

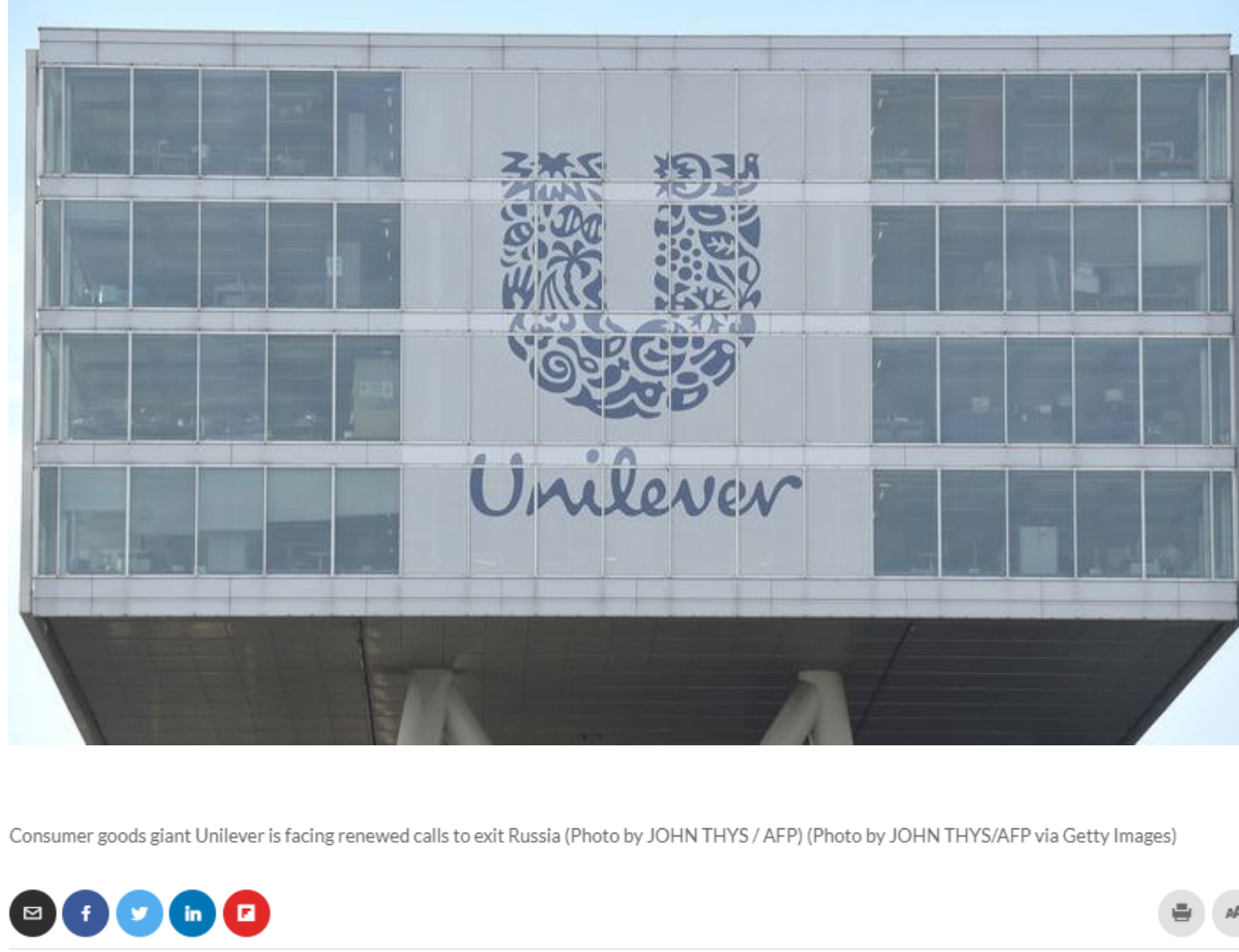
# 'Unilever has descended into a vortex of immorality': Pressure mounts on consumer goods giant to exit Russia

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'Unilever has done nothing but wriggle with excuses in response to our year-long demands for it to exit Russia,' says Moral Rating Agency founder Mark Dixon



Consumer goods giant Unilever is facing renewed calls to exit Russia (Photo by JOHN THYS / AFP) (Photo by JOHN THYS/AFP via Getty Images)

Referenced Symbols  
ULVR -0.19% ▲ UNA -0.01% ▼ AAPL +0.32% ▲ GOOG +0.08% ▲ GOOGL +0.11% ▲ AMZN +1.11% ▲ IBM +0.51% ▲ MCD -0.28% ▼ BN 0.02% ▲

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Pressure is mounting on Unilever to exit Russia, as the consumer goods giant faces calls for a boycott of its products.

