



SCHWEIZER BISCHOFSKONFERENZ
CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES SUISSES
CONFERENZA DEI VESCOVI SVIZZERI
CONFERENZA DILS UESTGS SVIZZERS

His Holiness Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
Čisty Pereulok 5
119034 Moscow
RUSSIA

March 7th, 2022

Your Holiness, venerable Patriarch Kirill, dear brother in the Lord,

During these days we follow with dismay and burning concern the humanitarian catastrophe that unfolds in Ukraine because of the invasion of the Russian army. In the Joint Declaration signed together with Pope Francis in Havana on 12 February 2016, you spoke about the need for peace in Ukraine: "We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis. We invite all the parts involved in the conflict to prudence, to social solidarity and to action aimed at constructing peace" (No. 26). The commitment to peace in Ukraine at our time has taken on a tragic new relevance. The Joint Declaration is an urgent common call for peace. What was then related to the violence in the Middle East now applies unequivocally to the war in Ukraine: "We lift our prayers to Christ, the Saviour of the world, asking for the return of peace [...], the fruit of justice (Is 32:17), so that fraternal co-existence among the various populations, Churches and religions may be strengthened, enabling refugees to return to their homes, wounds to be healed, and the souls of the slain innocent to rest in peace" (No. 11).

It tears our hearts to see Christians who belong to the same church forced to shoot at each other. It tears our hearts to fear that the cradle of Slavic Orthodox Christianity in Kiev is now endangered by bombs. It tears at our hearts because we regard the Russian Orthodox Church as a sister church with whom we share faith, hope and love and whose afflictions are not external to us. Our prayers and solidarity reach out to you, the faithful of your Church and all those who are suffering so unspeakably under this war.

Your Holiness, the eyes of the world are upon you in this hour of history. We are eagerly awaiting you publicly to rise your voice and unequivocally call for peace. As shepherd of your great flock, which you preside over in the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, you can help to put an end to fratricide, so that the blood shed will no longer cry out to heaven (Gen 4:10). You can help prevent a rift between Russia and Ukraine, deeply united in their culture, faith and history, for many generations to come. You can save lives by speaking out clearly to the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, for an immediate end to the murderous invasion of Ukraine. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:9).

We find ourselves in a world deeply marked by forces of confusion and destruction. The Letter to the Ephesians calls us to battle in this time, but not with the weapons of this world against the powers of this world, but with the armour of God, girded with truth, with the armour of righteousness, with the helmet of salvation, with the shield of faith that quenches the fiery projectiles of the evil one and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph 6:13-17).

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In this situation, we are with you in our prayers and also by the readiness to provide you and the faithful of your Church with concrete help with which we can promote measures to restore lasting peace. We do not give up hope that Ukraine and Russia will have their specific recognised place in the common house of Europe. We look forward to receiving your proposals in this regard.

Grateful for your attention to the expression of our deep concern, we remain united with you in the love of Christ, the one Lord of the Church.

Felix Gmür
Bishop of Basel
President of the Swiss bishops conference