



Public issues' proposal
**RUSSIAN MILITARY INVASION TO UKRAINE AND THE ROLE OF THE
ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**

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On behalf of the SCM of: Belarus

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Title of Public Issue Statement:

**RUSSIAN MILITARY INVASION TO UKRAINE AND THE ROLE OF THE
ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**

Context:

The ongoing unprovoked aggression of Putin's regime, the war in Ukraine, which was launched on 24 February 2022, continues to have a disastrous impact on the people of that country, and puts at risk the global humanitarian, political, ecological and economic context of the whole world.

Apart from civilian murder, destruction of cities like Mariupol, decimation of essential infrastructure, the displacement of millions of people, terrible massacres like at Bucha and hundreds of individual war crimes, there are also grave violations of human rights in the occupied territories and filtration camps, which degrade human dignity and deprive people of basic necessities.

We express our sympathy to the Ukrainian people in their struggles and sufferings. We pray for an immediate return to normal peaceful life in their country and a complete stop to Russian aggression in the region. We stand in solidarity with the Christian youth of Ukraine in this horrific and unjust time, and actively support their right to freedom and independence.

We, as Christians, are strongly disturbed by the role played in the justification of atrocities by the leadership of Christian communities in Russia, especially the Russian Orthodox Church, which claims to be a leading moral steward in the world.

The position voiced on many occasions by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and many other bishops and priests places many faithful of this Church, especially the young faithful, in a position of strong distrust of, and alienation from, the Christian religion. They are entitled to special encouragement in their faith



and peace-making activities.

In the absence of Ukrainian representatives in ecumenical forums, Russian Orthodox officials monopolize the discourse on the war. They manipulate documents and prayer formulations to shift focus away from the clear evidence that the Russian state is responsible for actions which are completely alien to the Christian message. Furthermore, we insist that any religious justification of the armed aggression is a dangerous perversion of the spirit of the gospel and Christ's teaching.

We acknowledge the courage of those Belarussians and Russians who, despite persecutions by the authoritarian regimes in their countries, courageously oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the use of Belarus' territory and infrastructure for attacks against Ukraine.

We pray that Almighty God will give the people of that region the wisdom to continue to resist propaganda and incitement of hatred, the strength to launch and participate in further protests for peace, and the peace of Christ to the whole people of Ukraine.

Therefore, after considering the future of our ecumenical events, we propose the following actions:

1. Participation of representatives of Ukrainian Church communities and Christian organizations, both those who remain in the country and those in the displaced community, is required in all relevant discussions, with clear acknowledgement that they are the subject of and an equal partner in the conversation.
2. Participants in the above mentioned conversation should be empowered and encouraged in their participation.
3. The WSCF will accept that it has a duty of care to its Ukrainian members/partners. The nature of this care should be decided promptly.
4. Discussion of the war can be morally and emotionally triggering for the Ukrainian participants, so safe-space policies must be enforced.
5. The language used in the regard to the war shall be appropriate in relation to the aggressors and victims. On the one hand, the aggressive character of the Russian invasion has to be highlighted, on the other hand, the right to self defense of the Ukrainian people must be recognized and respected. All euphemisms to describe this invasion as "conflict" or "events" should be avoided as much as possible - it is a war, invasion, unprovoked aggression and terrorism.
6. The activities of young Christians in Belarus and Russia for the sake of justice and peace, most of which are carried out in resistance to the leadership of their religious communities, must receive more visibility and solidarity.