

Poul Weihrauch
Chief Executive Officer
Mars, Incorporated
6885 Elm Street
McLean, VA 22101
United States

July 09, 2025

Dear Mars Leadership Team,

We write to you as [B4Ukraine](#), a coalition of Ukrainian and international civil society organizations committed to curbing the financial support that fuels Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. We are writing again to raise concerns about recent evidence that Mars continues to expand its operations in Russia, despite [public commitments](#) to cease investment and reduce operations to its "essential role in feeding the Russian people and pets" following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

We have [repeatedly](#) raised serious [concerns](#) regarding Mars' adherence to the universally recognised framework on business and human rights, including the broader principles of responsible business conduct. Despite the clear obligation under Principle 18 of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which requires businesses to engage in "[meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups and other relevant stakeholders](#)," Mars has not responded to any of our previous communications.

We call on businesses to:

- Immediately cease operations and presence in Russia and completely exit the Russian market.
- Refrain from any future business, trade, or investment in Russia until Russia ends its war against Ukraine, territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored, and accountability imposed for war crimes and the destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure and property.
- Ensure that any re-engagement with the Russian market occurs only after all of the following conditions are met:
 - Ukraine's sovereignty and complete territorial integrity are restored, as recognized by international law.
 - Reparations are paid in full for all damages caused by Russian aggression, covering infrastructure, economic losses, and human suffering.
 - Accountability is imposed for violations of international law, including the crime of aggression, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Mars has decided to [stay](#) in the Russian market, despite a plethora of human rights, reputational, financial, legal, and operational risks of operating in a militarised economy of a country waging an illegal war of aggression against its sovereign neighbour, in breach of the UN Charter. Due to Mars' contribution to the Russian economy and various other factors, the Ukrainian National Agency on Corruption Prevention added Mars to the list of [international sponsors of the war](#). Mars remains a major economic actor in Russia, generating approximately \$2.9 billion in annual revenue and paying [\\$99 million in profit tax](#) in 2023.

Now, recent reports claim that Mars leased a [41,000 m²](#) warehouse in New Moscow from Level Group in late 2024, with operations expected to begin in mid-2026. Market consultants [described](#) this as “one of the largest recent warehouse real estate deals in Russia,” and that Mars is leasing it due to business growth.

This is a significant expansion which brings into question Mars’ commitment to its own public statements on reducing operations in Russia, as well as its alignment with its stated [human rights policy](#) and broader responsibilities under international business and human rights frameworks, including international humanitarian and human rights law.

We are therefore writing to ask:

- Why did Mars enter into a new lease for a large warehouse in Russia after committing to cease new investments and suspend imports/exports?
- How does Mars reconcile its continued expansion in Russia, particularly large-scale logistics investments, with its public commitment to halt all new engagement in the market?
- Given the scale of Mars’s revenue and tax payments in Russia, does Mars acknowledge its potential of materially and financially supporting the Kremlin’s war economy?
- Has Mars received directives to issue conscription notices, and how is Mars ensuring its operations and associates in Russia are not complicit in forced military mobilization?
- What internal governance and human rights due diligence frameworks does Mars apply to assess the legality, reputational, and human rights impact of maintaining and expanding operations in Russia?
- What heightened human rights due diligence processes were undertaken prior to the decision to lease and operationalise this new warehouse? Is Mars willing to publicly disclose the due diligence process it conducted prior to this decision, including its risk assessment, stakeholder engagement, and final conclusions?
- Will Mars commit to publicly disclosing any future plans related to engagement in Russia, including further investment, warehouse expansion, or factory upgrades, prior to undertaking them?

On the point regarding re-entry and continuing risks of operating in Russia, we also refer Mars to the annex below, which outlines the legal, financial, reputational, and human rights risks associated with re-engaging in the Russian market.

We would be pleased to discuss these matters in greater detail and are therefore inviting you to a confidential meeting. Should you wish to participate in a meeting with Ukrainian and international civil society representatives, please confirm your availability by **July 23, 2025** to schedule. Kindly note that after this date, this letter and any responses will be published on the B4Ukraine website.

Sincerely,

The B4Ukraine Coalition

The Risks of Re-Engaging with the Russian Market

Recent speculation about the potential lifting of sanctions, particularly in the United States, has created uncertainty. However, it is clear that the broader sanctions regime remains intact. The United States has for now maintained its restrictions, while the European Union recently approved its [seventeenth package](#) of sanctions. Even if some policymakers consider relaxing their stance, the reality remains that the EU, UK, Japan, Canada, and numerous other countries and organisations have imposed sanctions on Russia, making it the most sanctioned country in the world, due to its crime of aggression against its sovereign neighbour.

