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Ukraine

Social Movement (Ukraine): Looking back at 2022

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The year 2022 opened a new tragic page in the history of Ukraine and the world. It was a year of incredible heroism and solidarity in the face of Russian imperialism. At the same time, the processes of neoliberalization of the economy and the attack on the remnants of labor rights intensified inside Ukraine. All this has been a real challenge for the left. But it has also opened up unimaginable opportunities for struggle. We invite you to join us with a review of the 2022 achievements of Social Movement in the struggle for a free and just Ukraine.

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Humanitarian Aid

The war determined the main directions of Social Movement's activity. The first priority was to help the victims of Russian aggression, as well as those who stood up to defend their homeland. Starting with sporadic humanitarian work, we have established regular and systematic activities to support the Ukrainian military and people affected by the war, especially in the frontline regions. In addition, Social Movement participated in the organization of more than 10 humanitarian convoys of foreign trade unions and leftist organizations. The received aid was sent to Zaporizhzhia, Kryvyi Rih, Mykolaiv and other frontline cities. For the most effective assistance and protection of Ukraine, Social Movement joined with other progressive groups including Feminist Workshop, Solidarity Collectives, Bilkis and many others. Social Movement activists successfully raised funds, sourced and delivered military equipment for soldiers, generators for medical workers, successfully raised funds for Starlink and much more. Regular trips to the regions with the necessary assistance became regular. In particular, Social Movement helped many families to organize a stable source of water and electricity in Mykolaiv. SR activists joined the ranks of the TRO and the Armed Forces, where they still serve, created innovative navigation systems for army drones and provided soldiers with everything they needed to bring victory closer.

International Solidarity

The full-scale war put Ukraine in the center of international attention. For Social Movement, 2022 was marked by the struggle against pseudo-pacifist ideology, whose proponents opposed the support of Ukraine. We did our best to unite left and progressive movements around the demands for full diplomatic support for Ukraine, effective and serious sanctions against the Russian Federation and the provision of all the necessary weapons for the complete victory of Ukraine. Social Movement activists established contacts with most of the influential left and green parties on all continents, prepared 100+ texts and interviews for an international audience - both on left-wing platforms (Jacobin, The Real News Network) and in mass media (Guardian, BBC, Business Insider, Elle, Mirror Weekly and others). Three international conferences were held. Our activists travelled to Great Britain, Ireland, Finland, Brazil, Germany, Poland, Georgia, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and other countries to promote the demands of support for Ukraine. Online lectures on Ukraine were held for the residents of Hong Kong and Korea. Without exaggeration, Social Movement has become the face of the Ukrainian left movement in the world. We

managed to organize students around the world to support Ukraine and participate in the formation of the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU) and the US Solidarity Network.

Campaign for the Cancellation of International Debt

The most prominent expression of international solidarity was the international campaign led by Social Movement for the cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt. The campaign resulted in its temporary suspension. From the first weeks of the war, Social Movement, together with the Polish left-wing party Razem, promoted the demand for the cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt in order to increase the country's defence capacity and a fair future that will not be dominated by huge repayments. We spoke in the Polish and later British parliaments, and raised the issue in most national parliaments in Europe through left-wing parties that endorsed the demands for debt cancellation and support for Ukraine. During the campaign, Social Movement established contacts with well-known financiers and economists in international institutions, NGOs and ruling left-wing parties such as the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland or the Left Alliance in Finland. Working with Democratic Members of Congress resulted in a bill committing the U.S. to advocate for a foreign debt freeze. Thanks to Social Movement, the foreign debt of approximately UAH 1800 billion was frozen for two years. This is a huge achievement, but our campaign will not stop there.

Resistance to “War Neoliberalism”

Despite the war, the Ukrainian authorities decided to continue the course of neoliberalization of the economy, which naturally led to the deterioration of the situation of ordinary citizens. Social Movement conducted powerful campaigns against the adoption of anti-labour laws and for the resignation of their main lobbyist in the Verkhovna Rada, MP Galina Tretiakova. A “Black List of Employers” was created, identifying those which abused the vulnerable position of workers due to the war. A lot of analytical materials were published on the causes and possible consequences of the attack on labor rights during the war. Social Movement emphasized and emphasizes that war is not the time for harmful socio-economic experiments. Tax cuts for the wealthiest part of the population have contributed to social instability, shifting of responsibility and unequal contribution of different social strata to the victory. In the absence of targeted social assistance, civil society was forced to play the role of the state and to take over almost all social functions. State policy in the socio-economic sphere has led to decline, social inequality, and sometimes to undermining of defense capabilities. Social Movement solidarizes with the theses of economists of the London School of Economics and Adam Tooze: this war should not be a place for ideological experiments and promotion of inequality policy.

