

August 24, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a bipartisan group of experts on nuclear nonproliferation, many of whom have served in both Democratic and Republican administrations, we urge you to prioritize responding to Russia's illegal seizure and mistreatment of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) and its staff. The most immediate priority should be ensuring the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can visit the plant to ensure its operations are safe and secure.

As you know, the Russian military seized ZNPP, Europe's largest nuclear power plant, in early March. Russia reportedly has since [deployed](#) additional forces there, [using](#) the facility as a base from which to shell nearby Ukrainian positions and population centers, knowing the Ukrainian military cannot risk responding in kind.

Moscow's actions risk causing a transnational radiological disaster. Russian forces occupying ZNPP have [reportedly](#) subjected the plant's workers to torture, interrogation, and other undue stress that could jeopardize vital safety functions. The Russia military's [reported](#) shelling of the facility and [damage](#) caused to the complex have further threatened the safety and security of the plant and its surroundings.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has aptly [described](#) Russia's actions as "suicidal" and on August 11 [underscored](#) the urgent need for an "agreement ... at a technical level on a safe perimeter of demilitarization to ensure the safety of the area." Nevertheless, Russia reportedly is [planning](#) a long-term occupation of ZNPP and intends to connect the facility to the electric grid in Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine.

We, the undersigned, commend the August 10 [statement](#) by the G7 foreign ministers, which demanded that Russia "immediately hand back full control" of ZNPP "to its rightful sovereign owner ... to ensure [the plant's] safe and secure operations." We support the IAEA request to access the plant, and demand that Russia vacate the facility.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi recently [emphasized](#) "the urgent need for the IAEA to be able to send an expert mission to carry out essential nuclear safety, security and safeguards work there." Despite recently [pledging](#) to facilitate the visit, Moscow continues to drag its feet, citing alleged security concerns with the IAEA delegation's traveling through Kyiv, as the Ukrainian government wants.

We urge you to work closely with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, UN Secretary-General Guterres, and IAEA Director General Grossi to secure an IAEA visit based on the agency's long record of impartiality and neutrality. We agree with your ambassador to the IAEA, Laura S.H. Holgate, that such a visit [should](#) "occur in a manner that fully respects Ukrainian sovereignty and legitimate Ukrainian authorities, and the IAEA must not lend any legitimacy to Russia's actions or control of the site."

There is no place in the 21st century for the illegal seizure and use of a nuclear facility to terrorize a population. At this nuclear facility devoted to peaceful purposes, atomic scientists, technicians, and other staff must remain free to focus on their critical work. In addition, the IAEA must be granted immediate access to ensure the plant's safety and security.

We know you share our serious concern about Russia's reckless behavior and infringement of its nuclear safety and security obligations and the human rights of ZNPP's staff. We hope you will take urgent action to help secure the IAEA visit to prevent a potential humanitarian and ecological disaster.

Sincerely,¹

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