Further, economic and regulatory conditions in Russia are no longer conducive to stable business operations. Companies re-entering the market would be navigating a landscape of restricted [supply chains, financial barriers, and legal uncertainties](#).

Russia has demonstrated a pattern of malignant and systematic asset seizures, expropriations, and regulatory manipulation, using foreign businesses as leverage in political disputes. According to a study conducted by the London School of Economics, since 2022, [over 500 Western firms](#) have seen their assets expropriated under various pretexts, including companies in industries ranging from brewing and consumer goods (e.g., [Danone, Carlsberg](#)) to energy (e.g., [Uniper, Fortum](#)). The scope of legislation and Russian domestic case law showing the readiness for expropriation has skyrocketed since the start of the full-scale invasion. Businesses looking to re-enter must expect that their assets would meet a similar fate.

These patterns show a blatant disregard for property rights, investor and shareholder rights, and are a general indicator of an authoritarian government. Accordingly, any western business seeking re-entry faces the [risk of Kremlin](#) decrees that introduce new fees, taxes, and price controls; limit the repatriation of profits and dividends; restrict asset sales and management decisions; and expropriate private businesses.

The [economic outlook](#) in Russia further devalues the case for re-engagement. Interest rates have soared to 21 percent, labour shortages are worsening, and consumer purchasing power has significantly declined. The country's middle class is shrinking, and the infrastructure that once supported international trade and investment has deteriorated.

Russia's own leaders have stated that returning businesses should [not expect to be treated on equal footing](#) with local firms. Instead, as confirmed by Vladimir Putin himself, those seeking re-entry would be [disadvantaged](#) to ensure the competitiveness of domestic businesses. Many Western brands have already been [replaced](#) by domestic or Chinese alternatives, making it difficult, if not impossible, for companies to regain their former market position. Rebuilding operations in such a climate would require substantial financial investment with little certainty of return, naturally concerning investors. Russian policy is confirmed to be favourable towards domestic production and market share.

The Russian legislative framework continues to pose a high risk of business complicity in the war. Under [Federal Law No. 31-FZ](#) businesses, including international companies that are operating on a full or limited scale in Russia, are required to conduct military registration of the staff if at least one of the employees is eligible for military service. They must also assist with delivering the military summons to their employees, ensure the delivery of equipment to assembly points or military units, and provide information, buildings, communications, land plots, transport, and other material means of support to the war effort.

Beyond financial and legal risks, reputational risks remain high. Any company that chooses to return to Russia will be seen as disregarding the human cost of the war in Ukraine. Some Russian officials

have even suggested that businesses seeking to re-enter should [contribute financially to the Russian military or establish operations in occupied Ukrainian territories](#). These decisions would directly associate a company's name with a government engaged in an ongoing conflict, one that has been widely condemned for violations of international law. Moreover, they could render the company complicit in violations of international law.

It has been over three years since Russia invaded Ukraine, committing the crime of aggression and breaching the UN Charter. Russia is violating international humanitarian and human rights law, committing over 150,000 documented war crimes. In recognition of the severity of abuses, in March 2023 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin to answer charges of war crimes.

As affirmed by international frameworks, in conflict-affected and high-risk areas, businesses are not neutral actors. The company's continued presence in Russia is not passive, but part of the system that enables and sustains Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine.

Poul Weihrauch
Chief Executive Officer
Mars, Incorporated
6885 Elm Street
McLean, VA 22101
United States

June 7, 2023

RE: Mars' business operations in Russia

Dear Mr. Weihrauch,

We are writing to follow up on our previous correspondence with Mars dated 7th November 2022 regarding potential inconsistencies between Mars' obligations, as articulated in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and the company's ongoing business operations and relationships in Russia that may contribute to, or be linked with, human rights harms. We have not received a response to our letter. We are writing once again to formally notify Mars on the serious and increasing risks the company faces by continuing its operations in Russia that may amount to complicity in human rights abuses committed by Russia¹ and to urge Mars to:

- Immediately cease all operations and presence in Russia and completely exit the Russian market.
- Refrain from any future business, trade, or investment in Russia until Russia ends its war in Ukraine, territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored, and accountability imposed for war crimes and the destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure and property.
- Establish and implement comprehensive human rights due diligence measures for any responsible exit from or re-engagement with Russia.

