

**STATEMENT
OF THE GERMAN COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE
ON THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE**

1. With the massive attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 in violation of international law, the Russian Federation crossed the Rubicon, an act which the UN General Assembly condemned by an overwhelming majority on 2 March 2022. If, after the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in the Donbas, which was promoted and carried out by Russia, there was still hope in the West that diplomacy would be able to prevent an expansion of the war and return to the Charter of Paris in the long term, this hope has proved to be an illusion for the time being with the renewed attack on Ukraine. The attack on Ukraine is not just a regional conflict, but a global political confrontation. It is an attack on the foundations of international law and at the same time an attack on the European idea and European and Western values. It is a fundamental departure from a policy of rules-based multilateralism and a turn towards the tradition of Great Russian imperialism. The struggle of Ukrainians is therefore a struggle for their and our freedom and democracy.
2. In his government statement on 27 February 2022 made during the special session of the German Bundestag, Chancellor Olaf Scholz described this situation as a turning point. The changed security policy situation we are confronted with triggers a variety of uncertainties to which answers must be found. Given the current state of affairs, we must prepare ourselves for a long period of fundamental confrontation with the Russian Federation. In this context, it will be important, not least for church action, to reliably and seriously take on the conflict, which will in all likelihood determine our peace and security policy reality for many years to come - at least until the end of the Putin regime - and to deal with it with strategic patience and decisiveness. In doing so, special attention must be paid to the ideological background of the regulatory policy conflict. What matters most in the current situation is to support Ukraine with an attitude of solidarity. This includes rapid and purposeful support of the refugees in cooperation with our European neighbours as well as numerous contacts with our partners in Ukraine. The last few days in particular have shown how much the practical gestures of solidarity are appreciated there. The practical solidarity that many people in Europe are showing to the refugees from Ukraine is a valuable sign of European unity. It is important that after the initial shock and the first emotional reactions, we remain reliably at Ukraine's side. The level-headedness of the Ukrainian leadership and the united condemnation of the war of aggression by all churches and religious communities in Ukraine are important signs to which we must respond with similar level-headed determination and European unity.
3. The right to self-defence, affirmed in the teachings of the Church and enshrined in international law, is completely undisputed in the case of Ukraine. Accordingly, wisely chosen deliveries of weapons are legitimate, if not ethically required. It goes without saying that here, too, the imperatives of proportionality and international humanitarian law must be observed. NATO would be well advised to ensure that it does not become a direct party to the war, otherwise there is a real risk that escalation control will be lost and nuclear weapons will be used with hardly foreseeable consequences. It is also not in Ukraine's interest to be turned into a desert contaminated by radioactivity. It is with a heavy heart that we have to choose the lesser of two evils. The tension between practical solidarity and necessary military self-restraint is hard to bear. This can only be achieved if, together with our European

and transatlantic partners, we develop a long-term perspective for resolving this fundamental conflict.

4. With regard to Russia, there is currently widespread agreement in Germany that, in addition to practical solidarity towards Ukraine, a clear and effective sanctions policy is needed. This requires the continued support of the population. The churches can help to generate the necessary staying power. The sanctions currently imposed, which are also painful for us, are aimed at reducing the economic opportunities of the Russian Federation, its political-economic isolation and, in the long term, the internal destabilisation of the Putin regime. The Russian population's support for the war is by no means stable. It is essentially based on a systematic propaganda of lies by the regime, which deliberately instrumentalize historical wounds of the Russian population - not least those caused by the Second World War - for its own purposes. So far, the government has not presented any convincing evidence for any of the reasons given for the war. External aggression and internal repression, such as against the renowned Russian human rights organisation Memorial, go hand in hand. All the more remarkable is the willingness of people to express their rejection of the war in Russia itself, despite the massive repression. This rejection will in all likelihood grow with the increasing losses of the Russian armed forces. Nevertheless, we should not assume that a momentum of change will occur in Russia in the short term. Nonetheless, the Russian people who oppose the war are an important sign of a better future. They deserve our recognition and solidarity. There is an inner spiritual connection between the defence of Ukraine's independence and the commitment to the democratisation of Russia. We should do what we can to support our Russian partners. The least we can do is not to let the existing cultural, scientific and religious contacts and connections with our partners break off.