Activist group B4Ukraine is among the voices urging consumers not to buy Unilever's **ULVR, -0.19%** **UNA, -0.06%** products, which include Dove soap, Hellmann's mayonnaise, and Ben & Jerry's, which was acquired by the consumer goods conglomerate in 2000.

"If the risk of becoming complicit in Russia's crimes against humanity hasn't swayed @Unilever, their consumers need to be the ones to show them that staying in Russia will hurt them much more than leaving ever would," tweeted B4Ukraine this week.

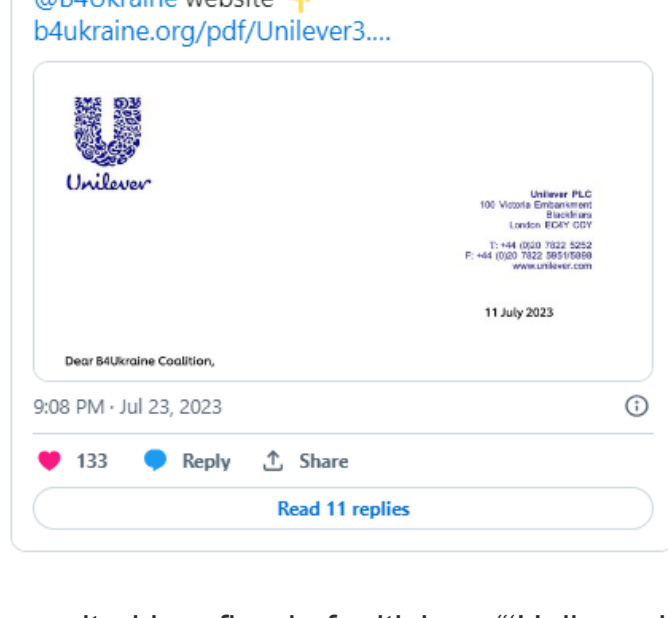


Unilever employs about 3,000 people in Russia. In the first six months of 2023, Russia contributed about 1.2% of the Unilever Group's turnover and 1.5% of its net profit, according to the company's **second-quarter results** this week. At the end of June, Unilever had net assets of \$882.7 million in Russia, including four factories.

**Related: [Unilever urged to exit Russia: 'It's making their hands bloodstained,' says Economic Security Council of Ukraine](#)**

Earlier this month B4Ukraine released a letter it received from Unilever responding to a number of questions from the group, including one related to conscription of Unilever

employees in Russia. "We are aware of the law requiring any company operating in Russia to permit the conscription of employees should they be called," Unilever said in the letter. "We always comply with all the laws of the countries we operate in."



The Unilever response resulted in a flood of criticism. "Unilever has descended into a vortex of immorality" said Moral Rating Agency founder Mark Dixon, in a **statement**. "Unilever has done nothing but wriggle with excuses in response to our year-long demands for it to exit Russia." The **Moral Rating Agency** was set up after the invasion of Ukraine to examine whether companies were carrying out their promises of **exiting Russia**.