It has been over one year since Russia invaded Ukraine and the devastating impacts continue to shock the global conscience and shake the global economy. Russia is violating international humanitarian law (IHL), including war crimes and crimes against humanity, through attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure (e.g., mass executions, sexual violence, torture, forcible transfer of civilians). More than 24,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and injured and millions more have been forced to flee their homes, creating one of the largest humanitarian and refugee crises of modern times. In recognition of the severity of abuses, in March 2023 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin to answer war crimes charges.²

¹ Andrew Clapham and Scott Jerbi, "Categories of Corporate Complicity in Human Rights Abuses," March 21-22, 2001, <https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/files/reports-and-materials/Clapham-Jerbi-paper.htm> (accessed May 4, 2023).

² International Criminal Court, "Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova," March 17, 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and> (accessed March 22, 2023).

Moreover, recent developments in Russia point to an expanding universe of financial, legal, and reputational risks facing those left behind.

On September 21, President Vladimir Putin escalated the war by announcing a “partial mobilisation” of the Russian population. The accompanying legislation ([Article 9 of Federal Law No. 31-FZ](#)) mandates all organisations, including the more than 1,500 international companies that are currently operating on a full or limited scale in Russia, to conduct military registration of the staff if at least one of the employees is eligible for military service.³ They must also assist with delivering the military summons to their employees, ensure the delivery of equipment to assembly points or military units, and provide information, buildings, communications, land plots, transport, and other material means of support to the war effort.

A new decree issued by President Vladimir Putin on March 3, 2023, enables the Russian government to suspend shareholders' rights and implement external management in companies that don't fulfil state defence contracts under conditions of martial law.⁴ By specifying the process of appointing Russian government representatives to manage businesses that fail to meet state orders, the latest Decree effectively creates a scenario of “partial nationalization.”

With new legislation introducing partial mobilisation, nationalisation, and potentially martial law in Russia, it is highly likely that corporations will be unable to prevent or mitigate negative human rights impacts, an obligation imposed on companies by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. As such, continuing to conduct business in Russia entails significant legal risks for companies, including potential civil and criminal liability under comprehensive sanctions regimes and recent international jurisprudence holding corporations and their officers responsible for human rights abuses abroad.⁵ Companies face the rising risk of criminal liability for complicity in

³ Federal Law No. 31-FZ of February 26, 1997 “On mobilization training and mobilization in the Russian Federation” (as amended), <https://base.garant.ru/136945/> (accessed November 14, 2022).

⁴ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 139 dated March 3, 2023 “On Certain Issues of Carrying Out the Activities of Business Companies Participating in the Fulfilment of the State Defense Order”, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202303030004> (accessed March 22, 2023).

⁵ International companies remaining in Russia are now at a greater risk of violating sanctions regimes as implementation of the legislation will likely involve transacting with sanctioned individuals or entities. Furthermore, new domestic civil and criminal cases against companies involved in violations of international law demonstrate the risk of significant liability for facilitating state-sponsored human rights abuses abroad (e.g., Lafarge case, Lundin case, Castel Group indictment, Nevsun holding, and Dassault Aviation, Thales, and MBDA France criminal complaint.) Victoria Riello and Larissa Furtwengler, “Corporate Criminal Liability for International Crimes: France and Sweden Are Poised To Take Historic Steps Forward,” *Just Security*, September 6, 2021, <https://www.justsecurity.org/78097/corporate-criminal-liability-for-human-rights-violations-france-and-sweden-are-poised-to-take-historic-steps-forward/> (accessed November 14, 2022); The Sentry, “Breaking: France Opens War Crimes Inquiry Focused on Iconic Food and Beverage Conglomerate,” July 1, 2022, <https://thesentry.org/2022/07/01/7216/breaking-france-opens-war-crimes-inquiry-focused-iconic-food-beverage-conglomerate/> (accessed November 14, 2022); Rfi, “French technology firm charged over Libya cyber-spying,” July 2, 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/business-and-tech/20210701-french-tech-firm-charged-over-libya-cyber-spying> (accessed November 14, 2022); Preston Lim, “Canadian Supreme Court Allows Corporate Liability for International Law Violations,” *Lawfare*, March 12, 2022, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/canadian-supreme-court-allows-corporate-liability-international-law-violations> (accessed November 14, 2022); Sherpa, “Aiding and abetting war crimes in Yemen: Criminal complaint submitted against French arms companies,” June 2, 2022, <https://www.asso-sherpa.org/aiding-and-abetting-war-crimes-in-yemen-criminal-complaint-submitted-against-french-arms-companies> (accessed November 14, 2022).

