

## ACAT Vigil for the victims of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

**On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland started the Second World War.**

**Today, 1 September 2022, there is war in Europe once again. The brutal attack on Ukraine launched on 24 February 2022 by the Russian government and President Putin, in violation of international law, has inflicted war, war crimes, violence and misery on the people of Ukraine.**

As of 9 May 2022, the UN estimated that 5.4 million refugees had left Ukraine and there were 7.7 million internally displaced people. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as of 31 July 2022 the war between Russia and Ukraine had caused at least 5327 deaths among the civilian population, including at least 537 children. The OHCHR also recorded at least 7257 civilians as having been injured, including at least 571 children; the actual number of casualties is estimated to be several times higher (Source: de.Statistica.com).

Kyiv claims that 42640 Russian soldiers had been killed as of August 2022; the Pentagon puts the number of Russian casualties (dead or injured) at between 70000 and 80000 (Source: FR 9.8.22). Putin is trying to keep these figures secret, fearing an uprising by soldiers' mothers and wives. On the Ukrainian side, President Zelensky said on 12 March that 1300 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed, whereas the Pentagon put the number at 1500 as of 28 February. Russian forces regularly bomb civilian sites on the pretext that military installations are concealed there.

The OHCHR's report of 28 June 2022 stated that there had been several confirmed cases of the Ukrainian military operating out of civilian facilities. Amnesty International issued a press release on 4 August 2022 stating that 'Such violations in no way justify Russia's indiscriminate attacks, which have killed and injured countless civilians.

The OHCHR reports that war crimes and atrocities have been committed; after the Russian army withdrew from the districts near Kyiv in March 2022, the bodies of hundreds of civilians were found in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha. Human Rights Watch states that the Russian forces that controlled a large swathe of the Kyiv region and Chernihiv in the north east of Ukraine, from the end of February through March 2022, were responsible for summary executions, torture and other serious mistreatment of civilians.

In 17 villages and small towns in the region which HRW visited in April, it documented 22 evident cases of summary execution, 9 other cases of unlawful killing, 6 possible cases of violent forced abduction and 7 cases of torture; 21 civilians reported that they had been illegally detained in inhumane and degrading conditions (Source: HRW of 23 May 2022).

In addition, there are many reports of rape by Russian soldiers. The Ukrainian Ombudswoman for Human Rights reported, for the first two weeks of April alone, 400 cases of sexualized violence, including against men, such as the proven case of the castration of a Ukrainian prisoner of war by a Russian soldier, as documented in a film (The Guardian, 29 July 2022). As always in the case of sexualized violence in wartime, proving that crimes have been committed is a very complicated process.



### ACAT Luxembourg campaigns for the abolition of capital punishment and the prohibition of torture worldwide,

- Calls for an immediate end to the torture and abuse taking place in connection with the war,
- Calls for the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry and the criminal prosecution in international courts of perpetrators and other persons responsible,
- Calls on all parties involved in the war to ensure the civilian population and human rights are protected,
- Endorses the statement by Justice et Paix Luxembourg on Russia's war against Ukraine,
- As an ecumenical Christian organization, expects churches to take a consistent stand against the weaponisation of Christianity by Kyrill I, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, who has justified the war in religious terms. The churches should speak out clearly, unambiguously and unceasingly against war and violence and on behalf of the protection of human rights.

## Silencing the guns.

*By attacking Ukraine on 24 February 2022, in defiance of international law, the Russian government and President Putin not only inflicted war, war crimes, violence and misery on the people of Ukraine, but also changed the parameters for peace and security in Europe and world-wide. One of the great nuclear powers has flouted the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, thereby placing rule-based international cooperation in jeopardy. The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission is deeply concerned at this development..*

The Gospel message compels us to seek ways and means of ending the war and securing peace. Nothing good comes out of hostility. In the spirit of Jesus, we wish to work towards ending enmity between states and peoples. The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission\* calls on all those in positions of responsibility, whether in politics or the military, to be guided by the ethical and political principle of achieving peace on the basis of a peace-oriented approach. The central question must be how to stop the war as quickly as possible so as to put an end to the death and destruction and avert the risk of a cataclysmic conflict.

