

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

“Protecting Ukrainian Refugees From Human Trafficking”

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman;
Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN), Co-Chairman;
Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC), Ranking Member;
Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH);
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT);
Senator Tim Scott (R-SC)**

Other Members Present:

**Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ);
Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)**

Witnesses:

**Kari Johnstone, Senior Official, U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor
and Combat Trafficking in Persons;
Tatiana Kotlyarenko, Anti-Trafficking Advisor, OSCE Office for Democratic
Institution and Human Rights;
Mykola Kuleba, Director of Save Ukraine, Former Presidential Commissioner
for Human Rights;
Nic McKinley, Founder and CEO, DeliverFund**

**The Hearing Was Held From 10:31 a.m. To 12:17 p.m., Room 562, Dirksen
Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD),
Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2022

CARDIN: We need to do this because we are trying to accommodate two panels today and we have witnesses that are with us virtually, so it's a logistics challenge. So, in an effort to be courteous to all of our extraordinary witnesses who are making their time available to us today, we'll do something that's unusual in the United States Senate: We'll start on time. So, with that, the Helsinki Commission will come to order.

I want to acknowledge Congressman Wilson, the ranking Republican on the Helsinki Commission from the House. I know we'll be joined by Congressman Cohen today. And I know that there is a real challenge.

I want to recognize Congressman Smith, who's the special representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in regards to trafficking and has been the leader in our Congress on dealing on the trafficking issue. So it's a pleasure to welcome him back. At one time he was the longest-serving member on the Helsinki Commission before he abandoned ship and –

SMITH: (Off mic.)

CARDIN: (Laughs.) Got kicked off the ship or whatever, but he's – but he went on to do other incredible things on foreign policy. So it's good to have Congressman Smith with us and returning to the Commission hearings.

Let me also acknowledge that the reason why we're going to have a disruption for the Senate participation is that there are currently three votes taking place on the floor of the Senate and they're trying to expedite these votes because of our scheduling today. This is, I believe, the last day we'll be in before the start the Easter-Passover recess.

The bill that's on the floor right now is a bill that would eliminate PNTR for Russia as a result of the invasion and atrocities in Ukraine – a bill that will speak, I think, volumes to our commitment to isolate Russia until it returns its troops to Russia and acknowledges the atrocities that it's created for the Ukrainian country and its people. The other part of that bill is the permanent extension of the Global Magnitsky statute, which we were very pleased to see that we'll be able to get that also accomplished. Last night, we passed a couple additional sanction bills, including – enabling bills, including a lend-lease on military equipment to the Ukrainians and other issues concerning energy, ~~s.~~ So I'd just point out we have good reason why we have disruptions of this hearing.

And then, lastly, today we will confirm Judge Jackson to be the newest member of the Supreme Court of the United States. That vote will take place as part of these three votes, but then the final vote will take place later this afternoon.

So, with all that going on, this hearing is extremely important. And the Helsinki Commission rarely holds two hearings in one week. We did it this week. We had an excellent hearing yesterday on oligarchs and the problems that they have created in funding Mr. Putin's corrupt regime. We had an excellent panel of witnesses and great participation. Today we're

talking about the tragedy that has been caused as a result of the Ukrainian crisis on the number of refugees that have left Ukraine and the number of displaced individuals within Ukraine.

I acknowledge that the OSCE chair-in-office gave a particularly strong statement at the OSCE Alliance Against Trafficking meeting earlier this week, where he outlined steps Poland is already taking to protect refugees from trafficking, including awareness [raising](#) of what is happening. Given Ukraine's exit restrictions on males aged 18 to 60, United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees estimates that 90 percent of those leaving Ukraine are women and children. Most cross the Ukrainian border without resources or a place to go, making them extremely vulnerable to human trafficking.

Trafficking networks from Ukraine to EU countries were already well-established before the war and more Ukrainian women were trafficked into the EU than any other country. There are credible reports from border areas where refugees are crossing that traffickers are trolling, trying to lure refugees with promises of accommodation, onward transportation, or employment. These are familiar stories. Some are masquerading as volunteers and others pretending to provide assistance. Traffickers have also started to use online methods such as social media and online advertising to lure potential victims, including through posts offering housing, employment, and other assistance. The longer the refugees have to remain outside of Ukraine, the more vulnerable they will become as they try to find longer-term housing and employment.

Children are particularly vulnerable. Almost half of the Ukrainian refugees are children. Thousands are unaccompanied, either because they have been evacuated from state care in Ukraine or because they have lost their parents or caretakers in the war. During the enormous influx of refugees into Europe in 2015, there was estimates that as many as 10,000 children went missing. We cannot let that happen again. Not only do we need to ensure that children are safe and taken care of, but we must be able to reunite them with family after the war if possible.

Government and NGOs in frontline countries are stepping up efforts to prevent these criminals from taking advantage of vulnerable refugees. EU countries are looking at what they can do to better coordinate efforts. I fully appreciate these efforts. Our goal today is to take stock of where they are – they may still have gaps – in order to identify what the United States and international organizations can do, organizations such as the OSCE, in order to fill in the void that's necessary.

I'm also very concerned about the reports that civilians, including children, are being forcefully moved by Russian forces from Ukraine to Russia, where they may also be at risk of human trafficking. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the situation on the ground and what we can do to effectively prevent Ukrainian refugees from falling prey to traffickers.

I do want to acknowledge our sincere thanks to the surrounding countries for what they've been able to do. There's no question that they have been willing to take extraordinary steps in order to help the refugees. I've already expressed this personally to several of the ambassadors, from Poland and Moldova and the other surrounding countries that have taken in a significant number of refugees.

Before introducing our first witness, let me yield to the – to my co-chair, Congressman Cohen.

COHEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have votes in the House, and I just made one and I'll have to go make another, so it's not the subject matter that makes me leave.

I welcome our witnesses and express my alarm about the dire humanitarian crisis in Europe caused by the old middle-level KGB agent, the worst crisis since World War II. The states that have offered refuge have been all commendable, and that's wonderful they've done that. But we know it's women and children who are the predominant refugees. The men of six to 60, or whatever it is – or, 16 to 60, staying behind to fight the war. They will be in vulnerable positions. And there will be people – whenever there are people that are vulnerable, there will be people that will take advantage of them, and that's going to happen.

This flow of refugees caused by Putin's war will cause us and require us to oversee as quickly – as closely as possible the welfare of the women and children not to be trafficked and used by people who have about the same consciousness and concern for others and human spirit as Vladimir Putin. So, he's – this is – basically, his own sense of entitlement and ego and destroying of people's lives and cities will lead to more destruction of human beings as refugees in the hands of people who are also corrupt – not so much corrupt, but just morally deficient at best.

So we appreciate what we're going to hear from you. Chris Smith has been a star on this issue for – ever since I've been here and maybe even longer, and he's concerned about human trafficking in his important position in the OSCE. And I know that he will be overseeing to the best of his ability and bringing ~~it~~ to the attention of the American as well as the world what will be happening and the need to be on alert to the potential for sexual violence and sexual trafficking in – of the refugees.

So I thank you for having the hearing, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate our witness and witnesses. I guess we've got some by the power of Zoom. And I yield back the balance of my time.

CARDIN: I will now recognize the ranking Republican member on the Helsinki Commission, Congressman Wilson.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Chairman Ben Cardin and Chairman Steve Cohen, for holding this important hearing today.

For my colleagues, I want to express concern about the potential of human trafficking to take advantage of vulnerable Ukrainian refugees. Our allies have shown to the best of their humanity as we see the support of the frontline states that – given to the Ukrainian refugees as an unprecedented humanitarian crisis created by the war criminal Putin. Sadly, with most refugees being women and children, it's easy for bad actors to exploit this tragedy to their malign ends.

We must now act to prevent it and to work together in evaluating the risk – which we are, Democrat and Republican.

I joined a bipartisan congressional delegation to Ukraine in December to hear firsthand from Ukrainians about the situation on the ground and their need and expectations for the future. So much has changed, sadly, since then, as Putin has perpetuated crimes against humanity and mass murder against Ukraine because of the people's desire to live in a successful and thriving democracy. President Biden is correct, this is a worldwide war against democracies for rule of law attacked by autocracies for rule by gun.

The murderous invasion of Ukraine by the megalomaniac Putin has no place in the modern world. America must unite democracies as we combine defenses to prevail with peace through strength. I continue to call for sending advanced antitank, antiaircraft, and antiship missiles to Ukraine. We must send a message to Moscow that its war crimes will be challenged to deny and stop Putin and his cronies, who feel free to have their way in the region and beyond, planning to invade Moldova and Georgia with the Chinese Communist Party attacking Taiwan and Iran vaporizing Israel as India is isolated in the lawless world.

