

INTERRELIGIOUS & INTERCONVICTIONAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Interreligious & Interconvictional Dialog Committee (IRICDC), Conference of INGOs – Council of Europe

Zoom-Meeting on Thursday 10th of March 2022

Russia's attack on Ukraine is affecting human beings in Europe and around the world. Many are calling for humanitarian actions, demonstrations or to send strong signals to end this intolerable suffering immediately.

Based on common human values and supported by our spirituality, we have gathered statements from the different religions and convictions in order to remember live accordingly to and put them into practice. Whatever we believe, we all belong to the same human family.

Our common wish becomes clear in the statement by **Religions for Peace (RfP)**: *“We pray for the citizens of Ukraine and Russia, who through no fault of their own will now suffer both spiritually and materially for decades to come. Violence breeds violence, and they will need much support to recover from the fear, insecurity, bitterness, and trauma that inevitably follows violent conflict.”* See more: <https://www.rfp.org/>

Contribution from Gabriela Frey & Trudy Frederiksson, EBU (European Buddhist Union)

His Holiness Dalai Lama: Our world has become so interdependent that violent conflict between two countries inevitably impacts the rest of the world. War is out-dated—non-violence is the only way. We need to develop a sense of the oneness of humanity by considering other human beings as brothers and sisters. This is how we will build a more peaceful world.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo: The suffering of people is really beyond imagination! However, with suffering comes strength. I hope that people rely on their innate goodness, I hope that people can help each other and be in solidarity with each other in this very difficult situation... this is the time to show inner strength, not just as a member of a religion or an ethnic group, but to show your unity as a human being.

Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh (recently passed away): We often think of peace as the absence of war, that if powerful countries would reduce their weapon arsenals, we could have peace. But if we look deeply into the weapons, we see our own minds—our own prejudices, fears, and ignorance. Even if we transport all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the roots of bombs are still there, in our hearts and minds, and sooner or later we will make new bombs. To work for peace is to uproot war from ourselves and from the hearts of men and women. To prepare for war, to give millions of men and women the opportunity to practice killing day and night in their hearts, is to plant millions of seeds of violence, anger, frustration, and fear that will be passed on for generations to come. (1997)

Sister “True Dedication”: Keeping a state of peace in Europe is not something to take for granted. It's not something born from inaction. Peace is an active state that requires nurturing, engagement, dialogue, understanding, and openness.

Contribution de Kari Flornes GERFEC (European Group for Research and Training of Teachers Holding Christian and Other Beliefs and Convictions):

Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989). “The inner spiritual life of human beings, the inner impulses of their activities, are the most difficult to predict, yet it is precisely on them that, in the final consequence, the downfall of salvation of civilisation depends.”

Formal and informal education ought to cooperate to construct an education, a pedagogy for the whole human being, cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually. GERFEC as an NGO works to develop and constantly renew this pedagogy. The construction of a safe place, democratic and inclusive is necessary for this education.

Contribution of Pierre Dussère (OIEC, Enseignement Catholique International)

God our Father, Father of the human family, take pity on the Ukrainian people and deliver them from the war that is being imposed upon them. Give them back their autonomy within their own borders and the power to decide their own future. Lord, we pray for the invader, and we ask you to touch his

heart, so that the fighting will stop and he will leave Ukraine. Remove also from the heart of every human being the seeds of hatred, domination, division, and the spirit of vengeance; put in each one a spirit of respect, peace, forgiveness, a desire for reconciliation and brotherhood. Keep the flame of hope burning within us so that we may persevere in making choices for dialogue and reconciliation.

Contribution of Liliane Seidmann, ICJW (International Council of Jewish Women):

Torah: The idea that peace comes from the consciousness of the individual emphasises the origin of human existence, the nature and consciousness of the human being. Ending war presupposes the mastery of the impulses and reasons that incite humans to violence. Peace will come as a result of the intellectual or psychological improvement of humanity.

I wish that we will come to a fast and reasonable solution to end the atrocities of the war and stop the paranoid Putin and his uncontrollable power by killing innocent people.

Contribution de Sören Lenz, CEC (Conférence des Eglises en Europe):

The Coventry Cross of Nails is a Christian cross, made from iron nails. The original version was made from three large medieval nails salvaged from the Coventry Cathedral after the building was severely damaged by German bombs on 14 November 1940, during the Second World War. Today it is a symbol of forgiveness and reconciliation in so called Community of the Nail of the Cross over all in the world. Cross of Nails from Coventry in the Nikolaikirche, Kiel.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CrossofNailsKiel.jpg>

Prayer of reconciliation inspired by the Coventry Nail Cross liturgy used during the 2nd European Assembly of CEC in Graz 1997

(Source: Sinfonia Oecumenica. Worship with the churches in the World)

