian "[kill list](#)" include religious minorities, and there is strong reason to believe that those spared will face intense persecution and will be forced to practice their faith in secret. We urge your administration to do everything possible to ensure that religious freedom is protected and is an essential part of any negotiations or strategy that might be pursued.



- **Ensuring that intercountry adoption remains viable in Ukraine.**

These times of war and disruption often most severely harm those who are already vulnerable. Certainly, orphans in Ukraine fall into this category as they face imminent danger and diminishing resources. As Christians, we believe that we are specifically called to care for orphans around the world and view intercountry adoption as an important way of doing that. It is essential that intercountry adoption remain open and viable for these vulnerable children and for families who have already begun this process and are awaiting to be united with their children. When Russia invaded Crimea, they suspended foreign adoptions, and there's grave concern that they could do the same if this illegal invasion of Ukraine is successful.

- **Supporting Ukrainian refugees in Europe and at home.**

Over 2.1 million people have already fled Ukraine, and it's estimated that as many as 5 million refugees may eventually be displaced. Throughout Scripture, we are specifically commanded to care for refugees. While we commend Poland and other neighboring countries who have welcomed these vulnerable people in the face of this immediate crisis, we know that Western Europe and the United States will have a role to play as well. Many resettlement organizations in the United States are still struggling to fully rebuild after several challenging years



and have been further stretched thin by the heroic work of resettling Afghan parolees. We ask your administration to support these nations that have taken in refugees and invest in rebuilding the refugee resettlement program to allow many to find refuge in the United States in a timely fashion.

As you and your administration respond to the crisis in Ukraine, we ask that these priorities be considered as you pursue strategies with our allies. We pray fervently for peace and security to come to our world. We also pray that God would grant you wisdom and favor as you navigate these tumultuous times.

Respectfully,

Brent Leatherwood  
Acting President  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

cc:

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
United States Secretary of State

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
United States Secretary of Homeland Security