Evicting the murderous Putin from Ukraine is the only way to help Ukrainian civilians and allow refugees to return to the Ukraine. In the meantime we must work together to the – ensure the refugees do not face more criminal acts at the hand of human traffickers. I look forward to hearing recommendations from our witnesses how we can best assist and prevent Ukrainian refugees from trafficking, and thank the witnesses for their expertise. And I yield back.

CARDIN: Thank you very much, Congressman Wilson.

I now recognize Congressman Smith.

SMITH: Thank you very much, Chairman Cardin, for convening this extraordinarily important hearing and for your leadership. I deeply appreciate it.

And Global Magnitsky will be renewed for another several years. And you were the Senate sponsor. I was the House sponsor. And it is – it is having, I think, a very good impact on the world.

CARDIN: Actually, permanent reauthorization.

SMITH: Permanent. That's what – that.

So I just – I'll be brief and I'll put my full statement into the record.

Thank you, Dr. Kari Johnstone, for your leadership. We work with J/TIP all the time. And I'm looking forward – we've got to go vote, then we'll come back, but looking forward to your recommendations on what can be done to mitigate this horrific crisis of human trafficking.

And Tatiana, who will be speaking a little later, she has convened more meetings and investigations and the like during COVID to ensure that especially the children who are being groomed and all the other terrible manifestations of human trafficking that were taking place – I just want to thank her for her extraordinary leadership. She has made all the difference in the world.

And I know you have two other very, very good and wonderful witnesses I look forward to hearing.

Yesterday at the Alliance – OSCE’s Alliance Against Human Trafficking, I was one of the panelists, of course; by Zoom; they’re in Vienna. And it was made clear by the representative for the UNHCR that the effort to combat human trafficking is “not big enough” – quote/unquote – and it’s not effective. You know, of course, it’s all happened in just such a fast period of time. You know, we know that the Russians and the Chechens and others are doing horrific things, and we don’t know who else. Hopefully, we’ll find in this hearing who else is buying and selling and putting up signs saying I’ll give you a ride, I’ll provide you a house, then they take them to some nefarious enterprise. So I’ll look forward to finding out more about that.

And again, very important that we do everything humanly possible to protect the women and children because that’s who’s getting trafficked. As was pointed out by my distinguished colleagues, almost everybody, whether they be refugee – over 4 million – or the 6 million internally displaced, they’re all at great risk. And as Ben Cardin mentioned a moment ago, we’re also worried about those that are going to Russia. What are they doing with those women and children? Probably abusing them. So we’ve got to fight every bit of this.

Yesterday we had an important call for a war crimes tribunal. I had a hearing on it with the – just a few weeks ago, on March 8th, on the Tom Lantos Commission asking that we indict Putin. Don’t wait. You know, don’t wait, like we did with Milosevic and all the others, until after the hostilities are ended. Indict him now. And we can do that through a – maybe the ICC will do it, but not likely. We should do it through a court that is convened through the General Assembly of the United Nations. That can work. And the former prosecutor for Sierra Leone testified that that is a modality that is available to us. There’s no veto power there. Russia can’t stop it, nor can China. And indict the man.

Thank you.

CARDIN: Thank you, Congressman Smith.

We have two panels, so let me go to our first panel. We’re very pleased to have Dr. Kari Johnstone with us. She serves as the senior official and principal deputy director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, J/TIP, where she has been the principal deputy director since 2014. Dr. Johnstone is a career member of the Senior Executive Service and received a B.A. from the University of Michigan and an M.A./Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, all in political science.

It's a pleasure to have you with. Your full statement will be made part of the record. You may proceed as you wish.

JOHNSTONE: Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Wilson, and distinguished members of the Commission, thank you very much for your leadership on human trafficking and human rights more broadly. And thank you for the opportunity to appear today at this hearing and your efforts to raise awareness on the urgent need to prevent human trafficking of those fleeing Russia's war in Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned, as are you, about the risks of human trafficking in this situation. Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, notable for its devastating attacks across the country, has inflicted unfathomable pain and suffering, and forced millions of Ukrainian citizens and others to flee seeking safety. Putin's war on Ukraine has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis where, as you noted, more than 4 million people, mostly women and children, have already fled Ukraine, and more than 7 million people are internally displaced. In just over one month, a quarter of the country's population has been displaced and half of its children.

The many people, including third-country nationals, fleeing Russia's aggression are at high risk for human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The majority of refugees from Ukraine are women and children who are already traumatized from the war and their often precarious journey seeking safety. Unaccompanied and separated children in particular, as you noted, are among the most vulnerable. Many have lost or ~~have~~ been separated from their families and caregivers. They've lost their homes and their sense of security. They likely find themselves in unknown places without familiar faces, and often do not speak the local language. Members of ethnic or religious minorities, third-country nationals, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ persons, and other victims of discrimination are also among those particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation during such a crisis.

As you noted, we are also very concerned about the estimated half-a-million citizens of Ukraine who are refugees in or have been deported to Russia, a large number of whom were reportedly forcibly transported there. These individuals are, indeed, at great risk of human trafficking, including forced labor and other crimes and human rights violations. There are also nearly 11,000 refugees from Ukraine in Belarus, which is complicit in Russia's war on Ukraine.

The State Department is actively working with our partners and governments throughout Europe to prevent trafficking of Ukrainian citizens and others fleeing the war and to increase protection of those whom traffickers exploit. In anticipation of a possible surge in the weeks before Russia's further offensive, we preemptively engaged with Ukrainian officials, neighboring governments, and partner organizations to urge them to integrate anti-trafficking elements into their contingency planning and protection efforts for refugees and displaced persons. Since February 24th, we have significantly increased our engagement with European governments across the continent and taken steps to urge and support enhanced efforts in the region to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute the traffickers.

In coordination with our State Department and interagency colleagues, we are leveraging the tools and resources that Congress has entrusted to us to tackle the threat posed by human traffickers in and around Ukraine.

First, we are working closely with our U.S. embassies in Europe to urge host governments to apply anti-trafficking measures as they welcome refugees and protect all trafficking victims. We are closely monitoring any reported harassment, violence, discrimination, exploitation, or stigma targeting those coming from Ukraine, and encouraging neighboring governments to put up safeguards to prevent these phenomena and other criminal activities. We are encouraging our European partners to take necessary measures, including distributing information to refugees on human trafficking and available safe resources for them in all languages that they can understand, training government officials and other frontline workers on trafficking indicators and referral mechanisms, providing tailored support to unaccompanied and separated children, and improving coordination within and between governments, civil society, and international organizations. We have been encouraged not only by how quickly governments and people in Europe have opened their hearts and their homes, but also by the efforts that governments have made to protect them and prevent trafficking.

Second, we are collaborating closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including with the [Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](#), and very much welcome his office's recent recommendations, including those that urge trauma-informed, age-appropriate, and gender-sensitive approaches; the establishment of centralized information and hotlines to provide clear information from national authorities; and registration requirements for any individuals that are offering transportation, housing, or jobs for people fleeing Ukraine. Although these measures cannot fully guarantee the prevention of trafficking and protection of victims, such measures, if fully implemented, make both prevention and protection more likely.

We also very much value the contributions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, with its groundbreaking International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council and the release of the updated National Referral Mechanism Handbook, which play a vital role in strengthening the coordination of efforts among all stakeholders to combat human trafficking and protect victims.

We also commend all the European Union is doing, including the early activation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which aims to provide immediate protection to displaced persons from Ukraine including legal residency, access to the labor market and housing, medical assistance, and access to education for children. These are crucial steps to help prevent trafficking that all countries welcoming refugees from Ukraine should implement fully and robustly.

Third and finally, utilizing the foreign assistance resources that Congress has appropriated, the TIP Office is providing targeted support through organizations such as IOM and the International Justice Mission to assist refugees and displaced persons affected by the war in Ukraine. We are working closely with IOM to enhance emergency victim assistance, which will help ensure vital food and emergency assistance can quickly and efficiently reach those

experiencing human trafficking in Ukraine and neighboring countries. We are also preparing expanded support to IOM to assist in prevention awareness-raising activities for those fleeing from Ukraine, those internally displaced, stranded third-country nationals, and the vulnerable that are remaining in place. We are also providing additional support for our current IOM Moldova project to continue to identify and provide tailored assistance to potential victims of trafficking and ensure that long-term victim reintegration options are expanded. Through supports to IJM – I'm almost done – (laughs) – in neighboring Romania, we also intend to strengthen the quality of essential social services for human trafficking victims and support Romania's criminal justice system to prosecute traffickers.

