

Your Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus',
dear brother in Christ our God and concelebrant of our lowliness,

Hereby we urgently address Your Holiness embracing you in the Lord.

It is with great concern and anguish in our heart that we have been following the tragic developments of the war, which is waged these days on the country of Ukraine. The constant attacks and the successive waves of bombardment, through a decision and by command of the Russian leadership, day by day render the Ukrainian land "a place of torment", of ineffable grief due to the deaths and ruins which have transpired. Sadly, not merely is the people persecuted but vital infrastructure, historic buildings, monuments of civilisation, even holy churches such as the Orthodox Holy Cathedral of Kharkiv are destroyed.

The Church of Greece intensely feels the duty to raise a voice of protest in favour of all those unduly falling victim of war and in favour of all those persecuted. It mourns those put to death as well as those still tested and persecuted because of the malice, intolerance and barbarity unfortunately coming not from people of a different faith but from Christians of the same denomination.

Connected through long-standing and unbreakable bonds of love and friendship with the sister Orthodox Church in Russia, the Church of Greece addresses a fervent appeal to Your Holiness and the entire Most Holy Church of Russia that, also on the occasion of the forthcoming commencement of the Holy and Great Lent, it resist the war plans of secular rulers. Please rest assured that an intervention on the part of Your Holiness for the purpose above will act as a catalyst. Such an ecclesiastical intervention and the witness of love, peace, and reconciliation, provide hope for the cessation of war and the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Ukraine.

Moreover, the intervention in question on the part of Your Holiness will also decisively contribute to the further growth of the dynamics of the Orthodox Churches in the modern world, as the war between nations of the same denomination diminishes our trustworthiness as Christians who, though having the primary duty to preach peace, nevertheless do not apply it in practice, thus bringing about various negative consequences as regards the prestige and the presence of the Orthodox Church broadly, on the inter-Christian and global levels.

Your Holiness,

Having regard to the gravity of the Lord's words that "*not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matth. 7,21) we conclude the present letter, by reiterating an impassioned plea to You, that you and we steadily side with the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ for love, brotherly love and practical application of the point made by the Apostle: "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (Cor. I.12,27).

In these crucial hours it is an inexorable need that we reaffirm the self-consciousness of the Orthodox Church as one and indivisible Body of Christ, by contributing in the bond of love to the prevalence of peace, which is Christ Himself. In this manner the Orthodox Church will rise as the most authentic and powerful peace-making factor between the two peoples, the Russian and the Ukrainian one, which partake of common, centuries-old traditions, but mainly of the Orthodox faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

On this occasion, holding your dear Holiness in a holy embrace, we remain

Your beloved brother in Christ,

I E R O N Y M O S II
Archbishop of Athens and all Greece