international crimes, which can be prosecuted by domestic courts outside Russia under the doctrine of "universal jurisdiction."⁶

On 24 February 2023, The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) suspended Russia's membership as a result of the war, calling on all actors in the international financial system to exercise extreme caution in all dealings with Russia.⁷ In practice, the decision means that all international banks will scrutinise all Russian payments, making financial transactions more expensive, lengthy, with no guarantee that the transaction will occur at all.⁸ Although FATF has not yet blacklisted Russia, it highlighted the consensus among its 36 member countries that "the Russian federation's actions represent a gross violation of the commitment to international cooperation upon which FATF Members have agreed to implement and support the FATF Standards."⁹ Previous practice shows that noncooperative behaviour is one of the reasons for FATF blacklisting. As a result, companies should examine and mitigate the high levels of risk attached to financial transactions with Russia and based on that risk, companies should reconsider all ongoing business operations related to Russia.

Companies may also be exposed to financially material risks through operational restrictions, such as limitations of future government contracts.¹⁰

Additionally, the Ukrainian government's [National Agency on Corruption Prevention](#) (NACP) is creating a list of "foreign companies that, despite the international recognition of Russia as the aggressor state and the introduced sanctions restrictions, continue to cooperate with it."¹¹ These companies are recognised as international sponsors of war. The listed entities will be included into the World-Check database to protect the global financial sector from Russian sponsors of war. Since banks and insurance companies use World-check to assess risks, companies on the list will be limited in freely accessing personal and corporate finances. So far there are 27 companies on the list, but the NACP notes that it will be expanded with "international companies that provide the public and private sector with goods and services of critical purpose, as well as [those that] contribute to the Russian budget."¹²

⁶ For example, ongoing proceedings in the US and France against the French multinational Lafarge for complicity in human rights violations in Syria. The Paris Court of Appeal, "La Cour d'appel de Paris confirme la mise en état de la multinationale française Lafarge pour complicité de crimes contre l'humanité commis par l'Etat islamique," May 18, 2022, <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Press%20release%20french%20version.pdf> (accessed March 22, 2023); United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, "Lafarge Pleads Guilty to Conspiring to Provide Material Support to Foreign Terrorist Organizations," October 18, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/lafarge-pleads-guilty-conspiring-provide-material-support-foreign-terroris> (accessed March 22, 2023).

⁷ FATF, "FATF Statement on the Russian Federation," February 24, 2023, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/en/publications/Fatfgeneral/fatf-statement-russian-federation.html> (accessed March 14, 2023).

⁸ Liudmyla Slieptsova, "Russia's membership in the FATF suspended. What does this mean and how ruinous is this for the aggressor's economy?," *Mind*, February 27, 2023, <https://mind.ua/en/publications/20253993-russias-membership-in-the-fatf-suspended-what-does-this-mean-and-how-ruinous-is-this-for-the-aggre> (accessed March 14, 2023).

⁹ FATF (n 7).

¹⁰ Venable LLP, "Do You Contract with State Governments? If So, Beware of Emerging State Sanctions' Obligations Related to Russia and Belarus," *JD Supra*, June 3, 2022, <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/do-you-contract-with-state-governments-6537229/> (accessed November 14, 2022).

¹¹ NACP, "International Sponsors of War," <https://sanctions.nazk.gov.ua/en/boycott/> (accessed February 6, 2023).

¹² NACP, "Companies from the NACP list of "International Sponsors of War" are now in the World-check database, used worldwide for reviewing counterparties," September 7, 2022,

Companies that maintain business relationships with Russia risk being perceived as supporting Russia's war effort. This could have a negative long-term impact on sales in other countries and attract investor scrutiny over adherence to ESG principles. The longer it takes for brands to extricate themselves from the situation, the more damaging it will be for their reputation.

In response to this unprovoked and unjustified war¹³ many other companies have already left Russia. According to the Kyiv School of Economics Institute's #LeaveRussia [company tracker](#), Mars has decided to stay and continue its operations in Russia. These activities in Russia risk enabling and financing Russia's violations of IHL and human rights law during the ongoing invasion and occupation of Ukraine.