Chairman Cardin and other members of this Commission, thank you again for calling this hearing and the important role that you are playing in raising awareness about the threat that human trafficking poses to refugees and displaced persons affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. This, as you noted, is a threat that we expect will continue to grow. While there's no simple solution, working together – and again, with your leadership – we are hopeful that we will be able to at least reduce the impact of this war. Thank you.

CARDIN: Thank you for that. (Off mic.)

I'm going hand over my time to Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN: Thank you, Chairman Cardin. And thank you to this Commission for the great work and all of the good hearings this week to look at various aspects of the war in Ukraine.

And, Dr. Johnstone, I very much appreciate your testimony this morning and for the good work that your office is doing to combat trafficking in persons in the Ukraine. As you pointed out and as we know, in conflict settings it is the women and children who are most often victims and who are most adversely affected, and certainly in Ukraine we've seen the vast majority of refugees are women and children, especially because men of fighting age are staying in the country to fight the war. You talked about the work you're doing with OSCE. Can you also talk about your work with the Office of Global Women's Issues; the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and Gender Policy Council at the White House; and how you all are coordinating this effort?

JOHNSTONE: Yes, Senator. Thank you so much for your emphasis and leadership on this issue in the current crisis and around the world.

We are, indeed, working closely with our colleagues throughout the State Department as well as the interagency to make sure that we are bringing all of the resources that we have to bear on this. At this point, we anticipate that we are at the early stages and that as this is a quickly evolving situation that the traffickers will get more organized themselves and effective. And we are working with our partners in the various parts of the State Department that you noted, including the Global Women's Issues Office; Population, Refugee(s), and Migration Bureau; as well as our colleagues in the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau to ensure that

the law enforcement piece and criminal justice is also strengthened to hold the traffickers accountable.

So we are working closely across the board. And a big part of it right now, again, is what you are doing in this hearing, is raising awareness so that as women and children – but particularly the women and adults – as they are leaving that they can be most informed of not only what their rights are, which is what we often do in a potential crisis like this, but also that they can make quick decisions based on the best information available – they understand what is safe and what’s not, what signs to look out for that may signal, in fact, that someone has nefarious intent amidst this overflowing welcome that they’re receiving from so many very well-intentioned people across the continent. But that they know the things they should look out for to keep themselves safe, too.

SHAHEEN: I know you’re aware that we have a law around women, peace, and security that is an effort to ensure that women’s voices are heard in conflict areas in particular, and it’s something that the State Department and the Department of Defense are working particularly on. But I had the opportunity to meet with some of the Ukrainian women parliamentarians who were here last week, and one of the things we talked about is the fact that they also have an initiative around women, peace, and security, and that there is an opportunity to work together on this. And I know that we had – there was a meeting with some of our foreign policy staff here on the Hill and some Ukrainians this week, and one of the things they pointed out is that with so many men in the country tied down in the war that the diplomatic and civil society positions are being filled by women, the leadership positions, and that this gives a unique opportunity to ensure that we really focus on women, peace, and security efforts and ensure that women are empowered in this situation. And it seems to me that this is an opportunity that we ought to think about to – because the more women are empowered, the less likely they are to be victims of trafficking. Can you talk about this opportunity?

JOHNSTONE: Absolutely, Senator. I think you’re absolutely right that there are unique opportunities for women’s leadership in the current circumstances, as evidenced by the women parliamentarians that are traveling to engage and make the case around the world for the support that Ukraine needs in its fight right now. There are many organizations not only in government as well but also nongovernment organizations that are women led and survivor led.

Often, those survivors are themselves women as well, and they play a vitally important role in helping understand what the actual needs on the ground are and the specific needs of both women and children, as we’re seeing that they are likely the majority of the trafficking victims, given that they’re the majority of the people fleeing the war.

So that is one reason that we commend the OSCE for its Survivor Advisory Council. As well, the U.S. also has an advisory council comprised of women – sorry, of survivors of human trafficking, including female leaders that are quite strong. The head of the OSCE Survivor Advisory Council is, in fact, an American woman who had been a member of our advisory council as well.

So I think that, in many ways, both in government as well as in nongovernmental organizations, those providing services really do bring a very unique perspective and very strong leadership.

SHAHEEN: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CARDIN: Thank you, Senator.

I'd just advise the members I've just been informed that the Senate did approve the PNTR and permanent extension of the Global Magnitsky by a close vote of a hundred to zero. We don't normally do things a hundred to zero in the United States Senate. So –

SHAHEEN: Congratulations, Mr. Chairman.

CARDIN: It shows that we do have strong support for work that was originated in this Commission. Thank you.

SHAHEEN: With the chairman. So thank you very much, Senator Cardin.

CARDIN: Congressman Wilson?

WILSON: Indeed. Chairman Cardin, I want to thank you for your bipartisan leadership. It's been so inspiring that Mr. Putin didn't need to do this, Senator, but he has certainly unified Republicans and Democrats to stand together with NATO, to stand together with the EU, and just over and over again examples around the world of how we're working together in a bipartisan manner. It's just so refreshing and I – and that's why I'm really grateful, indeed, a bipartisan bill that I have provides with legislation, for patriotic Russian military defectors, with immediate political asylum to America, along with the Russian diplomats and also Duma members who defy the maniac Putin and will – with any Russian military equipment that they bring over they can actually receive a reward of a hundred thousand dollars. And as illogical as this is, truly, Putin is defaming the people of Russia by his actions, and we can expect better.

With that in mind, international organizations do play such a role. What role do you think the OSCE should play in supporting actions of frontline and other states to protect refugees from human trafficking?

JOHNSTONE: Should I wait for the beeping or go ahead and –

CARDIN: We don't even hear that noise. That's –

JOHNSTONE: (Laughs.) All right. I will go ahead. Let me, first, also congratulate you on the resounding success of that vote for the Magnitsky Act.

WILSON: Yes. Yes.

JOHNSTONE: To your very good question, Congressman, about the important role that OSCE can play in this particular crisis, as I mentioned, there have been guidelines that the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons and his team issued right away to governments to take immediate steps to prevent human trafficking.

He is really – he and his team are in a unique position to continue to monitor the situation and provide their expertise, including ongoing technical expertise to participating states throughout the OSCE region to implement those recommendations. He also issued a second set of recommendations this week specifically related to the Ukrainian context for technology companies, cyber police, and NGOs that work online to combat human trafficking.

We also very much welcome the important role that the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights can play. I noted that the National Referral Mechanism handbook that was recently updated provide some very clear guidelines for governments throughout the OSCE region and participating states, that those can also provide some very clear ways that governments can take in steps, importantly, now to get ahead and help prevent the growth of a crisis.

But as I said earlier, we expect that this is likely to be a crisis that will continue to grow and the threat itself, as you noted, Chairman, is likely to continue to grow over time. So, the important role that OSCE can play is to keep attention and continue to urge governments both to increase their capacity and sustain attention on this over time.

That might include, for example, hosting a special meeting of the OSCE national anti-trafficking coordinator and rapporteurs as well as helping countries address the specific issues in their countries as they seek to implement the guidelines and recommendations as well as the National Referral Mechanism handbook.

WILSON: It's so inspiring to see the efforts by the neighboring countries – Poland, Slovakia, Moldova, and Romania – welcoming the fleeing families and – but there are and, sadly, attempts at possible trafficking of the women and taking advantage. And so what efforts are being made to protect persons from human trafficking?

JOHNSTONE: Thank you. You're absolutely right. We have been very impressed and, really, quite pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming support that governments throughout the region, including the neighboring states like Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova – the frontline states – have really opened their hearts and their homes, and there's been an outpouring of support from individuals and organizations as well as governments across the continent, including those that are moving further on beyond those frontline states immediately neighboring Ukraine.

Governments have already begun to take some important steps, including sharing information so that as refugees and others fleeing Ukraine can get information in languages available to them so that they know what are safe options for onward transportation, housing, jobs, also sharing information about what are the risks to look for so that they can understand

that, you know, if someone asks you for your passport and they're not a government official, don't give it to them. Don't give someone your cell phone. If there are offers that look too good to be true, they probably are. So, encouraging people to have a really skeptical approach to some of the kind offers that are being shared.

Governments are also taking steps on the protection side, including increasing police patrols at borders, transportation hubs, reception centers, where we know that there are signs already of concern that people may be lurking to do harm to these people that are fleeing a situation in such desperation.

WILSON: Well, thank you. It's very inspiring. You're being proactive and just, again, you've done a miracle. You have unified Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill. Thank you.

JOHNSTONE: Thank you.

CARDIN: Senator Blumenthal?

BLUMENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this hearing, which, I think, addresses a really pressing and urgent problem, and I want to thank the Department of State for seeking to prevent trafficking before it occurs.