Legal Assistance

In order to protect workers from abuse by employers, the #LABOUR project was created, within the framework of which free legal aid was provided to more than 80 employees. The process of applying for help was greatly simplified thanks to the development of a telegram bot. Human rights activity was marked, among other things, by victories in court in the cases of Vyacheslav Manchuk, a railway worker from Vinnytsia region (moral compensation was recovered in favor of the plaintiff as a victim of an accident) and Lyudmyla Puha, a nurse from Poltava region (the plaintiff was reinstated at work and her earnings for the period of forced absence were recovered in her favor). Dozens of people managed to achieve results in pre-trial proceedings. Social Movement also published and popularized a manual on the protection of the right to remuneration, which aimed to increase the legal literacy of workers.

Our activists also won two courts against the police in connection with an unlawful detention on January 19, 2021. Despite the war, Social Movement is an organization that continues to engage in human rights activities.

Strengthening Trade Unions

During 2022, Social Movement actively supported the trade union movement in Ukraine: including supporting the protests of ambulance doctors in Kyiv as well as the protest of crane operators in Lviv region. For activists from the NGO "Be like Nina" a report on staff reductions in view of changes in labor legislation was prepared. Social Movement activists and trade union organizers helped to organize an international meeting of crane operators from Ukraine, Poland and Israel. Social Movement actively cooperated with members of the KVPU, FPU and other trade unions to provide humanitarian aid, legal and political support. At the moment, we are helping to defend the demands of trolleybus drivers from Kyiv and Kharkiv, as well as nurses from Clinical Hospital #15 in the Podil district of Kyiv.

Education

Despite technical difficulties, Social Movement activists organized online seminars and events on the theory and practice of trade union organizing, energy policy, the political foundations of Ukrainian resistance, and other themes. The regular annual conference "Feuerbach 11" was organized with the participation of Social Movement activists and the magazine "Spilne" (Commons), to discuss the challenges of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. Numerous analytical and popular scientific materials were published on housing and economic policy, prospects of peace negotiations, theory of Marxism and socialism, post-capitalist society, the history of the Ukrainian and world left, and analysis of Russian imperialism. Based on the results of a survey on mental health during the war, an article was published with tips on how to preserve mental health. The war did not prevent the regular "Left Perspectives" educational event which was attended by more than 80 participants, where Social Movement activists made various presentations.

Media Work

The media work of the organization has reached a new level. We have been actively mastering new social platforms. Social Movement has a Twitter account, which has already gained more than a thousand subscribers, videos have been made for YouTube and TikTok. Numerous printed materials were developed and distributed, including brochures, manuals, memos, and stickers. Master classes on design of political posters and stencils were held. The work of Katya Grytseva, who made considerable efforts to form the visual style of the organization, received well-deserved international recognition including several exhibitions in France.

Public Actions

The full-scale invasion temporarily put street activism on hold, but the war did not hinder democratic processes. During the year, a number of successful actions were held, including against the destructive "optimization" of the Academy of Printing in Lviv, a flash mob for the day of action for decent work and actions against sexism. Together with the feminist organization Bilkis, Social Movement opposed the campaign of disinformation and intimidation led by right-wing radical MP Ihor Sholtis.

Development of Regional Branches

During the year the number of members of Social Movement increased significantly. The Lviv branch grew, its activists took part in actions, organized public lectures on labor rights and creative workshops, mobilized progressive students, etc.

Resistance to Authoritarian Tendencies and Chauvinism

The war increases the risks of growing popularity of right-wing views and hate propaganda. Even before the war, Social Movement supported women's and LGBTQ+ groups and advocated for the early ratification of the Istanbul Convention. We also condemned discriminatory trends in Ukrainian legislation, such as the adoption of new migration laws or chauvinistic statements by some MPs. At the end of 2022, Social Movement supported the campaign against Law 7633 (censorship of scientific sources on the basis of language), which quickly attracted the attention of Ukrainian scientists and received considerable support from the scientific community around the world.

2022 was a difficult year for all of us. We hope that 2023 will be better. We will work just as hard for a social, independent and just Ukraine, and we wish everyone security, victory and social progress in the new year.

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Translated from Ukrainian using Deepl and proofread by AN for [European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine](#).

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