Considering these risks and the company's continued presence in Russia, we would like to pose the following questions to Mars:

1. On March 10, 2022, Mars stated that it "decided to scale back [its] business and will refocus [its] efforts in Russia on [its] essential role in feeding the Russian people and pets."¹⁴ Considering a large portion of Mars' portfolio is consistent of candy, sweets, and chocolate, such as Mars, Snickers, Milky Way, and Skittles, we would like to ask Mars to define which products the company's considers essential in feeding the local population:
 - Can Mars provide its definition and list of goods it considers essential in light of the particular circumstances of this conflict?
 - Can Mars provide a list of goods that it stopped producing since the outbreak of the war because they are not considered essential?
 - Has Mars considered whether its goods can be replaced with local substitutes?
 - Which stakeholders has Mars engaged with in determining its policies and the decision to stay in the market?
2. While we do not deny that some goods and foodstuffs are essential in preventing food shortage and undernutrition of the local population, products like chocolates and candy that Mars produces and sells in the Russian market cannot and are not considered essential. In determining which products are essential, businesses should consider the nutritional needs of the affected population, focusing on nutrient dense foods, such as foods rich in proteins, vitamins, and minerals, including a mix of cereals (such as maize, wheat, rice, or millet), pulses (such as lentils, beans, chickpeas, or peas), oil, and fresh or processed fruits and vegetables.¹⁵ Businesses should also consider the availability of other sources of food, the availability of local substitutes, and the

<https://nazk.gov.ua/en/news/companies-from-the-nacp-list-of-international-sponsors-of-war-are-now-in-the-world-check-database-used-worldwide-for-reviewing-counterparties/?hilite=sponsor+of+war> (accessed February 6, 2023).

¹³ The UN General Assembly condemned Russia's "aggression against Ukraine" and demanded that Moscow "unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders."

¹⁴ Mars, "Mars update on Russia and Ukraine," March 10, 2022, <https://www.mars.com/news-and-stories/press-releases-statements/mars-update-russia-and-ukraine> (accessed May 30, 2023).

¹⁵ While a unified list of all essential foods does not exist in the international regulatory framework, there are sources which could be applied through analogy in determining which foodstuffs are considered essential (in conjunction with other international business and human rights legislative and regulatory documents): Sphere, "The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response," 2018, <https://spherestandards.org/handbook-2018/> (accessed May 4, 2023); WHO, "Technical note Supplementary foods for the management of moderate acute malnutrition in infants and children 6–59 months of age," 2012, <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/75836> (accessed May 4, 2023).

potential human rights risks and impacts associated with their operations. Furthermore, when determining the scope and meaning of essential goods, it is crucial to apply a contextual, conflict-sensitive approach. In the context of the war in Ukraine and ongoing operations in Russia, the concept of essentiality should prioritise items such as life-saving medicines that are not manufactured in Russia, while excluding goods such as food and hygiene items that are readily available locally. The continued production, distribution, and import of goods that are available/easily substituted locally and non-essential, in a way that their absence would not be life-threatening to the local population, indirectly perpetuates the conflict by sustaining the resources that enable Russian aggression.

- Has Mars considered all the circumstances and complexities of the Russo-Ukrainian war, including numerous human rights violations and war crimes committed in Ukraine, as well as the fact that Russia is an aggressor state, in determining to continue providing these goods within Russia?

3. **How has Mars practised due diligence in preventing the direct supply of its products to the Russian military? Does Mars have policies, mechanisms, and tools in place to carry out enhanced due diligence of supply chains, intermediaries, customers, and end-users to prevent the supply of goods to the Russian army? If so, how were they utilised for defining business connections that involve the Russian government, its agencies, and state-controlled or sanctioned organisations?** As a reminder, Bonduelle and Auchan have recently faced reputational damage because their goods were sent to Russian troops in Ukraine, some with notes wishing "a speedy victory."¹⁶ Both companies deny these allegations.
4. We understand and agree that Mars has obligations towards its 6,000 employees in Russia. These are laid out under the UNGPs and in the wider international human rights legal and regulatory framework.
 - Can Mars clarify how it has used this framework to minimise the risks and impacts to its employees?**
 - How has the company applied heightened human rights due diligence to its operations in Russia considering the new Russian legislation requiring businesses to help conduct military registration, deliver the summons to its employees, and provide resources where required?**
 - Has Mars received any such requests, and if so, how has the company responded to them?**
 - What is Mars doing to safeguard its employees from mobilisation?**
 - Have any of your employees been mobilised and, if so, what was Mars' role in the process?**
5. The safety of employees is and should be a considerable point of concern and obligations for companies. But in light of the specific context of the illegal war on Ukraine, there are other options for the safeguarding of employees that can and have been used by other international companies in Russia. Many companies have offered relocation packages, or contractual clauses