Social media, as we all know, is often a double-edged sword or a boon. On the one hand, it provides accurate information that can connect Ukrainian refugees with a legitimate organization. On the other hand, it can be also used as a very malicious tool to mislead and lure vulnerable women and children.

I visited the border just a short time ago and saw women and children coming across the border clutching their teddy bears and their pets with not much more than the shirt or the clothing on their backs, and I worried as I watched them go to the reception center, getting into cars and buses, without much checking occurring there.

Can we do more at that critical point, working with Polish authorities or officials of other governments, to be on the ground and making sure that that first initial contact is better protected?

JOHNSTONE: Thank you, Senator. We have also seen, in the media and our colleagues on the ground, those concerning moments when it looks like people are, potentially, putting themselves at harm's risk out of desperation, and they are tired and traumatized by that point and, perhaps, not able to make great choices.

So one of the important things that we and other governments on the ground as well as international organizations have done are urging that governments, international organizations, those that really are on the frontlines at the border points as well as reception centers and transport hubs, start registering the many people, often the vast majority of whom are probably very well intentioned, to provide transportation, housing, jobs at some point, that they are

registered so that someone is able to track and, hopefully, do some basic background checks as more time allows to ensure that we don't have known criminals that are trying to recruit or offer help in those situations, and governments are starting to put more efforts in place to begin that registration process, including, very importantly, tracking unaccompanied children – as children are coming, making sure that there are registration systems in place so that we can track their whereabouts.

A big part of the effort that we've seen growing also is just getting that information out there both online, as many of these people fleeing are looking at their phones. So they're not only looking at the posters that are also an important part, but letting them know, you know, what are the things that they can do to keep themselves safe that they – if they're getting into a car with someone that they don't know, if that's their only option, that they, you know, do basic things like take a picture of the driver's license and send it to a friend or a loved one. So, taking some basic safety measures themselves are also an important thing that we see a lot of partners on the ground starting to do.

BLUMENTHAL: Can the United States-based social media platforms – Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram – do more to monitor and remove nefarious actors from their platforms?

JOHNSTONE: I think that is an important role for the international community – writ large, governments, including the United States – to play is definitely to be monitoring and tracking the nefarious actors –

BLUMENTHAL: But the government can't right now order them to do anything. Can they do a better job of self-policing?

JOHNSTONE: You mean, the organizations that are online offering –

BLUMENTHAL: I'm talking about Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, the social media platform. Can they do a better job of rooting out the misinformation that may lure these women and children to traffickers or just kick the traffickers off their platform?

JOHNSTONE: So, I do think that is an area for growth and improvement, and I think one of the things, at least, at this current stage that those organizations can do is proactively share information about what to look for, what are the warning signs, and also where to get help, like hotline information and things like that. So –

BLUMENTHAL: Which they are not doing enough now.

JOHNSTONE: There's, certainly, room for improvement on that. Yes.

BLUMENTHAL: Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Senator, and we, certainly, appreciate, Dr. Johnstone, your leadership. It's so inspiring, and being proactive and it's – indeed, the issues that we face

today have just in an unprecedented positive way brought Republicans and Democrats together, and then we just have such faith in the State Department and your activities working with our military.

With that, we will now proceed to panel two.

JOHNSTONE: Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you.

(Pause.)

WILSON: Ladies and gentlemen, we will resume and, indeed, we're really grateful we have three witnesses that will present very vital information to the people of the United States and we have two online, but in person we have Tatiana Kotlyarenko and she's the advisor on anti-trafficking issues at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, where she provides technical support and capacity building in combating trafficking in human beings to OSCE participating states. Previously, she was the founder and executive director of the Enslavement Prevention Alliance of West Africa and Ghana.

Additionally, online, we'll have Mykola Kuleba, and she is the director of the NGO Save Ukraine, which is providing assistance to orphans, children with disabilities, and low income families affected by the war in Ukraine, as well as conducting evacuation operations of children. Previously, Mr. Kuleba was – served as the commissioner for children's rights in the Office of the President of Ukraine.

And, finally, we're really grateful to have Nic McKinley. He's the founding executive director of DeliverFund, which leverages cutting-edge technology to fight human trafficking. Nic spent 11 years in U.S. Special Operations as a U.S. Air Force pararescue man prior to being recruited to the Central Intelligence Agency, where he served as a country chief for a special unit within the CIA.

And we'll begin with our person who is present. Thank you, Ms. Kotlyarenko.

KOTLYARENKO: Thank you so much, distinguished members of the Commission.

I'm joining you here today from the 22nd OSCE Alliance Conference in Vienna, which specifically focused on the issue of protection and was organized by the Office of the Special Representative to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings at the OSCE.

I would like to thank you today for prioritizing not only the military attack on Ukraine and on democratic values but what, I believe, is also an attack on women and children. As a result, millions of refugees have been forced to flee their country, almost all women and children, and are now vulnerable and being targeted by human traffickers.

With a flow of over 4 million people, mainly women and children, from Ukraine, in the past month, there have been reports of trafficking in human beings, and risks of trafficking in human beings have been significantly exacerbated for this vulnerable population.

Women forcibly displaced by this conflict face situations which can lead to exploitation and abuse with little defense against criminals. Ukrainian women, prior to the military attack, were a target group for sex traffickers due to demand created by buyers and their high value in the sex industry.

If you want to prevent trafficking of Ukrainian women and children, we need to unite to address demand on policy, legislative, and practical levels. There have been reports of children and women disappearing after crossing the border, sometimes accepting a ride or a job offer from a person they think is there to help.

Although the extent of human trafficking is not yet known, the cases are beginning to be reported. Due to the Russian Federation's military attack in Ukraine, children have been displaced, putting them at grave risk of physical harm, severe emotional distress and trauma, and human trafficking. Three hundred and ~~seventy eight~~seventy-eight thousand children needed protection assistance on Ukraine's frontline. Among all of those children, those in state institutional care, almost a hundred thousand, were in severe danger.

I've met evacuated orphaned children to whom safety was a doll or a teddy bear – Mmisha – because nothing else was certain except the toy in their hands. There have been children who, on their own walk to the border, four kilometers in the cold, after being separated from family members or having had their parents killed, these are children who are physically safe but what they have is uncertainty and the trauma and terror that is likely to affect them for many years to come and make them very vulnerable to trafficking in the future.

I would also like to tell you about an incredible young man, Tyimir Tsaplienko~~cha Plienko~~ (ph), who is 16 years old. His father is a renowned Ukrainian journalist who's been recently wounded while covering the evacuation in Chernihiv. Tyimir (ph) has asked me to tell you that urgent help is needed to combat trafficking of women and children. Tyimir's (ph) response has been to organize his friends to conduct awareness raising at the Warsaw central train station, including handing out flyers and talking to arriving refugees about the risks of human trafficking.

He has seen so many potential victims. He is just a boy, and if he can do it, we can develop immediate and comprehensive responses to this unprecedented challenge in the OSCE region. OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has ~~and~~ recently launched two tools that can be a game changer in the fight against human trafficking – the updated National Reform Mechanism, joining efforts to protect the rights of trafficked persons – a practical handbook – and the OSCE-ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council.

Under Chapter 5 of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, OSCE participating states have committed to establishing national referral mechanisms as a

means of fulfillment – fulfilling their obligations to protect and promote the human rights of trafficked persons. The update of the interim handbook provides a framework which all OSCE participating states can adapt and apply within their own national systems.

Its purpose is to provide essential know-how of the working methods, procedures, and services that are required in order to fulfill the objectives of NRMs. For the first time, it explains the specific and individual needs and risks of both adults and children who are victims and survivors of trafficking, centering all communication and action on the protection of victims and survivors, including on addressing trafficking in human beings in migration flows and in states of emergency.

Effective National Referral Mechanisms are the first step towards the development of a comprehensive and impactful multi-disciplinary response. I would like to take a moment to thank Congressman Smith, OSCE Parliamentary Special Representative on human trafficking issues, and Janice Helwig from the Helsinki Commission for contributing your expertise to the NRM update of the handbook and U.S. for its support and funding and development of the NRM handbook and project work of the OSCE/ODIHR on anti-trafficking.

All children, including children from Ukraine, without exception, need to have a home environment where they feel safe, secure, individually supported, and cared for and where a settled routine can be created for them. Therefore, OSCE participating Sstates need to ensure robust and coordinated national child protection systems and implement National Referral Mechanisms for children, which ODIHR has developed, which must be child friendly, age appropriate, child-rights centered, and gender sensitive.

We do not want to sit by and watch unaccompanied minors disappearing without a trace. That is why a child registration system is an urgent requirement. To assist OSCE participating states in preventive trafficking and strengthening their responses to address trafficking in human beings resulting from the refugee flows from Ukraine, ODIHR has launched a survey to assess the needs of civil society at the frontlines and borders in all countries bordering Ukraine to tailor training of trainers to strengthen their capacity and technical expertise in prevention of trafficking as well as identification and provision of assistance and support.

