By Khatia Bzhalava

Georgian officials have responded to the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, expressing support and solidarity to Ukraine and its people. Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili has stated that the military attack on a sovereign country is unacceptable. He has called on the international community to apply all possible measures "to stop blatant violation of international order by Russia and prevent further military escalation."

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili has expressed solidarity to Ukraine, calling for a "halt of the military operations" in the country. "The Georgian nation is shocked by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people," the President tweeted.

Zourabichvili announced that she would represent Georgia in all the formats where the issue of Ukraine is being discussed.

"The issue of Ukraine is an issue for all of us and it is necessary for the voice of Georgia to be heard there as well. We are and will always be on the side of the peaceful path, but also on the side of upholding principles and that is what our unity should be!" said the President.

Zourabichvili also announced to sign a request from the Georgian Parliament to convene an extraordinary parliamentary session to express solidarity for Ukraine and support for its territorial integrity.

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili has also echoed the developments in Ukraine and stated that Georgia "stands with Ukraine in these difficult times." He called on the international community to take effective steps to stop Russia from escalating into a full-scale conflict and ensure the protection of international norms.

Georgian foreign minister David Zalkaliani has called Russia's military action against Ukraine 'totally intolerable'. In a separate statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has stated that Georgia is deeply concerned over Russia's actions against Ukraine, noting that Russian-led hostilities undermine the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and also violate the UN Charter and fundamental principles of international law, "which will carry heavy consequences not only for Ukraine but also for the entire international community". The Ministry has urged Georgian citizens in Ukraine to follow recommendations of the Ukrainian go-

Georgian officials react to Russia's attack on Ukraine

▶ *"Today, when Ukraine is trying to cope with this difficult situation, Georgia stands by its side," President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili stressed.*

▶ *A rally in support of Ukraine in Tbilisi. photo by Mzia Saganelidze (RFE/RL)*

vernment on security measures on the ground.

Georgian businesses and citizens have offered free accommodation to Ukrainian citizens in the country who are unable to return to Ukraine. Yesterday, several rallies were held in Georgia in support of Ukraine, including in Batumi, Kutaisi, and the capital Tbilisi. Protesters displayed Ukrainian flags in solidarity and stressed that rallies in support of Ukraine would be held daily.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the start of a military operation in Donbas early Thursday, days after recognizing the self-proclaimed people's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. Soon after launching a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, explosions were reported across the country.

By The Messenger Staff

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hotels, restaurants, clinics - Ukrainians are offered assistance in Georgia

Hotels, restaurants, clinics, and various types of shops in Georgia offer free services to Ukrainians. In the Facebook group Spend 4 Seasons in Georgia, thousands of people from different regions write that they are ready to receive Ukrainians trapped in Georgia in their homes.

Ukrainians are offered free accommodation in hotels, hostels and family-run hotels. Free meals are offered by restaurants and various types of medical services - clinics. The Georgian Tourism Administration also offers their assistance.

American actor Sean Penn Arrives in Ukraine to Document War Events

American actor Sean Penn has arrived in Ukraine. The information is spread by the residence of the President of Ukraine.

"The director arrived in Kiev specifically to document the current events in Ukraine as a documentary and to show the world the truth about the Russian attack. This morning the director was in the presidential administration."

Citizens in Russia Protest Against the attack on Ukraine - 1237 people detained

Citizens in 49 Russian cities are protesting against the attack on Ukraine. The protest started in the morning with one-man rallies and pickets and continues today. Rallies are being held in Moscow, among others. According to the human rights group OVD-Info, 1237 people have been arrested in rallies across the country so far, of which 629 are detained in Moscow alone. Information about detainees changes systematically. Video and photos of the arrests were spread on social networks.

Russia Starts War with Ukraine

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On the morning of February 24, Russia invaded Ukraine. Vladimir Putin has officially announced the start of a military operation. Ukrainian cities are bombed. Ukraine is also being attacked by ground troops, targets near big cities are being bombed.

The Russian president announced the "special military operation" by reiterating a series of false allegations he made earlier this week, including that Ukraine's democratically elected government was guilty for eight years of genocide. Putin also warned that any outside power intervening on Ukraine's behalf would face an 'immediate' response.

