



The Crisis in Ukraine - Give Peace a Chance

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Pax Christi International, a global faith-based peace movement, is following with great concern the current dangerous developments in Ukraine. Russia's decision to officially recognise the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in Eastern Ukraine as independent states, and sending so called "peace-keeping operations", increases the prospect of war between Russia, Ukraine, and the US and its NATO allies with potential catastrophic consequences for the world.

War in Ukraine will lead to immense suffering for the people of Ukraine with thousands of deaths, refugees, the disappearance of the potential of generations of young people and children, and mass destruction with long lasting effects on the country's economy and on global peace. Equally the impact of the use of weapons on the environment will be enormous and devastating. On the Russian side, there will be many casualties among the soldiers, often young conscripts, who are drawn into war actions.

By sending its troops into a territory that it has unilaterally declared to be a "third" state, Russia flagrantly violated Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty in open contradiction of the treaties it has itself signed and the Charter of the United Nations.

Since 2014, Russia has fed unrest, rebellion, separatism, and annexation with a view to destabilising an independent neighbouring state whose own existence it now openly puts into question.

Pax Christi International deplores this state of affairs that goes against the principles and values of the United Nations – where Russia holds a permanent seat at the Security Council – and also of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Pax Christi International supports the message of the UN Secretary-General who is urging all relevant actors to focus their efforts on "ensuring an immediate cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, preventing any actions and statements that may further escalate the dangerous situation in and around Ukraine and prioritizing diplomacy to address all issues peacefully."

Diplomacy is the only way out if we want to preserve peace.

Pax Christi International calls on the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe to become the fora where a peaceful solution for the crisis can and must be found.

Pax Christi pleads with the nations of the world to recognise the responsibility and authority of the UN Security Council to address the violations of international law.

Pax Christi International calls for

- The withdrawal of any Russian troops from Ukrainian territory;
- The full recognition of Ukraine's international frontiers as guaranteed by the Helsinki Declaration (1975), the Charter of Paris (1990) and the Budapest Treaty (1994);
- The implementation of the Minsk agreement and providing access to OSCE monitors of the Agreement;

- The government of the Russian Federation to let the aspirations for peace of its people to be heard in public and to stop giving to the world an unfair image of a country united for war behind its leaders.

Pax Christi International reminds NATO and the European Union of their overarching responsibility for the maintaining of peace on the European territory, by promoting active peace policies that include dialogue, mediation, the hearing of grievances and the adoption of deescalating measures, from the withdrawal of troops to the recognition of the dignity and identity of the Ukrainian nation.

As a faith-based organisation, Pax Christi International calls on all religious leaders to promote prayer, nonviolence and dialogue, and to take publicly a stance in favour of peaceful means of conflict resolution.

It also calls on its members to actively encourage their political leadership to equally promote a peaceful resolution of this conflict by using all the legitimate means at their disposal.

Pax Christi International also expresses its deepest solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We pray for all who live in terrible fear for what the future brings and we also pray for those courageous peacemakers in Ukraine and Russia who work for positive change in nonviolent ways. The people of Ukraine have a right to live in freedom, peace that enables them to participate in the sustainable development of their country.

In communion with Pope Francis, Pax Christi International recalls the message of his predecessors who in similar peace threatening moves of the past claimed that “nothing is lost with peace, all can be lost with war.”

Don't let the implacable mechanic of war to prevail over the patient quest for peace. It is still time to give peace the chance it deserves. It is a gift of God, nobody can dispose of it lightly!