



STATEMENT ON THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

The Bishops' Conference of the Nordic countries, gathered in Tromsø, wishes to express its profound communion with the Ukrainian people and its outrage at the war of aggression by which the Russian Federation shows disdain for Ukraine's sovereignty and causes untold suffering to millions of innocent people.

The attack this week on a children's and maternity hospital in Mariupol, geographically remote from any military target, stands as a terrible symbol of this war. The blood of mothers and children cries out to heaven from the ground. We have not the right to avert our gaze and ask 'Am I my brother's keeper?' (cf. Genesis 4:9f.). Therefore we cry out to the Russian president: Stop this unjust war! We appeal to the Russian people: Do not permit this iniquity to be perpetrated in your name!

We have been saddened by recent statements from certain quarters of the Russian Church, which present this war of flagrant aggression as a combat for Christian values. To speak in such terms is to engage in mere rhetoric, to hold moral values hostage to a political agenda.

Some of our Nordic countries have a joint border with Russia. We have strong historical links with Ukraine. This war touches us deeply. We pray that the homeless will find shelter, the frightened comfort, the sick and wounded healing; that the dead may rest in

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peace; that the hearts of the mighty may be open to the prompting of the Prince of Peace, to pursue the path of peace in justice.

In this time of Lent we are stirred by Christ's call to conversion. We proclaim it from the housetops. Naturally, it first of all regards ourselves, our Churches, and our countries; but it also regards our whole beloved Europe, lest a fratricidal war be allowed to assume ever more terrifying dimensions.

Our Lord tells us, 'Blessed are the peacemakers!' (Matthew 5:9). May the truth of this beatitude be vindicated in the days to come, while there is still time.

Bishop Czeslaw Kozon, Copenhagen, President
Anders Cardinal Arborelius OCD, Stockholm, Vicepresident
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Bishop David Tencer OFMCap, Reykjavik
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P. Marco Pasinato, Diocesan Administrator of Helsinki
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Bishop Teemu Sippo SCI, Bishop emeritus of Helsinki
Sr. Anna Mirijam Kaschner CPS, General Secretary