

FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Singaporeans who stand with Ukraine



(Clockwise from top left) Mr Rudy Taslim and his wife Lam Bao Yan, former actor Ix Shen, Mr Priveen Suraj Santakumar and Mr Charanjit Singh Walia, and Mr Matthew Tan. PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG, IX SHEN, CHARANJIT SINGH WALIA, MATTHEW TAN



Venessa Lee
Senior Correspondent

PUBLISHED 29 OCT 2022, 4:00 PM SGT



SINGAPORE – Some Singaporeans have been travelling to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries like Poland to pitch in and support victims of war.

As the 24-hour news cycle and social media amplified images of war in the days and weeks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, these volunteers decided to act. Most of them had experience in overseas humanitarian work. A large proportion of them were motivated by their faith, whether Sikh or Christian, to alleviate what suffering they could.

Ukraine, located more than 8,000km from Singapore, did not seem too far away.

This urge to support war survivors and refugees half a world away shows "how there is much more awareness about volunteerism", says sociologist Nilanjan Raghunath, an assistant professor at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. "We want to be a more compassionate society."

This urge to support war survivors and refugees half a world away shows “how there is much more awareness about volunteerism”, says sociologist Nilanjan Raghunath, an assistant professor at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. “We want to be a more compassionate society.”

Beyond making financial donations to a cause, “there has been a mindset shift, where some want to see for themselves if they can make a difference”, she notes. After all, ordinary people in other countries are taking in Ukrainian refugees or sending aid parcels too.

Small actions can make a big difference, say these fervent Singaporean volunteers.

Mr Steve Loh, the 49-year-old former director of Rescue and Relief International and a board member of Mercy Centre, a charity that focuses on humanitarian work, has years of experience in disaster relief work. He was at the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, as well as in typhoon and earthquake zones. The executive director of an educational institution spent two weeks at the Polish border with Ukraine in April, assessing the needs of those affected by the war for his partner charities.

During his time there, he experienced the “absolute terror” of hearing war sirens. “I feel being able to be of service, even if it is rudimentary, to our fellow men, possibly going through the darkest hours of their lives, is as much a privilege as it is an obligation, no matter where in the world they might be.”

Pastor Matthew Tan, 51, who flew to Poland for two months earlier this year, explains what Singaporeans like him have in common with Ukrainians.

“It’s a sense of empathy for people who live in a normal, peaceful state like Singapore, who are then plunged into a war. I wanted to be there physically to let them know that there are people on the other side of the world who care.”

‘Wherever there is darkness, we want to make a difference’:
Couple helping Ukraine war survivors



After years of volunteering in Africa, Ms Lam Bao Yan and her husband Rudy Taslim, both 38, made their wills – just in case – and flew to Europe to help Ukrainian war survivors.

Ms Lam first visited Germany to support Ukrainian refugees in April. She extended her trip when she got the chance to travel to Ukraine, where she returned to in August with her architect spouse.

Amid the jangle of war sirens, the pair have, within the past six months, established programmes providing shelter, food and counselling for single mothers, children, seniors and people with physical or mental disabilities. They are about to complete a project building 500 bomb-resistant homes in time for the bitter Ukrainian winter.

Their volunteer experience in Africa led them to believe they could also be of service in war-stricken Ukraine.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

- [Join ST's Telegram channel](#) and get the latest breaking news delivered to you.

[UKRAINE](#)

[VOLUNTEERING](#)

[SINGAPOREANS](#)

[REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS](#)



THE STRAITS TIMES



Available for iPhones and iPads



Available in Google Play



Subscribe today

Get unlimited access to exclusive stories and analyses by the ST newsroom

[Choose your plan](#)

- SINGAPORE
- ASIA
- WORLD
- OPINION
- LIFE
- BUSINESS
- TECH
- SPORT
- VIDEOS
- PODCASTS
- MULTIMEDIA

[About Us](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Need help? Reach us here.](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Sign up for our daily newsletter](#)

[Sign up](#)

[More newsletters](#)

By registering, you agree to our T&C and Privacy Policy.

[E-paper](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[Facebook](#)

[RSS Feed](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Telegram](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Youtube](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[TikTok](#)

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

MCI (P) 076/10/2022, MCI (P) 077/10/2022. Published by SPH Media Limited, Co. Regn. No. 202120748H. Copyright © 2023 SPH Media Limited. All rights reserved.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/life/singaporeans-who-stand-with-ukraine>