ODIHR will also start the process of translating the NRM handbook into a number of different languages to support not only the work of transit countries but also destination countries for Ukrainian victims of trafficking.

ODIHR will also conduct rapid National Referral Mechanism assessment visits to participating states neighboring Ukraine in the upcoming weeks. These assessments will result in tailored guidance to each OSCE participating states on how to strengthen their responses to address and prevent trafficking in human beings of Ukrainian refugees.

A solid understanding of the responsibilities and tasks of each anti-trafficking stakeholder involved in an NRM or equivalent system, and those involved in direct provision of protection and support for Ukrainian refugees, as well as knowledge of the context and unique

circumstances in which they are to be embedded, will serve as a preliminary step in the assessment of the National Referral Mechanism.

Moreover, the assessment visit aims to address possible gaps in combating trafficking in human beings in target OSCE participating states and in the region for a coordinated and unified response to the challenge.

ODIHR, through its rapid NRM assessment visits, is able to reflect on-the-ground situation in real time and provide participating sStates tailored and specific guidance based on its extensive experience in the field of National Referral Mechanisms and rights of victims and survivors to address the specific challenge of the flows of Ukrainian refugees to the participating states bordering Ukraine and onwards.

This is just the beginning of ODIHR's efforts to address this enormous crisis, which has made Ukrainian women and children extremely vulnerable to trafficking. OSCE participating sStates need to be prepared for what may be an overwhelming number of cases and victims in the upcoming months and years.

I ask for your continued support in strengthening ODIHR's work on anti-human trafficking response as it pertains to the refugee flows from Ukraine. You will now next hear from my personal hero, Mykola Kuleba, a man who has evacuated thousands of the most vulnerable children – children from state institutions, foster homes, children with disabilities or from other vulnerable backgrounds, and who continues to do so from combat zones with his group of committed volunteers, some of whom were actually killed recently and wounded doing this evacuating children. I call him a man of God, a man of faith, a man to whom each individual child matters.

So, I will ask you today, can we come together to support incredible heroes such as Mykola Kuleba and ensuring that Ukrainian children have a childhood, home, and education and safety?

To me, a Ukrainian child is every child, and all children across the OSCE as well as women should be protected from traffickers. Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Ms. Kotlyarenko.

And, indeed, we're grateful to have your hero, the director of the NGO Save Ukraine, and that's Mr. Mykola Kuleba. And, Director Kuleba, we look forward to hearing from you.

KULEBA: Thank you very much.

Greetings from unconquered Ukraine, and every day I'm traveling to combat zones but now I'm in the capital in Kyiv, and I am honored to be here today representing Save Ukraine and to be the voice of children of all who was killed, wounded, and maimed, for those who are forced to hide from shells and shootings in basements with no means to existence or those who have

had to run from war. Two-thirds of children are already being forced to leave their homes. Most of them are now refugees and are desperately seeking shelter abroad.

An astonishing amount of children are experiencing trauma that will haunt them for the rest of their lives, and those are not just words because the conditions from which we took them and the state in which they are in are not by any stretch of their ~~integration~~ imagination compatible with the term childhood – term childhood. This is a war on children and a genocide of the Ukrainian people, organized by Russia.

For the last seven years, I was presidential commissioner for human rights, and for more than 20 years I worked in the field of children's rights protection. Right now, as the founder of Save Ukraine NGO, with the support of state bodies and public organizations, we are coordinating for the special operations of evacuating vulnerable children from hotspots all over Ukraine – children with severe disabilities, orphans from orphanages and foster care, and children in large families.

Today, in the forty-third day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and in this last 43 days, we have witnesses, unspeakable suffering and crimes committed against millions of Ukrainian children. I have traveled to the U.S. and Washington many times. I lived in Arlington. Can you imagine that in the suburb of Washington foreign armies raping, killing, and crushing the bodies of American children with tanks?

This is exactly what is happening in the suburbs of the capital of Ukraine and within the territories that have been captured by the enemy. This is what Save Ukraine is seeing. Just examples, a little boy mercilessly survived after Russian forces fired Grad rockets on the columns of cars during an evacuation of children and families from Mariupol through green corridor.

A little boy, 16 years old, from Bucha. He stands in his backyard by the grave of his mother, who died of hunger in the basement.

There is also the story of 13-years-old Vavwa ~~(ph)~~. His father and little brother were killed by Russian troops during evacuation. Vavwa ~~(ph)~~ survived, but with severe injuries. But how does he live with this?

There are thousands of such stories only in Mariupol, but no one knows about them yet, the same way as no one knows how many children were killed there. They will never share these stories – their stories.

The situation in eastern Ukraine is sharply worsening. Hundreds of thousands of people are forced to flee from east to west. Children in Ukraine are facing gunfire and shelling, and injuries have been horrific. Parents are desperate to find transport, food, water, shelter, and medical supplies. Hospitals have been shelled and damaged. The Russian Federation does not follow any rules of war.

WILSON: And, indeed, Dr. Kuleba, I hope you can hear. You're such an inspiration, and the patriots of Ukraine are an inspiration to the world.

And with that, we now proceed to Nic McKinley, the founder and executive director of DeliverFund.

MCKINLEY: Thank you, Ranking Member Cardin and the distinguished members of this Commission, for your leadership on the tragedy of human trafficking.

As we've already talked about at length, human traffickers are in the business of exploiting vulnerable populations, and refugees are among the most vulnerable populations imaginable. In case you're not familiar with us, at DeliverFund we specialize in building and deploying –

KULEBA: – orphans from orphanages. Sorry. Can you hear me?

WILSON: Yes, we can, and if you complete and then we'll proceed to Mr. McKinley.

KULEBA: Let me finish, please.

WILSON: Yes.

KULEBA: In the last days, Save Ukraine has conducted complex evacuation operations, evacuating orphans from orphanages in the Donetsk region, several foster families, with about more than 100 orphans and many other families with children from the war zones.

Today, the Lysychansk district suffered strong shellings for the whole night and morning. Russians have inflicted destruction upon residential neighborhoods. But despite this, the team of heroic volunteers from our Save Ukrainian center has evacuated some familyies type orphanages from this territory. Now those children are safe, fed, and are already on the way to western Ukraine.

Yesterday, "orcs" conducted a pressure strike on the evacuation gathering place in Lysychansk. One man was wounded and hospitalized. The food distribution point is totally destroyed, and two evacuation buses have also suffered under their shellings. But despite this, we have managed to evacuate 68 people from Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk.

On the 5th of April, we evacuated more than four people from Sievierodonetsk. Among them were several severely sick children who we had to evacuate in ambulances. I thank Save Ukraine partners for the armored evacuation vehicles they provided to us.

People are very exhausted, hungry, and many of them need medical care. They were on the verge of survival under fire for a long time. Families told me how they drunk snow to cook. After all, a trip to the water could cost a life. Many have already died from dehydration and starvation. Children, people with disabilities, and elderly are particularly hard hit. They often

stay in houses because they do not have the opportunity to go down to the basements to hide from enemy shellings.

Last week, during an evacuation of families with children from Chernihiv, three of Save Ukraine volunteers died and three more were severely wounded as a result of shelling by the Russian army. All the evacuation transport was destroyed. I thank our drivers and volunteers and the whole Save Ukrainian team for heroic work to saving lives.

And for the children who are still here, there is no safety, only terror. But the war condition is always close to the risk of human trafficking. For children who were evacuated abroad, there is always a risk of human trafficking. Because of the massive movement of the children from Ukraine across borders, it is essential that countries bordering Ukraine as well as EU countries, have a unified and coordinated approach to children protection as well as registration of unaccompanied children and children with their family members.

In light of this, I'm working with DeliverFund to create a registration app and to provide the government to make sure that every child is accounted for. We also work in partnership with DeliverFund to map the current trends with dynamic and prevent human trafficking. We also have young people who are raising awareness and working to prevent trafficking of women and children arriving in Poland.

In addition, there has been numerous reports of woman and children who experienced sexual violence by Russian soldiers at combat zones. These woman and children are extremely vulnerable of human trafficking. In order to address this issue, I would like to announce a special center for victims of sexual violence in a confidential location to ensure protection and rehabilitation of these woman and children.

I'd like to ask you to support as this requires high-level expert due to the horrific crimes such as rapes and other forms of brutally. We know cases where mothers were raped in front of children and even cases when children were sexually abused in front of their mothers. And history does not remember such atrocities from the time of Hitler.