- L: Across the barriers that divide nations and people
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross.
 - L: Across the barriers that divide the rich from the poor:
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross.
 - L: Across the barriers that divide people of different faiths and religions
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross.
 - L: Across the barriers that divide Christians
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross.
 - L: Across the barriers that divide men and women, young and old:
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross.
 - L: Through the barriers that separate the East from the West and the South from the North.
 - C: Reconcile us, O Christ, by your cross across the barriers that separate men and women.
 - L: Confront us, O Christ, with the hidden prejudices and fears, which deny and betray our prayers.
- Enable us to see the cause of the strife. Remove from us all false sense of superiority.
Teach us to grow in unity with all God's children. Amen



Contribution Anne Marie Schott, EFECW (Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women):

"War...is the forgetfulness of the One, the forgetfulness that we are one humanity; there is no greater misfortune than to believe one has an enemy, and worse than a misfortune when one sees that this enemy is one's own brother" Jean-Yves Leloup

War seriously endangers our humanity, our brotherhood, our "common home". As Christian women, fully aware of the complexity of the situation, we do not lose hope. We trust in the greatness of God. We believe that the connection and respectful interaction between individuals and communities across borders guarantees a more humane earth, a better future for all. Carried by our belief in Life, carried by our faith in Jesus Christ, carried by our faith in Man, we stand in solidarity with each other, beyond our cultural, geographical, national, confessional or philosophical divisions. Moved by their suffering and fear, we support the Ukrainian people with our thoughts, our prayers and our acts of mutual aid. Every person, whether believer, non-believer, agnostic, or whatever his or her convictions, is free to be a catalyst and instrument of peace. Every person has a part to play in building a more just world, in building bridges of reconciliation. "Peace will have your face". Life is stronger than death; it is this hope for which we are responsible.

"Lord, hear our prayer! Open our eyes and our hearts, infuse us with the courage to build peace.

Keep the flame of hope burning in us, so that with perseverance we make choices of dialogue and reconciliation, so that peace may finally win.” Pope Francis

Contribution by Tsunma Jinpa, DBU (German Buddhist Union)

Today there are Tibetan flags hanging in many places across our town, to remind us of the invasion of Tibet, 70 years ago. Now invasion and war has come much closer. And we are shocked, because we thought that this could not be possible anymore – esp. here in Europe. How wrong we were.

In these distressing times I believe that it is more important than ever to build strong communities and friendships in order to support each other. It is one answer to all the suffering - to stand together in solidarity and compassion, in true friendship across traditions and religions – in our own countries, but also across Europe and the whole world. I wish to share a verse from The Sutra of Golden Light – that has been with me since the invasion of the Ukraine:

May nowhere in the world be the sound of lamentation, may not one being in need be seen, may they all be of radiant appearance, and may they share the light with each other.
The Sutra of Golden Light - Suvarnabhasottamasutra

May we take refuge in Bodhicitta and not be drawn into the conflict. And may we continue to be a light for each other and to share our light with each other in these times of darkness.

Tsunma Jinpa is a Nun of the Drikung Kagyu Tradition, Council member of the DBU.

Contribution by Lilia Bensedrine Thabet, IRSE (Institut Robert Schuman pour l'Europe):

No one is a believer if he doesn't wish for others what he wishes for himself. That utterance of the prophet of the Islam is the golden rule in all religions. We find it in all religions. It is about honouring parents, living as a good neighbour, respecting other people, being just, helping the poor, giving a hand to those who have little and to orphans and to make peace. Peace is neither a theory, nor an ideology, it is a way of living, behaving and believing.

Contribution by Jean-Bernard Marie (Justice and Peace)

Shared Prayer and Meditation are a force for action

- They are not an escape from reality or a refuge from danger and fear
- They are compassionate, sharing with others, and humane
- They are an inexhaustible resource, a deep comfort for victims
- They mobilise for action, welcoming and helping others
- They are effective instruments for building Peace and Justice

In the diversity of beliefs and convictions, with the richness of words and gestures, this is the contribution shared by the members of the Committee for Interfaith Dialogue, for all the victims of the war against Ukraine and for the restoration of a lasting peace.

CONCLUDING REMARK:

All great religions teach us forgiveness, tolerance and love. Why then do people who follow a religion bring forth violence and do not take the very message of their own faith seriously?

Our existing education system needs to teach about the importance of inner peace, whether one is a religious believer or not. One of the most important tasks of our time is to promote deep human values. This is not only done through prayers or religious faith, but especially through education, awareness, scientific knowledge and common sense.

Change only takes place through constructive action. From whatever level we look at it, peace can only come from inner peace. It is useless to pray for peace while continuing to pursue anger. Training the mind and overcoming hatred are more effective than prayers. Anger, hatred and jealousy do not solve problems; only affection, care and respect can do so.

This compilation is on behalf of all members of the committee, even if some could not provide a text of their own.