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Statement of Gloria Allred

Today I am honored to be here with Veronika Didusenko, Miss Ukraine 2018. Veronika and her 7-year old son were forced to flee from Ukraine, her homeland, and the country she loves on February 24, 2022, when Putin began to bomb Kyiv, the city in Ukraine where she and her son reside.

I first met Veronika in January of this year when she reached out on the internet to meet me to discuss an important issue affecting women around the world. She then came to my office in Los Angeles for a meeting with me to discuss how we could take action.

Veronika is deeply committed to working on women's rights issues. We decided that we would meet again today, March 8, International Women's Day, to have a press conference and take action on the issue that affects the condition, status, and rights of women.

Of course, that decision was made before Putin began his horrific and unjustified war on Ukraine and its citizens.

When the war began last month, I reached out to Veronika, who was home in Ukraine. I was concerned for her safety and the safety of her son, and I thought

that under the circumstances she would not be able to make her trip to Los Angeles, but Veronika decided to make what seemed to be impossible possible.

Like so many other Ukrainians, she is deeply committed to her values, her homeland, and her rights. She traveled through war-torn Ukraine with her young son, and through four countries to get her child to a safe place, and then she came to do the press conference in Los Angeles today with me on International Women's Day.

Because this war is continuing, even as we speak on this day, we want to highlight both the courage and the suffering of the mothers and the children of Ukraine who have been fleeing through bombing, shooting, fires, and destruction all around them to get to safety with and for their children. Many have lost their homes, many are separated from their husbands who must stay and fight the Russian military, and many have lost members of their family who have been killed or are too frail, elderly, or sick to leave Ukraine.

Many of these mothers and children are leaving or have left and have no idea where they will be able to live with their children, and if they will be able to return to their former homes, their friends, their family, their co-workers, and the land and people they love.

Many are trying to find a place in Europe to live, and Europe has helped, but Europe is experiencing a refugee crisis with more than one million refugees entering their countries in a short period of time, and millions more are expected.

As Americans, we too must do everything possible to open our doors to these refugees, and particularly mothers with children.

Today I urge President Biden to immediately announce that he will give Ukrainians the opportunity to come to the United States if they so choose. He should issue them “humanitarian parole,” which would allow them after being screened to enter and stay in the United States without a visa, because of this urgent humanitarian crisis. Many refugees from Afghanistan were admitted to the United States and allowed to stay here because they were issued “humanitarian parole.”

This approach is necessary and urgent because the visa process could take many months or longer and the delay in that process may put the lives of these mothers and children at risk.

A portion of the poem by Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty says, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

We are a big country with a big heart. Many of our parents and grandparents came to this country as refugees and were looking for a better and safer life.

I know that Ukrainians want to return home when it is safe and possible for them to return to their country, but for now millions of Ukrainians have no place to live.

Europe is doing what it can, but we must step up as well. I call on President Biden to announce as soon as possible that he will provide “humanitarian parole” and allow as many of these Ukrainian mothers and their children to enter the United States A.S.A.P.

Today is International Women’s Day and the time for urgent action is now.

Attorney Gloria Allred

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