Russia has staged ~~in~~a real genocide of the Ukrainian people. When Ukraine laments from a explosions we – the world cannot turn a deaf ear. Just now, as we speak with you, Russia is launching its missiles and destroying peaceful Ukrainian cities. Ukrainian children are dying. Hundreds of thousands of children in Ukraine are currently sitting in basements and bomb shelters.

It is spring outside, but they have not seen the sun for more than a month. Millions of Ukrainian children are now refugees wandering around the world. The world must help this great democratic country that has faced unprecedented evil. Each of you has the ability to aid in the rescue. Each of you can resist this evil. You can do it. Let's help Ukrainian children together. Let's save Ukraine together. Thank you very much.

WILSON: And, Director Kuleba, you are an inspiration to all of us. In every way, it's an indication you have really brought out the best.

We have Mr. Nic McKinley. He's the director of the DeliverFund, and at this time we'll proceed with Mr. McKinley.

MCKINLEY: Thank you, sir.

As I was stating earlier, and as Mykola alluded to, at DeliverFund we specialize in building and deploying software and intelligence on human traffickers and their activities. So, we prevent and counter human trafficking by disrupting and complicating their business model, decreasing their profit margins, and reducing the human trafficking market.

And I say market because it is one. The crime of human trafficking exists in an illicit market, and, like all markets, it is subject to the laws of supply and demand.

Global demand for forced labor, black market organs and adoptions, and commercial sex exploitation remains high. So chaotic situations like the one created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine are market opportunities for human traffickers to source victims.

And the internet technologies that were previously mentioned allow these traffickers to advertise these victims at scale anywhere in the world, and then transport them to the locations where they have the most demand, therefore, maximizing their profit margins.

This Commission has an opportunity to keep these refugees from being trafficked by providing resources to partners like Save Ukraine, like OSCE, and others in the region who are accepting these refugees and attacking the markets where these traffickers are operating.

Traffickers engage in their grotesque business model for money. So to the extent we can complicate their business models and reduce human trafficking by attacking the traffickers' ability to profit from the exploitation of these vulnerable populations, education and awareness campaigns are important and they should be continued.

But we also need to counter the human trafficker with equal vigor, because you cannot have a human trafficking victim without a human trafficker. The DeliverFund team on the ground in Poland, in working in coordination with multiple partners like Save Ukraine and OSCE, has tracked trafficking victims from locations in Ukraine to other locations in Eastern and Western Europe.

So, we know this is happening and are quickly beginning to understand how we can disrupt the market and prevent it by working together with our partners, specifically, with OSCE Save Ukraine, USAID, and the Department of State J/TIP office.

I encourage this Commission to resource these countries who are accepting these refugees and ensure they have the resources they need to prevent -and counter the human trafficking we know is happening, and just as importantly, to make sure they have the data and intelligence required to best allocate those resources.

Thank you, again, to this Commission for taking this crime so seriously, and I look forward to your continued leadership on this issue.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Mr. McKinley.

Now, hey, we have been joined by a super star from the Palmetto State of South Carolina, Senator Tim Scott. I'm just so grateful to have you here, and we were fellow citizens at one time of the holy city of Charleston.

SCOTT: Yes, sir.

WILSON: So just grateful to have you here. If you'd make – want to make a comment.

SCOTT: Thank you, Congressman, for this opportunity to say something.

There's no doubt that the genocide that we're seeing today through Ukraine is devastating, deplorable. Frankly, it's disgusting. But the aftermath, the humanitarian crisis that will linger, perhaps, for years, will require assistance from the United States and our Western allies for – frankly, for the next several years, to go forward. And I look forward to continuing to listen to experts help us understand and distill the necessity of assistance and what the package should look like and, frankly, how we can make sure that those who are providing assistance are qualified and verified.

So, the process that we have to undertake is incredibly important, and I look forward to being part of that solution.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Senator. And, again, you are so appreciated by the people of South Carolina, your leadership so positive. You and Senator Lindsey Graham reflects so well.

SCOTT: Thank you, sir.

WILSON: And they reflect well on the issues that we're facing today, the humanitarian issues, and it's really so inspiring. All three witnesses have made such wonderful presentation.

And then, Director Kuleba, your courage to serve there in Kyiv is incredible, and with that, a question we would all have. What more can we do? Having been in Kyiv in December, I saw the extraordinary people there. It was – it's so impressive. But what more can we do to assist and – because, hey, it was not intended but we have a remarkable circumstance, the Republicans and Democrats being totally united and wanting to help the people of Ukraine.

KULEBA: As I told you, you can support Ukraine now. I'm not telling you about weapon because it's more about the other issues. I am more involved in child protection system, and we need more support, and we need more ambulances, more armored buses. We need more food, humanitarian support, because we have a humanitarian catastrophe in a lot of region(s). I have a photo on the video what happened now, this minute, in the cities.

For example, Cherkiv, it's 150 kilometers from Kyiv and the huge lines of thousands of people who need food – who stayed there, but they are hungry. And we need strong partners who really support us.

I'm responsible for Save Ukraine NGO, and I cannot tell you about the whole country. But I see my very eyes what happened with children there. I hear stories from families. I see how children – how childrens dying. It's madness. And I cannot understand what happened in the head of – in Putin's head. Nobody can understand.

But I never could imagine it will happen in Kyiv, in the center of Europe, with more than 40 million of population. And you better know how to support Ukraine just now. We need support. We need everything now to protect our country, to protect future of our children.

I told you, you cannot imagine that somebody touch your child. But it happened. They are killing our children. They're killing our families. It's unnormal. It's genocide.

WILSON: Director, thank you so much, and, indeed, from so many of us who have had the opportunity to visit Russia over the years, it's just horrifying to see the consequence of Putin's regime, people who are – should be world class and working together.

And with that in mind, we have Ms. Kotlyarenko. What more can we do on behalf of alerting about the issue of human trafficking?

KOTLYARENKO: Thank you so much for the question. There are many things that can be done, actually. Number one, actually, I would say, is the prevention piece, because we don't want to deal with the consequences for years to come. So, on the prevention piece, as Mykola Kuleba has mentioned and as also Dr. Johnstone has mentioned, there needs to be a robust and coordinated child registration system.

So as children are moving across Ukraine, across the border, they're registered. There's a complete record of their special needs, if they have any, and we would know what happened to a child leaving the combat zone in Ukraine to the final destination in Germany, France, or wherever they may end up being – going to. So that part is essential because a lot of children can go missing.

In addition, there needs to be a clear number that is accessible to all refugees crossing the border or even those that are crossing back so that they can have one contact number which they could contact. In addition, it is really important to build the capacity of local law enforcement so they can react quickly to incoming cases and identify and detect trafficking victims.

And I will say it again and again – you've heard, you know, Dr. Johnstone say it as well – effective and robust National Referral Mechanisms. Those are essential. They would create the necessary tool on the ground for multi-disciplinary approach and coordination in order to both detect and identify trafficking victims but also prosecute cases, as well as provide assistance and support. Thank you.

WILSON: And thank you so much for your leadership, and, indeed, it is followed with Mr. McKinley developing the cutting-edge technology to fight human trafficking. And what is the status again, Mr. McKinley, of this?

MCKINLEY: So, we currently have a team of four people on the ground working on deploying that technology, working directly with Tatiana and Mykola and his team to make sure that it gets into the right hands, to make sure it gets – it's being used by the right people. Obviously, with the Russian threat, the cybersecurity piece is extremely important, and so that complicates things a little bit. We need to make sure that we're – if we're putting all of these children's identities into a database that we are properly protecting that. But then also that we can focus on the technology and that's very important, but I want to direct attention to something that Mykola had specifically asked for, which is food.

We need to keep in mind that part of the reason why these populations of refugees are so vulnerable is because they don't have their basic necessities met because they had to flee a conflict zone. So, if we can do immediate prevention steps, like, making sure there's food, water, and shelter for these refugees, that goes a long way to preventing them from being in such a dire situation that they become more vulnerable to human trafficking.

WILSON: And thank you for that insight and, indeed, each of you, the three that I had the opportunity to speak with, you know, it's such an inspiration for the people of the world, and hope springs eternal. I really believe you're going to be – you're going to be successful, and the people of Ukraine will be successful.

Now a leader on efforts for human rights. There's nobody better in the U.S. Congress than Congressman Chris Smith, all the way from New Jersey.

SMITH: Thank you very much, Commissioner, and Ranking Member Wilson, for your leadership and for your questions. I apologize that I missed the testimonies. I will go back and read them. We did have votes and I had to get over there to vote.

Let me just – a couple – I know a lot of questions have already been asked so I won't be redundant, I hope. But maybe, Tatiana, you can give us some insight, or any of our distinguished witnesses, about the level of situational awareness on the part of the NGOs, the people that are providing the services that – the governments – to be conveying 24/7 of the risk of trafficking. You know, in one of my five laws that I authored on combating human trafficking, in the second we put in language about making sure that in refugee situations we are doing everything humanly possible to make sure that everyone is on the same page situational awareness wise about what's going on.