There must be no question, however, of denying Ukraine's right to defend itself. The right of self-defence is enshrined in international law and the principles of peace-keeping in cases where the U.N is unable to take effective action against a war of aggression that violates international law. That is undoubtedly the case today. It is also legitimate to provide emergency assistance to a state that is under attack. This raises the crucial question of the objective to be pursued. For the Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission, this can only legitimately be the speediest possible cessation of hostilities: in other words, a ceasefire.

Any assessment of the consequences of the war needs to look beyond Ukraine and Europe. The conflict is already having a devastating impact on poverty and hunger worldwide. Prior to the war, 25% of the world's wheat exports came from Ukraine and Russia; wheat and oil are now in short supply on the global market and the price of wheat is rising.

The Covid pandemic had already further increased the number of people living in extreme poverty to 800 million.

Exceptional efforts will be required in the field of diplomacy and humanitarian cooperation to bring food to the places where people are going hungry.

We are convinced that supplying arms is legitimate to the extent that it enables the Ukrainian army to deny the Russian army any possibility of victory, so that there is no alternative to a ceasefire for the Russian side too. Given the immense negative impact of prolonging the war, the Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission calls on the EU and NATO states to ensure that their support for Ukraine is focused on the objective of ending the war as swiftly as possible.

Far-reaching economic sanctions should maintain pressure on Russia. Sanctions should be focused on 'the thin social layer of multimillionaires upon which the regime relies' (Thomas Piketty). We note the particular responsibility in this regard of the Luxembourg financial centre, as according to recent information assets in excess of EUR 4.2 billion belonging to persons and companies subject to sanctions have been traced and blocked in Luxembourg to date. According to press reports, additional assets in excess of EUR 200 million held at the Luxembourg Freeport have also been frozen. The parliamentary debate on human rights and business has produced few tangible results so far in terms of a coherent approach to enable Luxembourg to deal with challenges of this kind in future.

\*Justice et Paix Luxembourg is a Catholic committee of experts in the field of human rights, peace, justice and sustainability. Its work aims to maintain awareness, within both the Church and the wider community, of issues relating to justice and peace. It formulates ideas and contributions based on the Church's position with a view to helping to shape Luxembourg's policies on peace, sustainability and human rights. Its work is based on the Church's teaching on social issues and peace, and draws on the wide-ranging experience of Catholic organisations in the field of international cooperation.'

The primacy of non-military conflict management must be upheld and further developed, particularly in time of war. Support should be provided not only militarily, by supplying arms, but also through civil measures. Humanitarian aid for internally displaced people and the victims of war is as necessary as aid for the reconstruction of infrastructure that has been destroyed. There is also still an urgent need to make use of any opportunities that may arise for diplomatic initiatives.

What action can be taken – including by third parties - to counteract the increasing hostility between Russians and Ukrainians and the demonization of opponents? This is being fueled in part by the conflict, but at some point there must be reconciliation if there is to be any prospect of peaceful coexistence after the war. According to the UNHCR more than 6.4 million refugees have left Ukraine since the war began, mostly for neighbouring countries. The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission is thankful that Luxembourg communes have shown great readiness to welcome and help refugees, and wishes to help ensure that this response is maintained over the long term. In addition, refusal to carry out military service in Russia or the Ukraine on conscientious grounds should be recognized as grounds for asylum if it is requested. We also draw attention, however, to the difficult negotiations in connection with the new EU pact on migration and asylum and the rejection of asylum seekers from - for example - Syria or Afghanistan; there must be no double standards in this respect.

Russia's attack on Ukraine has also brought nuclear conflict back into the realm of possibility. While this underlines the importance of a functioning disarmament and arms control system that encompasses all nuclear states, it also highlights the fragility of a European and global security system based on nuclear deterrence, as any such system contains the risk of uncontrolled escalation. The first meeting of states parties to the U.N Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in 2021, took place in Vienna from 21 to 23 June 2022. The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission calls on the government of Luxembourg to sign the TPNW. The TPNW Treaty, which has 86 signatory states, must be used to give new momentum to international efforts to achieve disarmament, particularly in view of the escalating conflict between NATO and Russia.

Defence stocks have soared since the outbreak of war between Ukraine and Russia, and representatives of the defence industry have intensified their efforts to be classified as socially sustainable under the EU Taxonomy. The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission has considered in depth the challenging issues of 'Sustainable Finance' and firmly rejects that prospect: defence companies must not be classified as socially sustainable under the EU Social Taxonomy.