¹⁶ Euromaidan Press, "Bonduelle accused of gifting 10,000 food kits to Russian troops; French office denies," January 3, 2023, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2023/01/03/french-bonduelle-gifts-10000-food-kits-to-russian-troops-wishes-them-victory/> (accessed May 4, 2023); Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, "New evidence reveals Auchan was fully aware of destination of its goods supplied to Russian army," March 3, 2023, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/russia-auchan-allegedly-supports-soldiers-fighting-in-ukraine-despite-french-management-denials-recent-investigation-reveals-more-proofs/> (accessed May 4, 2023).

which condition the continued employment and safety of employees remaining in Russia. For example, if Mars had decided to sell its Russian business it could have included contractual clauses to ensure the continued safety of its employees, as previously exemplified by the actions of the French Publicis Groupe who employed 1,200 people in the country.

-Has Mars considered any of these or other options before deciding to continue operations in Russia?

6. Despite Mars' promise to scale back its operations and suspend all advertising activities in Russia, the company's career page lists over 90 open positions in the country.¹⁷

-How does Mars reconcile its statements on scaling back its operations with these ongoing employment opportunities in Russia?

-How does Mars reconcile its statements on employee safety with continued employment opportunities in light of the new Russian legislation obliging companies to help with the military conscription of its employees?

7. Mars is one of the largest foreign companies still operating in Russia. In 2022, the company's annual revenue in Russia hit \$2.6bn, which constitutes a 20% growth compared to Mars' revenue in 2021. According to recent data, Mars is reportedly one of the largest profit tax payers in Russia in 2022, paying almost \$100 million to the state coffers last year.

- How much profit tax has Mars paid to the Russian government in 2022 and 2023? How much overall tax has Mars paid to the Russian government in 2022 and 2023?

8. Mars boasts an impressive portfolio of globally recognized and beloved brands such as M&M's, Snickers, or Twix. By choosing to continue operating in Russia, the company inadvertently grants the regime a sense of legitimacy and approval. By leveraging the power and reputation of its brands, Mars indirectly expresses support for the regime's actions, which could be interpreted as condoning the war. The continued presence of Mars' brands in the Russian market creates a perceived association between the company and its widely known brands and the Russian government, which may not align with the values of its customers.

-How is Mars ensuring that it does not align itself and the names of its brands with the war and the Putin regime?

9. Other companies have faced legal, administrative, and ethical challenges and still committed to, and exited, Russia. Mars has decided to stay in the country, even after over one year since the start of the war, over 80,000 reported war crimes, over 24,000 Ukrainian civilians killed or injured, and with the head of the Russian state indicted by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes, namely the abduction of Ukrainian children.

-Considering these developments and the rising number of reported human rights abuses and war crimes, has Mars considered fully exiting Russia so as not to be even indirectly or remotely associated with these crimes?

In consideration of the above points, we request an urgent dialogue with Mars' relevant senior management and staff to discuss the company's ongoing activities and relationships in Russia, associated risks to the people of Ukraine and the company, and potential steps to prevent/mitigate these risks. Please contact the B4Ukraine Coalition at contact@b4ukraine.org to schedule a call. We kindly ask for your response by 5:00pm CET, June 21st, 2023.

¹⁷ Mars, "Jobs at Mars," <https://careers.mars.com/ru/ru/search-results> (accessed May 4, 2023).

Sincerely,

The B4Ukraine Coalition

Poul Weihrauch
Chief Executive Officer
6885 Elm Street
McLean, VA 22101
United States

CC: Mars Executive Team and Board

07/11/2022

RE: Mars business operations in Russia

Dear Mr. Weihrauch,

We write to you as [B4Ukraine](#), a coalition of Ukrainian and international civil society organizations working to curtail the financial resources enabling the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the spirit of respect for the fundamental rights of all people, the rules-based international order, and a prosperous global economy, we expect companies to demonstrate public support for the people, democracy, and territorial integrity of Ukraine, opposition to Russia's war of aggression, and alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

We request an urgent dialogue regarding potential inconsistencies between Mars Incorporated's (Mars) stated policies on Russian aggression and human rights more broadly and the company's ongoing business operations and relationships in Russia that may contribute to, or be linked with, human rights harms.