And secondly, with regards to the messaging to the people that are fleeing, is there any way any of you can tell us what might be the best means to ratchet up the awareness to the fleeing individuals? I agree, food and shelter – it's all absolutely necessary. But, you know, as they flee, they're more vulnerable.

So if – I mean, is it something that President Zelensky, you know, a heroic figure if ever there was one, could convey on a regular basis about, you know, as you cross the border, even as you're internally displaced – but as you cross the border, please be ever mindful that when that car looks to pick you up, when you go to a house, that it's not a potential trafficking situation.

And we know that there are a number of unaccompanied children, unaccompanied minors, that are making their way across. Are there any estimates as to how many? And, again, looking at the presidents, from Duda to the others in Romania – Viktor Orbán in Hungary and all the others – are they broadcasting a message to everyone that the other shoe of abuse after the horrific war itself is that other hell, as you said in your statement the other day, Tatiana, leaving one hell to go to the next – that are they systematically conveying that message as well? And if not, how can we encourage them to do so?

KOTLYARENKO: I think many of the bordering countries and, as one, Ukraine, the message about trafficking is going out. The problem here is, is that when you're fleeing and you have no other options, many of the women have never traveled on their own with the children outside of the country. Some even have not even traveled to a city before.

So, when they're crossing borders, oftentimes, they don't even know where they are. They think there are people to help them, and many are. There have been incredible people in all of the countries mentioned who have come out and helped and opened their houses and opened their car doors and driven them to medical facilities, provided support, food, shelter, clothes, and such.

The problem is, is that there are also others, and the traffickers are getting smarter. So, in the beginning, there were reports of men offering rides, and I know that some of the, you know, in some of the reception centers, for example, in Poland they would actually offer them elderly women to take instead of younger women. So that was a technique.

But now they've switched. So now they have couples who might come and offer or even female recruiters whom women will trust. Because at a certain point, you know, if you cannot trust anyone at all – not men, not women, not anyone – but you still have to move your family, you have to move your children, you have to move yourself to a safer location or to an onwards location, that vulnerability is in place.

So, once again, National Referral Mechanisms, in countries that are robust and equivalent, would actually go a long way where there are protection systems that are created internally in Ukraine and externally around Ukraine, and many of the countries are transit countries. So, for example, in Romania, you have had hundreds of thousands – I think something, like, 800,000 people come – but only 80,000 remain and the rest moved forward.

So, you have this situation where there's a lot of movement, you know, to Ukraine, from Ukraine, and now there's also movement back to Ukraine, and that creates massive vulnerability.

So, can more be done? Yes, absolutely. I've mentioned, you know, a young man who's doing just this with his – with the team of his teen friends. But I think it needs to be done in a

comprehensive government level. I think the IGOs need to step up to do this jointly also with civil society. I think it takes all hands. You know, the multi-disciplinary approach that is the model for the National Referral Mechanism needs to be adopted all across.

SMITH: In 2012, I asked the foreign minister of Ukraine in a meeting that I had with him on human trafficking if they would host a conference on ensuring that their and other OSCE partners – participating states – would train their flight attendants and other modes of transportation, including buses and trains but especially planes, jets, so that the flight attendants could be situationally aware when a trafficking situation may be underway.

I raise that because many of the women who were being trafficked were being going – were going to the Middle East. They were going to Dubai and other places to be exploited under false pretenses – of course, you know, the deception part of human trafficking. And it was a very successful conference that was convened in 2013 and, you know, even some of the flight attendants in Ukraine were trained at the conference, just symbolically, as it rolled out.

Now, my question is, in terms of people who may be looking to aggressively pick up and abuse and take people to other parts of the world, is there any sense as to where some of these traffickers may be coming from? Are they coming up from the Middle East, for example? Are they coming up from other places to – or is it something that's still forming and it hasn't manifested?

And let me ask you as well, other flights, like, out of Germany or wherever it might be, I do hope and I would strongly ask each of those governments to be very aware of who's getting on their flights, whether it be Lufthansa or whatever it might be, to be aware of Ukrainian women who might be being trafficked to other parts of the world for exploitation, including in the Middle East. So, is there any sense of that – you know, the makeup of who the potential traffickers are?

KOTLYARENKO: I think it varies, actually. They're the small "pop and mom," quote/unquote, operations. But I think there's also an organization behind this as well, because if you're talking about a large number of women and children who are, potentially, being trafficked – as I said, people who know this, I'm pretty sure shortly, especially with DeliverFund's assistance.

Where are the traffickers coming from? I would say they – they're coming from across EU and further out. I heard of a case just recently of a woman at the Warsaw train station dressed up with a child. When she was asked, you know, in an awareness raising conversation on trafficking where she's going, she said Dubai, that she was offered a good job there. As to the extent of the job and her skill level, that didn't match. So, there's your answer there.

But as I said, at this point, a lot of the evidence is more anecdotal. I mean, the other piece is that Ukrainian refugees can now travel for free across Europe on the train systems. But a lot of them arriving at places they don't know anyone, as I said – and this is where, once again, it's not just the bordering countries that we need to look out for. We need to look out across the

whole of Europe and, actually, potentially, also here in the U.S. because there have been also reports of Ukrainian refugees at the border with Mexico.

So, I think we are going to see a global issue eventually in terms of trafficking of Ukrainian women and children who are very much valued and especially in the sex trade – the sex market, even prior to the military action that has happened a month and a half ago.

SMITH: I appreciate that. Thank you. It seems to me, we really need to accelerate those efforts to make sure that the flight attendants and everyone else – Airline Ambassadors International – Nancy Rivard has done great work there, and I think there needs to be a doubling down right now to make sure, as well as with the trains and the like, that they're not being used to transport victims.

Finally, the United States has put out a TPS – temporary protective status – for Ukrainians who are here. I think that's a good move. There are a number of people I've met within my own district that are worried that visas will be running out. They don't want to be, you know, in a bad situation. So, I think that was a very good move.

But working with some of my colleagues across the aisle, including Lloyd Doggett, we've been asking the administration – he's from Texas, a Democrat – that, you know, we know a lot of Ukrainians have said they don't want to leave or go too far because they want to go back.

But I do hope that the United States would be more generous in opening up our doors to these true refugees, even if it turns out to be a more temporary status or if it is more than that. I think we need to do much more, and that letter is – if it hasn't been sent already we've been collecting signatures and my hope is that – your thoughts on that? Should the United States be more generous in opening up its doors to refugees?

KOTLYARENKO: I think all countries in the OSCE should actually provide support and as much as they can, based on their legislation and capacity, and there are different ways to support. And, once again, you know, one of the things that has been mentioned over and over again is protection of children, specifically, unaccompanied minors, because there – as I've mentioned earlier, there are over a hundred thousand children who – or close to a hundred thousand children who were in state care before the military action in Ukraine, as well as 70,000 children in foster care group homes.

So, we're talking about a lot of very vulnerable children, which may overwhelm systems of just the neighboring countries. So, this is where everyone can come and have a unified approach and provide help and assistance in protecting those children, at least for the meantime.

SMITH: Thank you.

Yield to Senator Klobuchar.

KLOBUCHAR: Well, thank you very much, Congressman, and I was listening with interest just because I agree on so many things. We have a big Ukrainian-American population

in my state of Minnesota and I advocated on the visa front. I think we should take more refugees, really, from all over the world.

I've advocated raising the caps not only for humanitarian purposes but also because we have a very low unemployment rate in our state and the refugees, including Somalians, Liberians, we have the biggest population in the country of those refugees – second biggest. Hmong have been a big part of our economy and our economic growth.

And so thank you for raising those issues, as well as the need to flight attendants have good radars for figuring out when something's wrong.

So, I'm going to start here with you, Ms. Kotlyarenko, and I wanted to – I visited, actually, the Polish-Ukraine border just a few weeks ago with Senator Portman and Senator Wicker and Senator Blumenthal. I'll never forget that for the rest of my life of the Ukrainians streaming through, the Polish greeting them at the border, taking them into their homes.

What do you think can be done more at the borders on trafficking, and have you seen registries – which, I think, seem like a good idea – set up successfully in other places?

KOTLYARENKO: Thank you so much. I've had a similar experience. My family came as refugees to U.S. in 1989 from the former Soviet Union. So, when I see these kids coming in with the fear and uncertainty in their eyes, not really understanding what's going to happen, it's, truly, heartbreaking, and this is what traffickers are taking advantage of.

KLOBUCHAR: Yes. That's the hardest part. Yes.