II. On the situation of the Orthodox churches: 'War is contrary to the will of God'.

The Luxembourg Justice and Peace Commission supports the action taken early in March 2022 by Cardinal Hollerich, who, as president of COMECE (the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union), addressed an urgent appeal to the Patriarch of Moscow, Kyrill I, to intercede with the Russian authorities to stop the hostilities against the Ukrainian people and establish safe humanitarian corridors.

It is still a core task of all Christian churches to stand up for justice, peace and respect for the inalienable human dignity of all persons, near and far, including our opponents and enemies. The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kyrill I, has justified the Russian war of aggression in religious terms.

He has categorized this anachronistic reversion to the projection of imperial power and the waging of war to extend national territory as the 'metaphysical struggle of Good against Evil. This has far-reaching consequences for the Christian Church worldwide and places particularly severe strain on relations between the Orthodox churches.

On Friday, 27 May the Ukrainian wing of the Russian Orthodox Church, after holding a national synod in Kyiv, declared its complete independence from the Moscow patriarchate.

In contrast to Kyrill I, the Ukrainian national synod condemned Russia's war of aggression as a breach of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill', and called on the governments of Ukraine and Russia to resume negotiations and end the bloodshed.



Living Library Luxembourg Workshop - Experimental Hip Hop Dance Workshop - Painting Workshop with Maria Thym - Ukrainian Luxembourgish Party. There will be activities-workshops this autumn, if you would like to participate please visit our website [www.youngacat.lu](http://www.youngacat.lu)

## Ivan Klymnyuk



*The stories of the residents of Ukraine on the one hand are so different, and on the other - they are very similar starting from 24 February 2022. And we all at one point became hostages of this terrible war.*

During the last two or three years, the Covid epidemic has adapted the population to the prohibition of movement around the planet and the country to the limitation of live communication, except online. Each of us was forced to remain only in the family circle all the time, which was often perceived as a restriction of the freedom of citizens. But even in this difficult time for the entire planet, 2 beautiful sons were born with an interval of 14 months (and what else could you do in quarantine?).

Therefore, the stress from the quarantine activities was completely compensated by communication with my sons and pleasant worries around them. At the time the war started, my children were 11 months and 2 years and 2 months old. In the face of the threat, I set priorities: the first place, without compromise, is the safety of the family. At a time of mortal danger, every person's consciousness changes greatly and subconscious mechanisms begin to work. Responsibility educates, heals and strengthens.

A few days after the invasion of the Russian army, I took my family through the shelled roads to Western Ukraine, to Ternopil, where I was born and where my parents live.

Despite the fact that it was calmer there, sirens sounded several times a day for several hours and we had to hide in bomb shelters. Since the actions of the Russian occupiers were unpredictable and the threat of rocket fire was extremely high, a decision was made to take my family out of Ukraine to a safe place. From 5 March 2022 they were warmly received by Luxembourg.

Since then, I have not seen my wife and children for more than 5 months. Thus, after the forced quarantine period, and now the forced separation from the family, I can compare it to "Out of the frying pan into the fire". However, knowing that they are safe, I remain in Kyiv and fulfill my duty, operating on military and wounded civilians and organizing humanitarian aid for hospitals and war victims. My boys are growing for me online and not in person.

Never in the entire long history of Ukrainian statehood have we been so consolidated and united by the common goal of repelling the enemy of the entire civilized world and protecting European values. Our people united the free world not just around their struggle for freedom, but around understanding how fragile our freedom is. It is important to understand that the length of the front and border currently defended by Ukrainian soldiers is greater than the distance between Kyiv and Luxembourg.

Glory to Ukraine!

With gratitude to the people of Luxembourg

**ACAT Vigil for the victims of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is supported by :**



Commission luxembourgeoise « Justice et Paix »

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Association reconnue d'utilité publique.

Dons déductibles fiscalement. Merci de préciser "Don ACAT".

*L'ACAT-Luxembourg est affiliée à la Fédération Internationale de l'ACAT (FIACAT) ayant statut consultatif auprès des Nations unies et du Conseil de l'Europe. Les ACAT informent, sensibilisent l'opinion publique. Elles appellent leurs quelque 30.000 adhérents dans 25 pays à l'action, à la réflexion et à la prière.*