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Crocodile tears for Ukraine as millions of U.S. families suffer utility shutoffs

written by Stephen Millies
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A protest in Albany, New York, in June 2022 demanded the extension of a statewide moratorium on utility shutoffs. Photo: Communities for Local Power

“Kyiv Readies for Brutal, Cold, Dark Winter” is a typical headline in the capitalist media these days. The Nov. 21 Associated Press article—[reprinted by Voice of America](#), the official U.S. propaganda outlet—tells of electrical outages caused by Russian missile strikes.

Other headlines include “A Capital Draped in Darkness” in the [New York Times](#) and “Missile Strikes Leave Kyiv in the Dark” in the [Atlantic Magazine](#).

What about the millions of U.S. families facing electric and gas shutoffs by the profit-mad utility monopolies? [Twenty million households](#) are behind on their electric bills.

Just in 2020 and 2021, households had their power shut off 3.6 million times. Each of these shutoffs caused misery for millions of children and their parents.

The actual figure of utility shutoffs is higher. Only 33 states and the District of Columbia [require utilities to report disconnections](#).

Many seniors and disabled people have to juggle to pay their rent, food and prescription medicines. Morgan Magda, who lives in Girard, Ohio, had her gas cut off.

Her sole source of income is Social Security disability benefits. Millions of workers become disabled because capitalists speed up work to make more profits. Carpal tunnel syndrome can strike workers at both computer keyboards and assembly lines.

"I'm disabled and have had to live without hot water, a stove to cook on, and now heat. It's been so hard," [said Magda](#).

Utility shutoffs can also become a death sentence. A May 15, 1982, fire in Baltimore killed 10 people, including seven children. The fire was caused by a candle the family was forced to use after their electricity was shut off.

The family owed just \$808 on their electric bill to Baltimore Gas and Electric, now part of the Exelon Corporation. That works out to \$80.80 for every person killed.

[A dozen years later](#), two adults and seven children died in another Baltimore fire on Feb. 26, 1994. Once again, an overturned candle started the inferno after their electricity was shut off.

Stop the shutoffs!

Last year it was estimated that U.S. households owed [\\$32 billion in unpaid utility bills](#). President Biden is doing practically nothing to help the millions of families facing life-threatening utility shutoffs.

Yet Biden and Congress have spent \$68 billion so far on the war in Ukraine. The White House has just asked Congress for [another \\$37.7 billion](#).

This \$105.7 billion total is three times what could pay all the unpaid utility bills.

Capitalists aren't spending this money—all of it stolen from poor and working people—because they want to help Ukrainians.

Human life is cheap to the wealthy and powerful. For the executives at Baltimore Gas and Electric, each child killed in that May 15, 1982, fire was worth just \$80.80.

Black grandmother Eleanor Bumpers was killed on Oct. 29, 1984, by a New York City cop because she owed \$394 in back rent.

To save a mere \$5 million a year, Flint, Michigan, [stopped pumping clean water](#) from Lake Huron and instead used water from the Flint River, a virtual sewer. Flint's children were poisoned while thousands face water shutoffs in Detroit and other cities.

Stop NATO's war!

Wall Street and European banks are turning Ukraine into their colony. Foreign capitalists are taking over the country's fertile farmland. [A 2021 law](#) is making this theft easier.

The Russian Federation is now targeting Ukraine's electrical infrastructure in an attempt to disrupt the massive deliveries of weapons from the U.S. and NATO. The

[stock price of Lockheed Martin](#), one of the biggest U.S. war contractors, has gone up \$100 per share since the conflict started.

Russian forces are not carpet-bombing cities like the U.S. did to Baghdad. They're not dropping napalm to burn children alive like the Pentagon did in Korea, Laos and Vietnam.

The capitalist media sheds phony tears for Ukrainians but it says nothing about the over 14,000 people that were killed by the Kyiv regime's war on Donbass since 2014.

Why can't the White House loosen the economic blockade of Cuba while the socialist country is rebuilding the parts of its electrical grid that were wrecked by Hurricane Ian?

The Russian Federation is fighting the NATO alliance of big imperialist states. NATO uses a puppet Ukrainian regime that rests upon fascist militias like the Right Sector and Azov Battalion, as well as thousands of foreign mercenaries.

For the brass hats in the Pentagon, the conflict in Ukraine is just the first step of a war to take over the 6.4 million square miles of the Russian Federation.

The working class and all oppressed people need NATO and the U.S. to get out of Ukraine. We need to take over the greedy utilities to guarantee electricity, gas and water for all.

