

24 March 2022

Issued by the Press Office of the
Evangelical Church in Germany
(EKD)

Herrenhäuser Str. 12
30419 Hannover

T. +49(511) 2796-264/268
F. +49(511) 2796-777

pressestelle@ekd.de
www.ekd.de

“End the violence, oppose the hatred”

EKD Church Conference takes a position on the war in Ukraine

At its two-day meeting concluding today (24 March), the Church Conference of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) dealt extensively with the war that the President of the Russian Federation began against Ukraine. In a unanimously adopted statement, the Church Conference, which comprises all leading clergy (bishops) and senior legal experts in the 20 Protestant regional churches, underlined their solidarity with the people in Ukraine and condemned the war, which is breaking international law. They also expressed gratitude for the readiness of people in Germany to donate. “Hatred and violence must not be allowed to have the last word. Peace has the last word. Christ is our peace,” said the chair of the EKD Council, Praeses Annette Kurschus, who is also moderator of the Church Conference.

Peace can ultimately not be achieved by the military force, according to the statement. However, the lasting wish for nonviolence now has to address the option of supporting Ukraine with weapons – in face of an aggressor that ignores international law and commits war crimes. “Ukraine has an undisputed right to defend itself against the acts of aggression directed against it.”

In the statement, the Church Conference calls upon its members to receive refugees and to avoid any division between different groups of refugees. It expressly praises the courage of many Orthodox priests in Russia who have spoken out against the war and against the position of their church leadership. “It is all the more important to us to resolutely oppose both generalised views about Russian Orthodoxy and its inclusion in a uniform enemy stereotype of Russia,” the document states.

In view of the impacts of the war on the global cereals market, the Church Conference appeals to the German Federal Government to refrain from its intention to reduce funding for development assistance.

The full text of the statement

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
The Gospel of Matthew 5:9

We extend our respect and profound sympathy to all people in Ukraine and neighbouring countries affected by the inconceivable violence of the war begun by the President of the Russian Federation. We condemn in the strongest terms the fact that people – soldiers and civilian population alike – are being instrumentalised, injured and killed for political and military goals. We admire the courage of Ukrainian civil society and are uncomfortably aware of it in view

of our comfortable situation in Germany. With respect and great gratitude we see the huge readiness to help being displayed in Ukraine, the neighbouring countries and here in Germany. We will do everything in our power to support the people in Ukraine and the refugees. That includes intercessory prayer, pastoral care for trauma sufferers, caring for particularly vulnerable persons and lending all support for diplomatic and non-military courses of action.

In the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ we are profoundly convinced that peace can ultimately not be achieved through military force. Peace is more than the absence of war. Without trust, justice and personal contacts between people of all nations, peace is not possible. Nevertheless, the different options present us with a dilemma: we have a fundamental wish for a non-violent solution to the conflict and yet an impulse to support Ukraine with weapons, in face of an aggressor that brutally ignores applicable international law and commits war crimes. Ukraine has an undisputed right to defend itself against the acts of aggression directed against it.

We call on the Russian leadership to end the violence. We watch the warmongers with feelings of powerlessness and support political endeavours to counteract them effectively. We ourselves can do a lot for humanity. That includes receiving refugees and not allowing any division to arise in our society between different groups of refugees. The right to find refuge in a safe place is indivisible.

With all the great willingness to help and donate for Ukraine, we must not forget other war regions. Such a shift in generosity will ultimately run the risk of causing conflicts and letting people die in other parts of the world as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. Humanity is indivisible. Humanity builds peace. We urge the German Federal Government to refrain from its intention to reduce funding for development assistance.

We hear a clear multiplicity of voices within the Russian Orthodox Church. From the beginning voices have been raised from its midst expressing opposition to the acts of war, in particular in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. We pay tribute to the courage of many Orthodox priests in Russia who have collected signatures against the war and against the position of their church leadership. As peacemakers, they risked a lot and placed themselves in great danger. It is all the more important to us to resolutely oppose both generalised views of Russian Orthodoxy and its inclusion in a uniform enemy stereotype of Russia.

In view of the multiple voices of Russian Orthodoxy, we hope that it will be possible to maintain bridges of dialogue. They can open up pathways that may be of great significance for a peace process. It is crucial for a long-term and sustainable perspective to keep up cultural, economic and human contacts. Civil society in Russia depends on our support. It is equally important to promote

societal cohesion here in Germany. There must be no spreading of hatred against people of Russian origin.

A future peace order needs more than military force and deterrence. It needs global justice; it needs climate justice. And it needs a binding legal order that empowers civil society, protects human rights and also applies to superpowers.

Hatred and violence must not be allowed to have the last word. Peace has the last word. Christ is our peace.

Hanover, 24 March 2022

EKD Press Office
Carsten Splitt

Up-to-date information and materials (in German) on the topic “War in Ukraine” can be found at www.ekd.de/ukraine

About the EKD’s Church Conference

It consists of the leading clergy and senior legal experts of the member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany. It meets four times a year, deliberates on the work of the EKD and on common concerns of the member churches. The Church Conference forwards documents for decision, or proposals, to the Synod and the Council and has its own right of initiative with respect to legislation. The moderator of the Church Conference is Praeses Annette Kurschus, chair of the EKD Council.