

**“The Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ”**  
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Hello everybody. It is a great pleasure for me to present our movement for pro-democratic and anti-militaristic Russians – the Svoboda Alliance. This is a unique opportunity for us to talk to such an audience and some of our activists from Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney came here to Canberra.

We are a group of non-for-profit organisations and activists in Australia and New Zealand. We organised rallies and other activities in support of Alexei Navalny and other political prisoners, against the election fraud and suppression of the freedom of speech. Nowadays, when the Kremlin has started an unjustified and barbaric war against Ukraine, we cannot stand aside. We stand with Ukraine.

These few photos feature some of our rallies in Perth, Sydney, and Adelaide. We also come to support other communities. Ukrainian, Belarus, Armenian – there was an escalation of the conflict recently.

Today we stand with Ukraine, and our support is not limited to those rallies, but we also collect humanitarian aid like medical kits and sleeping bags. This photo shows cargo we collected for another Russian who left the safe haven of Sydney to go to the city of Uzhgorod.

We help raise donations for volunteers both in Ukraine and abroad, because those working in refugee centres definitely need supplies. We run fundraising and buy-and-sell projects for specific cities and humanitarian funds. Of course, we also share information about other donation options.

As you could see in the previous photo, we use the new white-blue-white flag to identify ourselves. It became ethically unacceptable for many Russians to use the tricolour, the flag Russian army uses to mark the captured territories of Ukraine. It is already recognised by the Russian authorities. You might get up to two weeks of free food and accommodation for just displaying it. A very generous attitude to anti-militaristic activists, isn’t it?

As you can see, these flags are used in America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. It became a true symbol for pro-democratic and anti-militaristic Russians.

Now I will tell you about some of our activities throughout the last year.

We experienced a year-long struggle to stop the SBS, a major media outlet, from rebroadcasting the NTV, a major Kremlin propaganda channel. We collected signatures under an open letter, we participated in a community consultation, we wrote many letters. It was truly odd to see it took them almost a year to resolve the issue. Only when the war had begun and we wrote a pretty explicit letter, they finally shut it down.

We also got involved in the parliamentary run campaign. The last parliamentary run in Russia in 2021 was the direct precursor of the war. The current assembly of the Duma voted for the invasion and occupation. But they barely represent Russian society. Independent statistical studies show, United Russia – Putin's pocket party – has to steal around 16% of the votes to hold the majority of seats.

Interestingly, the voting results abroad are pretty important for the Kremlin, since they demonstrate the interests and sympathies of the diasporas. One of the senate representatives said they had some sort of consultations with so-called Russian councils – consulate- and government-backed associations in many countries – about the “threats” from the Western countries.

Of course, it was important for us to ensure there is no election fraud in Australia and the results represent the sympathies in the diaspora. We participated in a project called “Vote Abroad” and became independent poll observers. This photo was taken during vote counting in Sydney. The results of the run in Australia and many other countries clearly showed that Russians followed “Smart Voting” – the strategy proposed by Alexei Navalny.

We could save the results here, but not in Russia. United Russia got an incredibly high amount of votes due to the newly introduced electronic voting system, which is completely untransparent. We lodged an official petition to the parliament of Australia (EN3459) to condemn the election fraud. However, the reply (in brief) said that we asked to condemn the violation of voting rights in Russia, and they had already condemned the poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny.

Now, when the war has begun, we lodged another petition to the parliament. We ask to declare United Russia a terrorist organisation. This petition was published online on the day this talk was given, and its number is EN4088.

So what are the key inputs the Russian community here in Australia can provide?

We can and we do inform Russians about the real situation using non-banned media and social networks (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki). Other major social networks like Twitter, Facebook,

Instagram are banned in Russia. Many major media outlets like BBC and all independent Russian media are banned.

We work to identify pro-Kremlin activists and their links to the Kremlin. Surprisingly, we found some people who know the names of proxy people used to hide assets of Putin's crew. We share this information with the authorities.

Of course, we meet Australian politicians to discuss the possible actions. It can help us identify appropriate targets for sanctions to force Russia to cease the fire and change the government.

And one of the key inputs we can provide is the information about the Russian society itself. A lot was said a lot about the constitution, about the Kremlin's strategy and the election fraud. But why do Russians tolerate this government?

Firstly, there is an enormous amount of various *siloviki* – the army, security services, the police, private security companies. The Kremlin spent the profits from selling crude oil and other commodities to pay them, and this is one of the things which makes the situation completely different to what we see in Ukraine. Some estimates show there are almost 7 000 000 of *siloviki* out of a bit more than 60 000 000 of the able-bodied population. More than 10%! And there are pretty low chances to find justice, since less than 0.5% of the court trials result in acquittal.

