

28 February 2022

Australia must open its doors to Ukrainian refugees

The Law Council of Australia joins members of the international legal community in expressing grave concerns at Russia's invasion of Ukraine in violation of international law.

Under international law, a state is prohibited from the use or threat of force against another state. The only exceptions to this principle apply where a state is acting in self-defence or acting pursuant to a United Nations Security Council resolution. Neither of these exceptions apply to the actions taken by Russia against Ukraine.

In addition to Australia's responsibility to assist Australians who are at risk and need to evacuate, as a member of the international community Australia should seek to protect and support the people of Ukraine through the provision of humanitarian aid and the offer of asylum to citizens seeking to leave the country.

The Law Council of Australia calls on the Australian Government to join and support international efforts to accommodate refugees leaving Ukraine. It also calls on the Government to implement pathways to permanent protection visas for Ukrainian asylum seekers and refugees currently in Australia; prioritise family reunification when processing humanitarian visa applications from Ukrainian nationals; and immediately increase the ceiling of 13,750 places allocated under the Humanitarian Program for the 2021-22 financial year.

The Law Council is deeply concerned for the safety of members of the legal profession in Ukraine and has written to the Ukrainian Bar Association to offer its support.

Contact: Kristen Connell, P. 0400 054 227, E. kristen@talkforcemediacom.au