Mars's Human Rights Policy formalises the company's commitment to "respecting human rights in our value chain, starting with areas where we have the most control and influence, and where we can have the greatest impact."¹ Mars fulfils this commitment by "implementing a due diligence process to identify relevant adverse impacts on human rights and to establish or support appropriate and effective mechanisms for prevention and remediation."² This policy is supplemented by the company's Supplier Code of Conduct, Responsible Workplace program, and its "CARE Framework," which is a "step-by-step tool to guide our human rights decisions and actions."³

It has been eight months since Russia invaded Ukraine and the devastating impacts continue to shock the global conscience and shake the global economy. Russia is violating international humanitarian law (IHL), including war crimes and crimes against humanity, through attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure (e.g., mass executions, sexual violence, torture, forcible transfer of civilians). Tens of thousands have been killed and millions of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, creating one of the largest humanitarian disasters and refugee crises of modern times.

¹ Mars, "Our Human Rights Policy," <https://www.mars.com/about/policies-and-practices/human-rights-policy> (accessed November 1, 2022).

² Ibid.

³ Mars, "Human Rights Position Statement," <https://www.mars.com/about/policies-and-practices/human-rights> (accessed November 1, 2022).

On September 21, President Vladimir Putin further escalated the war by announcing a “partial mobilisation” of the Russian population. The accompanying legislation ([Article 9 of Federal Law No. 31-FZ](#)) mandates all organisations, including the more than 1500 international companies that are currently operating on a full or limited scale in Russia, to conduct military registration of the staff if at least one of the employees is eligible for military service.⁴ They must also assist with delivering the military summons to their employees, ensure the delivery of equipment to assembly points or military units, and provide information, buildings, communications, land plots, transport, and other material means of support to the war effort.

This legislation entails new and significant legal risks for companies remaining in Russia, including potential civil and criminal liability under comprehensive sanctions regimes and recent international jurisprudence holding corporations and their officers responsible for human rights abuses abroad.⁵ Companies may be exposed to financially material risks through operational restrictions, such as limitations of future government contracts.⁶

In response to this unprovoked and unjustified war⁷ many companies have left Russia. According to the Kyiv School of Economics Institute's #LeaveRussia [company tracker](#), Mars announced in early March that it would scale back its business and “refocus” efforts in Russia to its “essential role in feeding the Russian people and pets.”⁸ The company also suspended new investments, social media and advertising activity, stopped imports and exports in or out of Russia, and stated that “any profits from our Russian business will be used for humanitarian causes.”⁹ While we commend these statements, our research indicates that Mars is failing to uphold these commitments and is still at risk of proximity to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

⁴ Federal Law No. 31-FZ of February 26, 1997 “On mobilization training and mobilization in the Russian Federation” (as amended), <https://base.garant.ru/136945/> (accessed November 1, 2022).

⁵ International companies remaining in Russia are now at a greater risk of violating sanctions regimes as implementation of the legislation will likely involve transacting with sanctioned individuals or entities. Furthermore, new domestic civil and criminal cases against companies involved in violations of international law demonstrate the risk of significant liability for facilitating state-sponsored human rights abuses abroad (e.g., Lafarge case, Lundin case, Castel Group indictment, Nevsun holding, and Dassault Aviation, Thales, and MBDA France criminal complaint.) Victoria Riello and Larissa Furtwengler, “Corporate Criminal Liability for International Crimes: France and Sweden Are Poised To Take Historic Steps Forward,” *Just Security*, September 6, 2021, <https://www.justsecurity.org/78097/corporate-criminal-liability-for-human-rights-violations-france-and-sweden-are-poised-to-take-historic-steps-forward/> (accessed November 1, 2022); The Sentry, “Breaking: France Opens War Crimes Inquiry Focused on Iconic Food and Beverage Conglomerate,” July 1, 2022, <https://thesentry.org/2022/07/01/7216/breaking-france-opens-war-crimes-inquiry-focused-iconic-food-beverage-conglomerate/> (accessed November 1, 2022); Rfi “French technology firm charged over Libya cyber-spying,” July 2, 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/business-and-tech/20210701-french-tech-firm-charged-over-libya-cyber-spying> (accessed November 1, 2022); Preston Lim, “Canadian Supreme Court Allows Corporate Liability for International Law Violations,” *Lawfare*, March 12, 2022, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/canadian-supreme-court-allows-corporate-liability-international-law-violations> (accessed November 1, 2022); Sherpa, “Aiding and abetting war crimes in Yemen: Criminal complaint submitted against French arms companies,” June 2, 2022, <https://www.asso-sherpa.org/aiding-and-abetting-war-crimes-in-yemen-criminal-complaint-submitted-against-french-arms-companies> (accessed November 1, 2022).

