

*Testimony*  
*Polina Pidhorodyska*  
*Ukrainian Second-Year Law student at Paris-Panthéon-Assas*  
*University*

- **Introduction: the beginning of the war**
  
- It is an honor for me to speak today as a second-year law student at Panthéon-Assas-University.
- However, less than two years ago, I was only a refugee, one among millions of Ukrainians who had to leave their country as a consequence of the Russian invasion.
- My hometown, Mykolaiv, was 40 kilometers from the frontline. My father kissed us goodbye and told us to leave immediately. This was in March 2022. There were six of us: me, my mother, my grandparents, my younger brother and Johnny, our little dog. All my friends fled to the four corners of the earth.
- Then one day, because of Russia's army, I lost everything I had: my home, my daily life. Russian missiles even destroyed my school: Mykolaiv's first Ukrainian high school was bombed just because of its name.
  
- **World support in a personal context**
  
- Today I speak French fluently, I just passed my first year of legal studies at Paris-Panthéon-Assas University. My life is that of an ordinary student: no bombings or power cuts. This normality became a reality only thanks to the support of Western countries and particularly the EU and the United States. This support did not only come from France. It also came from the French, who not only made me feel welcome in their country, but also literally in their homes. From the day that I arrived and up to this day, I have felt kindness and sincere compassion from the people around me. For all this I would like to thank those who took me in: Nathalie, who is

here today, and her family. They are the ones who encouraged me to follow my dream to become a jurist and study in this University. It was an unachievable dream, an unthinkable dream, which only now has started to become reality: little by little, thanks to the support of France, of the French, and in particular the Presidency of the University.

- **And also from the United States**

Today I am a student in France but ultimately, I would like to go back to Ukraine, my native country, a country which is fighting for the values of democracy and freedom. We lead this fight with vital support from our partners in Europe and the United States. Madam Speaker Emerita, Mrs Pelosi, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your infallible commitment in favor of Ukraine and Ukrainians, from the very beginning of the Russian invasion. I remember perfectly the moment you arrived in Kyiv in May 2022. All Ukrainians personally felt that they were not alone and that the free world had their back. You gave them hope and the power to hold their heads high.

- **Conclusion**

It is thanks to this support that I have the honor of speaking to you today. It is thanks to this support that Ukrainians (such as myself) feel welcome in the countries of the democratic world and can study there. It is also thanks to this support that Ukraine is still fighting today and will keep on fighting, all the way to victory.

Thank you very much!

*Paris, Grand Amphithéâtre de La Sorbonne, 6 November 2023*