KOTLYARENKO: I mean, I was lucky. As I said, I came here and we had, you know, a wonderful support system and family. But all of them are really in fear.

So, what can happen more at the borders? I think there should be more than just flyers next to the booths at the borders talking about trafficking. I think there could be proper billboards and proper checkpoints, actually.

I know that there are volunteer points where people do check where people are going. But we have also discussed proper child registration systems and I truly believe that those registration systems should be run by government to government so that there is a government-to-government follow through on where these children are, both unaccompanied children but children, in general.

KLOBUCHAR: Right. Exactly.

KOTLYARENKO: I think that that would – that is a key and this could be, I think, easily done on the EU level, frankly, and coordinated as well because many of the Ukrainians are coming into the EU as well as other neighboring countries like Moldova, for example, which is not a part of the EU.

KLOBUCHAR: Right. I understand there's a hundred thousand refugees in Moldova, I heard yesterday, that they've taken in. I think I heard one out of – for such a poor country, one out of 25 of – a one to 25 ratio, 25 people in Moldova to one refugee. It would be, like, 13 million refugees in the U.S. So, they, clearly, have generously taken in a number of refugees. But with that can cause trouble if there's not any oversight of what's happening with the kids.

KOTLYARENKO: I fully agree. I think the countries have done tremendously well in their response. The problem is, is that when you have so many vulnerable people –

KLOBUCHAR: Exactly.

KOTLYARENKO: – women and children, who are so valued by traffickers moving so quickly across borders –

KLOBUCHAR: Yeah.

KOTLYARENKO: – countries have done extremely well, and I have actually spoken, you know, to the delegations of different countries and they're really committed and they're trying. But I think any country that would experience this unprecedented rapid flow of such a vulnerable population would require all hands on deck and all assistance –

KLOBUCHAR: Right.

KOTLYARENKO: – from absolutely everyone.

KLOBUCHAR: Exactly. So Senator Cornyn and I introduced the Abolish Human Trafficking Reauthorization Act just – actually this last week, which we had passed the first bill that included safe harbor and other provisions years back, the first major trafficking bill.

What steps has the EU taken to coordinate efforts among transportation sector, businesses, government agencies, and just what do you think more can be done from the EU point? You just talked about the border. But is there other things you think could be done?

KOTLYARENKO: Yes, I do believe there are many things that can be done. As there are people moving across, I think there needs to be a more visible hotline number that everybody coordinated across the EU, that everybody could actually contact not just for children, because there is the EU Center for Missing and Exploited Children as well or the version that we have here, but all across available in Ukrainian at all times.

I think there should be training and support and assistance for law enforcement to detect and recognize cases of trafficking. There should be more shelter spaces created for victims of trafficking and there should be more awareness raising all across about the vulnerabilities that Ukrainians actually have and vetting, actually, as well, for those that are taking in Ukrainians into their homes, because we have heard, actually, rather, horrific stories of Ukrainian women who have been housed, you know, by good – you know, good willing people where they were sexually abused or exploited otherwise.

KLOBUCHAR: OK. And maybe that's my last question here of you, Mr. Kuleba. We've focused a lot in my questions here on trafficking in countries surrounding – of Ukrainian refugees surrounding Ukraine. What are you seeing on the ground in Ukraine? How can organizations like the U.N., especially, improve their involvement?

KULEBA: Thank you very much. I have only some examples. It's from yesterday's evacuation from Chernihiv.

In my bus, for 20 people it was half of them children. And for example, one child was orphaned with guardianship. His grandmother was guardianship for this boy, and he came to me and told me, please take my child to a safety place from the – I asked her, but how do you know that I am not – will abuse him. I don't want he will be under the shellings. But save him. And it was, like, one example, and we spent one hour to agree with that grandmother to go with this child. We found a safer place for them together there.

And the other two orphans, what – with their worker of orphanage. And when I called director, where are you going? We don't know, but, please, to find a safer place for these children. That's why we need protection from human trafficking inside Ukraine and outside because it's millions of children. It's not only children but womans.

KLOBUCHAR: Yes.

KULEBA: And but Nic and Tatiana, they're professionals and we work together, and I believe we can develop strong system for Ukraine, which will protect our childrens and our womans from human trafficking.

KLOBUCHAR: Well, and I want to thank you for what you're doing, your courage being there on the ground, and your people. I think you know we stand with you. But I appreciate that you – with everything that's happening, with the evil of Vladimir Putin, that you're willing to focus on another evil, too, which is that people are going to take advantage of the situation when you have vulnerable people who, as you point out, just want to save their kids' lives, and the traffickers are going to come in and take advantage of that.

So, this has been enlightening for me to think about this other aspect of the problem, something I've long been involved in. But I think we are, rightfully, focused on getting you the weapons that you all need and the humanitarian aid. But we have to immediately start focusing on this as well. So, thank you very much. Thank you, Congressman Smith.

SMITH: Thank you, Senator Klobuchar. Great to see you again, as always.

Just to conclude, if I could ask, is there a hotline or is there a contemplation of establishing a hotline that victims and refugees, especially refugees, could call and find out whether or not, you know, the situation is, potentially, harmful to them? Or if they are in trouble to get rescued?

KOTLYARENKO: I believe that if there's a partnership with telecoms there could be one global number, potentially, or regional numbers that could be established so that it's not a different or different set of numbers in each country that they need to locate and call.

So, this is where if there was one hotline created, at least a temporary one, for Ukrainian refugees to call in that could attend to their questions in Ukrainian, Russian, and the other local languages that they may speak, I think that will go a long way, actually, because there are always a question, where do I call and how do I get them? Are they going to be available 24/7? Do they have people who could actually attend, for example, to a child reporting? Because that's also important. Is a trauma informed approach going to be used and is there – you know, does this connect also to law enforcement for action? Because it's not enough for people just to call and say, I'm being trafficked. But what happens afterwards?

SMITH: Before we conclude, would any of the witnesses like to make any further comment, perhaps, a question that wasn't asked? And I would like to especially thank Mr. Kuleba. I didn't get to hear your testimony. I will go back and watch it and – because we did have votes on the House side.

But to have evacuated and rescued 10,000 children from Ukraine, many with disabilities and medical needs, is just extraordinary. I mean, that is heroic, and just know that Congress and the world just thanks you and especially those children. So thank you so much.

Would anybody like to say anything before we close? OK.

Yes, Mr. McKinley?

MCKINLEY: Yes. Thank you. We've talked a lot about victims. We've talked a lot about the national registration systems and hotlines and the things that we need. But we need to also focus on the human trafficker. We know who these people are. They are not hard to find. I mean, they advertise on the internet. It's pretty easy to figure out if we have a human trafficker who's moving from, say, Germany into Poland.

We also need a robust focus on that because we all want to do this work to – you know, to serve the human trafficking victims. That's why we exist. But let's also keep in mind you cannot have a victim without a human trafficker. It's the human trafficker that creates that victim.

And so getting all of the European countries on one page where they can be sharing information about human traffickers and really complicating their ability to do their business, their ability to move, their ability to put money in banks, their ability to use the same polite society that we all use, and so focusing on actually preventing the human trafficker by directly counter – preventing human trafficking by directly countering the human trafficker is also a global strategy that we need to implement as soon as we can.

SMITH: If I could, Mr. McKinley – and it's so important that you raise that – who should take the lead on that? Individual law enforcement? Should there be a – you know, we've

had in the past the SECI Center. We've had a lot of coordination in the past. What do you think – who should take the lead?

MCKINLEY: So, this is a combination of private industry, because those are the platforms that these traffickers are using to advertise and exploit their victims and first make contact with their victims, and then the other bookend of that is law enforcement.

You know, at DeliverFund we currently work with over 191 law enforcement agencies across the globe simultaneously, and that's a software product. So, who should take the lead? I just think, politically, it would be very difficult to get any one group to agree to, essentially, be under the umbrella of another group.

But it's very easy to get law enforcement officers, especially at the municipal level and the local level, to get them to start coordinating on one common software platform with one common operating picture.

And then those traffickers have to move. They go through the same, most of the time, border checkpoints that we all do when we travel. So making sure that we have human trafficking watch lists that are shared, very similar to the way we have terrorism watch lists or narcotrafficker watch lists. We need human trafficking watch lists that are shared internationally to make sure that those traffickers are flagged at the border, and if they don't get caught at one border, they'll get caught at the next one.

SMITH: Mr. McKinley, thank you so very much for that, and we will follow up on that and I know Tatiana and all of us will. Thank you so much for that.

Anyone else before we close?

Thank you, again, for all of our very distinguished and noble witnesses for the great leadership you're providing in combating this terrible plague of human trafficking generally and now especially as it relates to Ukrainian women and children.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the hearing ended.]