⁶ Venable LLP, “Do You Contract with State Governments? If So, Beware of Emerging State Sanctions’ Obligations Related to Russia and Belarus,” *JD Supra*, June 3, 2022, <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/do-you-contract-with-state-governments-6537229/> (accessed November 1, 2022).

⁷ The UN General Assembly condemned Russia’s “aggression against Ukraine” and demanded that Moscow “unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.”

⁸ Mars, “Mars update on Russia and Ukraine,” March 10, 2022, <https://www.mars.com/news-and-stories/press-releases-statements/mars-update-russia-and-ukraine> (November 1, 2022).

⁹ *Ibid.*

Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Mars was one of the largest food and pet food companies in Russia, producing confectionery products, chewing gum, pet food, and cooking sauces. The company owns and operates ten factories¹⁰ and employs more than 6,000 workers in Russia.¹¹ Despite Mars's promise to scale back its operations and suspend all advertising activities in Russia, the company's career page lists several open positions in the country, including two marketing positions.¹² Similarly, Mars candy brands, such as M&Ms, Bounty Bars, Twix, Snickers, and other non-essential brands, are reportedly still available in local super markets, in direct contradiction to Mars's commitment to focus its operations on essential goods.¹³ Given the fact that Mars is hiring new employees, the current number of workers at risk of conscription is unclear. Furthermore, Mars has only committed to suspending production, import, and export of certain brands, leaving a significant number of assets in Russia at risk of requests for government use under the partial mobilisation order.

These activities risk enabling and financing Russia's violations of IHL and human rights law during the ongoing invasion and occupation of Ukraine and violating Mars's Human Rights Framework and the company's stated commitment to abiding by the UNGPs. It remains to be seen how directly Mars will be impacted by the partial mobilisation and the heightened legal, regulatory, operational, and financial risks associated with companies being required to provide direct support to the internationally sanctioned Russian military.

We seek to understand how Mars has conducted and continues to conduct heightened Human Rights Due Diligence, per its stated policy and the UNGPs concerning due diligence in conflict-affected areas, and how the findings of such a process has resulted in these continued business activities and relationships. As noted by the UNGPs:

...the more severe the abuse, the more quickly the enterprise will need to see change before it takes a decision on whether it should end the relationship. In any case, for as long as the abuse continues and the enterprise remains in the relationship, it should be able to demonstrate its own ongoing efforts to mitigate the impact and be prepared to accept any consequences – reputational, financial or legal – of the continuing connection.

In consideration of the above points and B4Ukraine's [Declaration](#), we request an urgent dialogue with Mars's relevant senior management and staff to discuss the company's ongoing activities and relationships in Russia, associated risks to the people of Ukraine and the company, and potential steps to prevent/mitigate these risks. Please contact Eleanor Nichol at enichol@businessforukraine.info to schedule a call. We kindly ask for your response by 5:00pm CET, 21st November 2022.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information

Sincerely,

¹⁰ Interfax, "Mars suspends investment in Russia," March 10, 2022, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/76148/> (accessed November 2, 2022).

¹¹ Dean Best, "Mars to 'scale back' Russia business," *Just Food*, March 10, 2022 <https://www.just-food.com/special-focus/ukraine-crisis/mars-to-scale-back-russia-business/#:~:text=Mars%20manufactures%20confectionery%20at%20plant,the%20Siberian%20city%20of%20Novosibirsk> (accessed November 1, 2022).

¹² Mars, "Jobs at Mars," <https://careers.mars.com/ru/ru/search-results> (accessed November 1, 2022).

¹³ B4Ukraine, "Deaths and Treats: How your favorite sweets are a part of bloody war in Ukraine," October 25, 2022, <https://businessforukraine.info/actions/for-every-less-ethical-candy-maker> (accessed November 1, 2022).

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