Russia's troops broke the border in a number of locations, including Belarus, a long-time Russian ally, in the North, South, and East. Fighting has been reported in portions of eastern Ukraine. Belarus's authoritarian leader Lukashenko said his country's military were not involved but could be if needed.

A total of 10 individuals are thought to have been murdered, 6 of whom were killed in an air attack near capital. According to a Ukrainian presidential adviser, at least 40 troops have been killed and dozens more have been injured. Ukraine claimed to have killed 50 Russian soldiers, destroyed 3 tanks and shot down 6 Russian planes and a helicopter, although this has yet to be confirmed.

According to the President 'Russian occupation forces try to seize the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, it is a declaration of war across Europe'. Ukrainian edition UNYAN reported that Russian troops entered Chernobyl from Belarus.

"National Defense, which protects the building of a hazardous radioactive waste depot, is strongly resisting them. If the occupiers' artillery attacks the nuclear waste of this warehouse, radioactive clouds will cover Ukraine, Belarus and the European Union," a journalist said.

Earlier on Thursday after the invasion Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for the Russian president, announced that Putin is ready to negotiate with Ukraine, but only on one issue — Ukraine's neutrality and refraining from placing

▶ *Zelensky said Russia had positioned almost 200,000 troops and thousands of combat vehicles on Ukraine's borders.*

▶ *Kyiv's Boryspil international airport was among a number of airfields bombed, along with military headquarters and warehouses in the big cities of Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv and Mariupol.*

weapons on Ukrainian territory. Ukrainian President Zelensky declared martial law across the country, severing all diplomatic ties with Russia, and promising to provide guns to anybody who desired them. He also asked Turkey to close the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits to warships.

The international community, part of which imposed sanctions on Russia yesterday, condemned the unjustified and unprovoked attack on Ukraine and demanded the aggressor to withdraw troops, pledging support for Ukraine.

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission said the bloc condemned Russia's 'barbaric' invasion of Ukraine and the 'cynical arguments to justify it.' She added that E.U. leaders meeting on Thursday will present fresh sanctions targeting "strategic sectors" of the Russian economy. Sanctions will block "the access to technologies and markets that are key for Russia. We will weaken Russia's economic base and its capacity to modernize. And in addition we will freeze Russian assets in the E.U. and stop the access of Russian banks to European financial markets."

According to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson, this is a disaster for our continent. "This morning I will address the nation about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.I also speak to the G7 leaders and call on all NATO leaders to meet immediately."
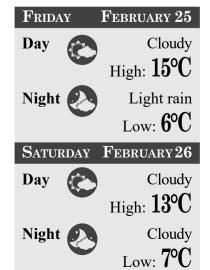
US President Biden plans to impose what he called "severe sanctions" against Russia on Thursday during a public address on the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"President Putin has chosen a premeditated war that will bring a catastrophic loss of life and human suffering. Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring, and the United States and its allies and partners will respond in a united and decisive way. The world will hold Russia accountable."

Prime Minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia, said a number of Nato partners with shared borders with Russia have agreed to begin negotiations under Nato's Article 4. Nato can be pulled together under the defense alliance's treaty if any member believes their independence or territory is threatened. Meanwhile, Moldovan and Lithuanian presidents declared a state of emergency inside their countries.

Polish Health Minister Adam Niedzilski said they were preparing to receive Ukrainian migrants, including those injured in the Russian aggression. According to him, 120 hospitals are being prepared for this in Poland.

Recall that Russia's president recognized the independence of two self-proclaimed people's republics in eastern Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk earlier this week. Russia opposes NATO bases near its borders and has asked for written guarantees that NATO does not expand eastwards. One of the Kremlin's central demands is that Ukraine never be allowed to join NATO – a move it considers a red line. After Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, Russian-backed separatists seized the breakaway territories. Putin initiated the strike in response to the ouster of pro-Russian President Yanukovych by major street protests in Ukraine. Since then, over 14,000 people have died in eastern Ukraine as a result of fighting between russia-controlled insurgents and Ukrainian authorities.