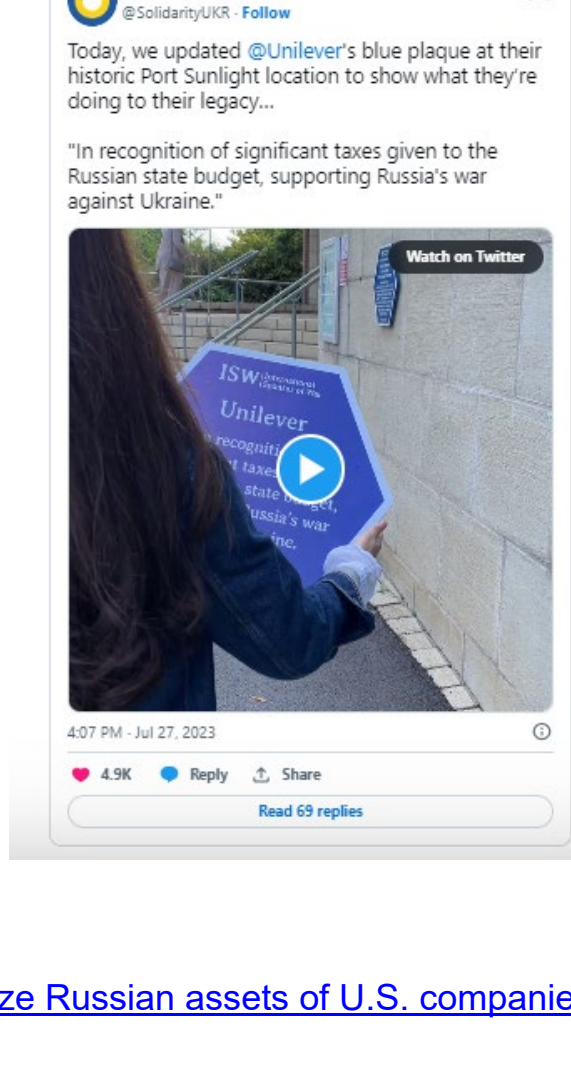
Unilever contributes more than \$700 million annually to the Russian treasury and economy, according to the Moral Rating Agency. "By confirming it will not oppose Unilever staff fighting Ukraine, it may therefore soon move from financially supporting Russia to providing staff to go into battle for Russia against Ukraine," Dixon said, in a subsequent statement released earlier this week.

Unilever was recently **added** to the Ukrainian government's 'International sponsors of war' list amid calls for a boycott of the company's products.

The Ukraine Solidarity Project has also launched a high-profile campaign urging Unilever to get out of Russia using the images of Ukrainian veterans injured in the war with Russia. Earlier this month, activists from the Ukraine Solidarity Project held a giant poster featuring the veterans outside Unilever's London headquarters.



This week the Ukraine Solidarity Project placed their own plaque over the blue heritage plaque at Unilever's historic home in Port Sunlight in the northwest of England. "In recognition of significant taxes given to the Russian state budget, supporting Russia's war against Ukraine," the Ukraine Solidarity Project's plaque reads.



**Related: [Kremlin could seize Russian assets of U.S. companies, warns Moral Rating Agency](#)**

MarketWatch has reached out to Unilever with a request for comment on this story. In a **statement** issued in February, the company said that "since March 2022, we have ceased all imports and exports of our products into and out of Russia, and we have stopped all media and advertising spend." The company added that it has also ceased all capital flows into and out of the country.

"We understand why there are calls for Unilever to leave Russia. We also want to be clear that we are not trying to protect or manage our business in Russia," Unilever said. "However, for companies like Unilever, which have a significant physical presence in the country, exiting is not straightforward."

Earlier this year, on the anniversary of Russia's invasion, the Economic Security Council of Ukraine **slammed Unilever** over its Russian presence. "It's making their hands bloodstained because of what Russia is doing in Ukraine," a representative for the Economic Security Council told MarketWatch. The **Economic Security Council of Ukraine** was set up to develop expertise in identifying and counteracting internal and external threats to Ukraine's economic security.

**Related: [Most Ukrainian businesses are fully operational, says Kyiv-based American Chamber of Commerce](#)**

A slew of major Western corporations such as U.S. giants Apple Inc. **AAPL, +0.32%**, Alphabet Inc. **GOOG, +0.08%** **GOOGL, +0.11%**, Amazon Inc. **AMZN, +1.11%**, International Business Machines Corp. **IBM, +0.51%** and McDonald's Corp. **MCD, -0.28%** **left Russia** in response to Moscow's devastating invasion of Ukraine.

In addition to a flood of criticism, Western companies that maintain Russian operations also run the risk of asset seizure by Putin's government, as evidenced recently when the local operations of Danone **BN, -0.09%** and Carlsberg were **placed under the control** of Russia's federal state property management agency.