

**The anniversary of the Russian war
against Ukraine: Yearning for a just and
lasting Peace in Europe**



**INITIATIVE
OF CHRISTIANS
FOR EUROPE**

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Inspired by our shared Christian faith and motivated by a deep yearning for a just and lasting Peace in Europe and in the world, IXE - Initiative of Christians for Europe, issued this statement.

We stand with Ukraine, which has been the target of this war against international law, including the Budapest Memorandum, for one year.

We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their fight against aggression and in their right to live in a free country, and we recognize their right to self-defence. We condemn Russia's war of aggression as a crime against humanity. This crime has led to hundreds of thousands of dead and injured people, including civilians. Millions of refugees have fled the horror. All those who want to escape war must find protection through humanitarian visas or asylum, following the model of EU reaction. Innumerable people are at risk of falling victim to this war. Poverty and food insecurity have grown in many countries, principally in the Global South. Inflation, especially in the energy sector, exacerbates social inequality. From a Christian perspective, we must always opt for the weak.

1. In the past and present, religions have been and are being instrumentalised in conflicts and wars by political elites. We firmly reject this. In the 21st century, religious communities must finally take a decisive stand for peace. Therefore, we criticise in the clearest terms that the ideological ground for this war has been supported to a high degree by the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church. Instead of making a contribution in the sense of Christian peace ethics, the Russian Orthodox leader Kyrill granted absolution. The war of aggression is no longer considered a sin, but a service of God. In the year of war, no voices of reconciliation were heard. This must change. We call on Patriarch Kyrill to stop war propaganda. All Christian churches and other religious communities in Russia should work for peace.
2. We call for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine to prevent further suffering for soldiers on both sides as well as for civil society. Russia started the war and must end it, instead of further escalation. Peace can only be dignified and lasting, if it is built on liberty, restauration of territorial integrity and justice which involves the investigation of war crimes and reparation of war damages. We do not give up hope that the aggressor of the recent past and present can become a country with which diplomatic understanding is possible – even if this seems impossible now, given the brutal and aggressive actions of the current Russian government. International law must take precedence over state power interests and the right of the stronger.
3. We call for continued support of Ukraine on its way towards membership in the European Union. We call for the reconstruction of Ukraine to be prepared based on active solidarity between countries. Green infrastructure must be created to avoid redundant fossil fuel technologies.
4. The war against Ukraine follows imperialistic goals. With the accompanying propaganda and disinformation it is also an attack on universal values. The devastating consequences for energy prices show how closely energy and geopolitics are interwoven. At the same time, the climate crisis poses enormous security risks. For both reasons, the green transformation needs to be accelerated urgently on all levels.

Before the war and during the war, church organisations played and still play a central role for Ukrainian society. They provide social support for people in need, faith and value based education at catholic schools and the university in Lviv as well as pastoral care all over the country. In the present and future, we will support our Ukrainian partners to that they can continue their work and rebuild their country. Those who want peace must prepare it and create the basis for it to emerge and grow. This remains the task and challenge of all Christians, believers, and people of good will.

The Initiative of Christians for Europe (IXE) is an association of lay organizations and committed Christians from different European countries. General concern of IXE is to incorporate a more vivid awareness of a united Europe in the national debates. The initiative aims at fostering the encounter of Christians in Europe and to promote the Social Doctrine of the Church in order to achieve a better mutual knowledge and understanding of historical and cultural differences.

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