



DID YOU KNOW?

Ukraine is the second largest European country after Russia and has a population of 44.1 million people.



If you feel worried



It's understandable that you might feel upset about what's happening in Ukraine. If you do, talk with a trusted adult, ask questions, and share your feelings. Limit your exposure to the news, and do things you enjoy. To learn more about what you can do to help people and show the world you care, turn to p24.

Nations unite in support of Ukraine

On February 24, Russia invaded Ukraine, an independent country to its west, launching the largest military attack in Europe since World War Two (1939–1945). Ukrainian soldiers and citizens are fighting back, and people around the world are standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

What is happening?

In the weeks before the invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin put more than 150,000 troops at the Ukrainian border and rejected efforts by the US and other countries to negotiate peace. As the invasion began, large explosions went off near Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, and other cities. Russian troops crossed into Ukraine from three directions. As Ukraine's military and citizens fought back, President Volodymyr Zelensky said from a Ukrainian street, "We are defending our independence, our state, and we will continue to do so." As of March 1, Ukraine said that more than 1,000 civilians had been injured and more than 350 had been killed. Other sources said those numbers may be too low.



Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine

Why did Russia invade Ukraine?

Putin has said that he believes Ukraine is part of his country, not independent. He also said he wants to stop Ukraine from strengthening its ties with the US and other countries in the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, a military alliance of 30 nations in Europe, North America, and Eurasia). Putin sees NATO as a threat to his control over the region. Many Russian citizens do not agree with Putin's actions. In more than 60 Russian cities, tens of thousands of citizens protested the invasion. About 6,000 were arrested.

How is the world reacting?

Nations around the world condemned Russia's actions, and famous monuments were lit up in the blue and yellow colors of Ukraine's flag as a show of support. At a rare emergency meeting of the United Nations (UN) on February 28, world leaders accused Russia of violating the UN charter, which calls for nations to settle disputes peacefully. The US, UK, European Union (EU, a group of 27 nations, mostly in Europe), and other nations imposed harsh economic sanctions (punishments) on Russia, causing the ruble (Russian money) to drop in value by more than 25%. Many nations, including the US, Canada, Germany, France, and Finland, are providing weapons to Ukraine. Meanwhile, people around the world were angered and saddened by Russia's actions and held protests demanding an end to the conflict. The few nations that support Russia include Belarus, Syria, Pakistan, and Venezuela.

What is being done to help people?

Many countries, including the US, are shipping food, medical supplies, and funds to Ukraine, and humanitarian organizations are in the country providing assistance. The UN has allocated \$20 million in emergency funds and has asked for donations of \$1.7 billion to continue providing aid to more than 6 million people affected by the fighting. Meanwhile, more than 650,000 refugees (people who flee their homes because of danger) have left Ukraine so far. European nations including Hungary, Poland, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and the UK are taking them in. Citizens of neighboring countries have been giving out food, diapers, and other supplies to people fleeing Ukraine and crossing the border into their nations.

What will happen next?

Officials from Ukraine and Russia met on February 28 to discuss an end to the conflict but were unable to reach an agreement. They were set to meet again on March 2. As *The Week Junior* went to press, Russian troops were approaching Kyiv and missiles were being fired at the city of Kharkiv. The International Criminal Court said it would investigate whether Russia had committed war crimes. Zelensky was urgently calling for the EU to admit Ukraine, which would secure military support for his country from EU nations.