Secondly, Russia has a very long history of suppression of non-govt-led associations and activities. There is no such thing as a culture of public assemblies in Russia. Also I'd like to refer to some indices. #52 is the Human Development index. Well behind many countries, meaning the Kremlin does not consider the people to be something valuable. And I was looking for a measure of altruism in Russian society, when I found the World Giving index. The overall score puts Russia in 117th place. The society in Russia is extremely individualistic and egoistic. There is a concept of collectivism in Russia, but it is not about helping the ones in need, but about punishing successful individuals. An old idiom widely used in state propaganda reads "We have never lived well, so there is no reason to start [live well]" (не жили хорошо – нечего и начинать).

Thirdly, an extremely high level of chauvinist militarisation of the society in Russia since childhood. Look at these babies in the photos dressed in military uniforms! What should you do to a mother to make her think of her very own child as a pack of cannon meat (пушечное мясо, one more idiom in Russian)? The state propaganda destroys even the family ties.

Of course, it can only be achieved by holding total control over the media. Russia occupies the proud 150th place in the Press Freedom index. I used some data from Wikipedia to calculate that in the years 2000-2018 a journalist was killed every 2 months. Just imagine all these people killed for doing their job!

So, just to summarise, Russian society is extremely individualistic. It is also split in two categories: those who use VPN and those who don't. And you can see a person from the first category being detained by the police for a poster saying "no to war", while the other people without this

knowledge use their children to form 'Z', a symbol of Putin's aggression and war crimes.

Pro-Putin people use these symbols even abroad! This is a car running with 'Z' symbol in Auckland. The other signs of pro-Kremlin activities may include affiliation with the RARC, an association with close ties to the Russian embassy. Their narratives noted by experts include justifying support for the annexation of Crimea, drawing attention to alleged Russophobia, and complaints about "the hypocrisy and double standards of West policy towards Russia". Local activists like Simeon Boikov spread not only pro-Putin sentiment, but also anti-vax misinformation. Their close ties to the Russian diplomatic staff and combatants like Igor Girkin may be a sign of deeper collaboration with Putin's government.

An important question is how many Russians support the war. Some surveys show that up to 70% of Russians support the "special military operation", not war. I think much fewer people will say "yes" to war. The wording really matters. There is another independent survey, which states that 95% of the calls were dropped as soon as the question was asked. Anyway, we must acknowledge that 70% to 90% of the society are the silent majority that does nothing to prevent children, women and men of Ukraine being shelled and bombed by the Russian army.

Neither class solidarity nor class responsibility exists in an extremely individualistic society.

So what can we suggest? This is our view to an effective policy.

Sanctions should motivate individuals to act rather than call for class solidarity.

A peace treaty won't end the Kremlin's aggression and imperialistic ambitions. The Kremlin must fall.

All assets and sources of income of the Kremlin elites including those from sales of oil and gas should be seized or reduced. Only when the government won't be able to finance the police and the army, the ruler will change.

We must ensure nobody escapes a trial and punishment if guilty.

We would like to provide some suggestions from our community.

Russians associated with Putin's regime should be banned from entering and having assets in democratic countries. The nationals of other countries helping them hide their assets should also be investigated and prosecuted.

A pathway to political asylum for Russian and Belarusian activists – if they have already been prosecuted or threatened for anti-war and pro-democratic positions and may face a long prison term.

Careful targeting of pro-Kremlin activists and organisations abroad as Kremlin propaganda inside and outside Russia must not be able to use the “Russophobia” narrative.

We urge the world not to be one step behind Russia.

Putin won't stop until he feels a strong push back. He will advance and advance until he feels resistance. Remember that totalitarian regimes don't start with anti-human mottos and wars, but they finish with them. The moment when United Russia rigged the election results was the moment they put their values and ideas above everything else. This is fascism.

We saw a major hesitation to impose strict sanctions since the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and of Ukraine in 2014. There was no real reaction when we waited for the international community on the streets in 2011. Does it align with the democratic values within the UN and the PACE?

And this hesitation was widely used by the Kremlin's propaganda to say “these are the real democratic values, look, they are no better than us! So we Russians must be happy with us!”.

And we, the Svoboda Alliance, call you. Back in 2014, many Russians were joking “don't make my iskanders (missile systems) laugh at your sanctions”. The sanctions were ineffective then. We call now to kick the regime so hard the iskanders will cry.

Thank you for your attention. Слава Україні.