



FOLKEKIRKENS
MELLEMKIRKELIGE RÅD

His Holiness Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia
Russian Orthodox Church
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Copenhagen, 3. May 2023

The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark met 27. April 2023 in Copenhagen, Denmark. We heartily congratulate you on the occasion of Easter and our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ!

It is with horror and sorrow that we have followed the suffering of Ukrainian people in the last 14 months since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Not only does the acts of Russia violate the principles of the Geneva conventions and continue to bring suffering and death over the Ukrainian people. But also, the fact that orthodox Christians justify war against orthodox brothers and sisters deeply saddens us as ecumenical, Lutheran Christians. Therefore, we call upon the Russian Orthodox Church to distance itself from and condemn the invasion as an expression of unjustified aggressive war, an act which can never be justified in Christian theological perspective.

In contrast, we as churches should demonstrate our joint ecumenical commitment to following Christ's commission to peace and protection of those most vulnerable. Therefore, we call upon the World Council of Churches to continue our common pilgrimage towards justice and peace by urging member churches to distance themselves theologically and ethically from unjustified aggressive warfare. We urge you to join us in this effort in our common organization World Council of Churches.

However, not only are we witnessing a war of aggression that violates international conventions, but also a war that is justified in ways which are ethically illegitimate and theologically invalid. The justification of Russia's military campaign in metaphysical terms as a 'purification' of Ukraine as well as the propagation of a Russian political exceptionalism is illegitimate and invalid. This constitutes an active contribution to legitimize the war by misleading statements and make you complicit in the continued suffering of Ukrainians as well as Russians. We strongly reject the misuse of Christian ethics and theological rhetoric in the propaganda of the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church's justification of a culture of war and death.

We have not given up the hope that the Russian Orthodox Church can play a role in the rebuilding and reconciliation of nations and peoples after the end of the military conflict. However, to be able to work for peace, the Russian Orthodox Church needs to honor the dignity of all humans theologically and ethically, irrespective of nationality and ethnicity. From our historical ecumenical experience, we believe that this transformation can happen only through confession, prayer, courage, and love.

We hope and pray that war and power will not steal away the hope of the Russian Orthodox Church, but that the resurrected Lord will remain a visible sign of God's love and compassion in a world full of aggression and selfishness.

In Christ,

Prof Peter Lodberg

Chairman of the Council International Relations of
the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark

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