5. The necessary correction of Germany's peace and security policy goes hand in hand with the announcement that the existing backlogs in equipping the German armed forces will be made up for with an extraordinary financial effort. In addition, the defence budget is to be increased in the long term in order to meet the obligations of the alliance. However, it is currently unclear exactly how and for what purpose these considerable sums of money are to be used. Moreover, it is currently unclear what the overall balance within the framework of German (peace) policy will be. There is a danger of a situation-related overreaction, which could also be at the expense of equally fundamental climate, development and social policies. Here, it is important to expertly accompany the processes in security policy detail and to continue to think in terms of a comprehensive understanding of security and transformation. This includes strengthening civil means of conflict resolution. For it will remain crucial in the future to refrain from rearmament and arms exports and to devote greater financial, intellectual and political efforts to building up and expanding civil conflict resolution capabilities. This also means that Germany and its European and transatlantic partners must work vigorously to avert the hunger crisis in many countries of the Global South that is developing as a result of the war. For in addition to the pressing humanitarian issues, famines would further destabilise the global political situation and force more people to flee. It would be fatal if we narrowed our focus to the acute threat from Russia and thus weakened the necessary food, energy and climate policies. This is all the more true as the German government must overcome the existing energy dependence on Russia as quickly as possible. The social costs of the necessary broad-based policy must be fairly distributed.

6. Putin's blatant nuclear threat has shown the world in a new way that the system of nuclear deterrence is like riding on a razor's edge. There is always the danger that conventionally conducted military conflicts will escalate into nuclear conflicts, bringing entire countries, perhaps even continents, to the brink of annihilation or the destruction of their livelihoods. Therefore, it remains right to advocate a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons and complete and controlled nuclear disarmament. Moreover, the world has become aware of the potential danger inherent in the civilian use of nuclear energy in the event of war. Against this background, we consider ourselves confirmed in our view that the planned phase-out of nuclear energy is urgently needed, and not only for reasons of environmental protection.
7. In these days the view is repeatedly expressed that the Russian war of aggression refutes the Christian doctrine of Just Peace with its priority option for civil conflict management and active non-violence. We do not share this view. On the one hand, the doctrine of Just Peace has never denied the ambivalence of the problem of violence. On the other hand, the attitude of active nonviolence does not primarily consist of a refusal to do military service. Active nonviolence aims at containing violence and, as far as possible, overcoming it. Above all, it resists the pull of complete hostility that every war exerts. It does not respond to hatred with hatred, it does not demand revenge, it remains peaceful even in the face of hostility in order to be able to seize every opportunity to avoid or end war. We recall Immanuel Kant's admonition that even in war the spirit of peace and a certain amount of trust in the enemy's way of thinking must be preserved, because otherwise there cannot and will not be peace, even if the weapons are silent. The Ukrainian President, his government and the people of Ukraine deserve credit for having so far maintained a moderate tone in their pronouncements and statements and for having avoided warmongering. This ability reveals great moral strength. It would be a significant anticipation of a peaceful future if it were preserved, despite the horrors of war. For no war can bring peace; only people who do not let themselves be hardened by it can do that.
8. Preparing for peace in times of war challenges not only the diplomats, but all of us and the international community. Much depends now on not condemning the entire Russian people, but on accusing those politically responsible and, if possible, holding them accountable. We perceive that critical questions about the political-cultural developments in their own society that led to the war are also increasing in Russia. For the future political-cultural renewal of Russia, much will depend on the extent to which society there succeeds in seriously facing up to these questions. Genuine peace policy must take care not to humiliate the opponent, even in the event of his defeat. The basic requirement of any peace treaty must be justice that punishes injustice without seeking revenge. For there is no more effective impetus for the need for revenge and retribution than the feeling of having to endure injustice.
9. As Christians, we are united in prayer across all fronts, borders and obstacles with all those who are innocently suffering and dying - regardless of their religion or confession. We are all the more pained by the credible reports that in the occupied territories, on the part of the Russian Federation, all religious communities except the Church, which is linked to the Moscow Patriarchate, are subject to manifold repression and persecution. These blatant violations of religious freedom once again demonstrate the repressive nature of the Russian regime. We condemn President Putin's invocation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as blasphemous. The fact that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church remains silent on these events and even more tries to religiously legitimise the Russian attack on Ukraine is a disgrace for the Russian Orthodox Church, which is rich in tradition. The courageous

testimonies of all those Russian Orthodox believers who oppose this war against the will of the Patriarch are, on the other hand, precious and effective signs of common Christian hope. We are grateful to them - not least with a view to the future of ecumenism. Together with them, we pray for all those whose lives are at risk and who have lost or will lose their lives. Ensuring a genuine and honourable remembrance of them helps to overcome the enmity of hearts and to place relationships on a basis of respect and truthfulness. Reliable and ongoing solidarity with the refugees is an essential practical expression of our Christian hope, which goes far beyond overcoming the current challenges. This hope ultimately points to the horizon of conversion and renewal. It defends the possibility of reconciliation in the long term. For violence must not have the final word.

26 March 2022