

WORLD JEWISH RELIEF **PRESS RELEASE**

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Advisor at the EU commission explains how EU failures are also to blame for current Ukraine Crisis as WJR hosts Ukraine Crisis Briefing

On Wednesday night World Jewish Relief (WJR) hosted a **Ukraine Crisis Briefing** at JW3 in North London. The event was attended by over 150 guests who heard from academics, WJR programmers and members of the Ukrainian Jewish Community. The history of the region, the part EU failures played on the current crisis and thoughts around the escalating tensions in Crimea and now West Ukraine all formed part of the agenda.

WJR, who have been monitoring the crisis closely, currently provide assistance to over 16,000 vulnerable individuals in Ukraine including those most susceptible to poverty – the elderly, disabled and children.

The panel of guests included:

Dr Rory Finnin, Director, Ukrainian Studies programme, University of Cambridge.

Dr Finnin's primary research interest is the interplay of literature and national identity in Ukraine.

He began by thanking hosts WJR for the important work they continue to do in Ukraine. An expert on nationalist theory, he told the audience: "There is a fundamental misapprehension of Ukraine, its people and its history... it is dangerous to believe as Putin said in his speech that Ukrainians and Russians are the same – they are not the same people."

Dr Alan Rousso, Managing Director, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Dr Rousso's department supports the Bank's conduct of high level political dialogue in countries where they operate, including Ukraine.

Dr Rousso described the Ukrainian treasury as 'almost empty' with a high risk that government salaries and pensions will not be paid out. Dr Rousso also blamed a bloated bureaucracy, corruption riddled throughout the entire system, the monopolisation of the market system by a group of oligarchs and weak rule of law as the reasons why Ukraine is still stuck in transition.

Stephen Adams, Partner, Global Counsel.

Before becoming a partner in Global Counsel, Stephen Adams was a senior policy and political adviser at the European Commission and the UK Department of Business, where he worked primarily on trade policy, including with the Ukraine.

Mr Adams said: "There was a failure structurally with the EU. As a policy-making instrument, since 2004 the EU has struggled to find a way to think and talk to Ukraine. Ukraine is treated loosely as an enlargement state and left this part of the foreign policy arm operating almost entirely in isolation to other discussion. Neither was talking to Moscow. Given Moscow's response to Armenia last year, in retrospect this will look like a failure of policy and communication within the EU."

Dr Amelia Glaser, Director, Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, San Diego

Dr Glaser's research and teaching interests include transnational Jewish literature and the literatures of Ukraine. She is the author of *Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands*.

Dr Glaser shared her perspective on how recent events affect and continue to affect Ukraine's Jewish population explaining that the events in Ukraine are incredibly multi-ethnic and Maidan has had support from many Jews along with other minority groups.

Adva Rodogovsky, Ukraine Programmes Manager, World Jewish Relief outlined the steps World Jewish Relief have taken and are taking to mitigate against a humanitarian crisis in the country. She said:

"Thanks to incredible work of our partners, WJR programmes are continuing unaffected by current events. However, in Ukraine food prices are rising by 10-20% and medicine prices by 30-40%. We are expecting an increase in the number of people we will have to support as people fall below the vulnerability line. This is why we've launched a Ukraine Crisis Fund."

Julia Goldenberg, Founder, ACF To You (2U), WJR's partner in Kiev, Ukraine

Julia is the Founder and Board Chair of ACF To You, a young and dynamic Ukrainian NGO, specialising in protecting human rights and providing assistance to those in need regardless of background. When asked about a rise in anti-Semitism she said:

"I'm really afraid to be mistaken but at this stage there is no increase in anti-Semitism. There's no state-sponsored anti-Semitism, even the deputy Prime Minister is Jewish. Jews participated in Maidan and there is no need for us to pack our bags. Political and economic problems in the past have been blamed on Jews but at this time we simply don't know what's going to happen."

Current projects in Ukraine include WJR's *Home Repairs Programme*, which helps those barely subsisting on government pensions to reach an acceptable standard of living. Many of those they support live in damp, dilapidated apartments in buildings with broken lifts and crumbling flights of stairs. *Food Cards* are still being loaded with money so that families can buy the essentials they need and WJR's back-to-work programmes in Ukraine are still progressing.

This Pesach, WJR will continue to raise funds for these key programmes in Ukraine. To support please visit www.wjr.org.uk/ukrainecrisis

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