

## **Appeal of His Beatitude Sviatoslav to the Sons and Daughters of the Ukrainian People in Ukraine and Abroad, and to all People of Good Will**

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The recognition by the president of the Russian Federation of the “independence and sovereignty” of the self-proclaimed LNR and DNR creates serious challenges and threats for the entire international community and for international law, on the basis of which today people and their nations exist and cooperate. Irreparable damage has been done to the very logic of international relations, which are called to safeguard peace and the just order of societies, the supremacy of law, the accountability of state powers, the defence of the human being, human life and natural rights. Today all of humanity has been placed in danger—that the powerful have a right to impose themselves on whomever they wish, with no regard for the rule of law.

In its decision the government of the Russian Federation unilaterally withdrew from a lengthy peace process, tasked with ensuring the restoration of dignified conditions for life on the territories controlled by Russia in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, for those impacted by Russian military aggression. The war, initiated against our people in 2014, has inflicted deep wounds on many of our fellow citizens: thousands killed, wounded, left in solitude. Yesterday’s step taken by the president of the Russian Federation destroyed foundational principles for a long-term process of restoring peace in Ukraine, created the path for a new wave of military aggression against our state, opened the doors for a full scale military operation against the Ukrainian people.

We consider the defence of our native land, our historical memory and our hope, our God-given right to exist to be the personal responsibility and sacred duty of the citizens of Ukraine. The defence of our Fatherland is our natural right and civic duty. We are strong when we are together. Now has come the time to unite our efforts in order to defend the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. The duty and responsibility of all of humanity—to actively work to avert war and protect a just peace.

We are convinced that the world cannot develop and find answers for the challenges of today by resorting to might and violence, by showing disdain for shared human values and the truth of the Gospel. I call upon all people of good will to not ignore the suffering of the Ukrainian people, brought on by Russian military aggression. We are a people who love peace. And precisely for that reason we are ready to defend it and fight for it.

Today we call out in prayer to the Almighty Creator, with a special appeal for wisdom for those entrusted with making important decisions for society, in whose hands lies the fate of humanity. We ask the Heavenly Father for assistance in restoring a just peace on Ukrainian land.

We pray especially for those who defend Ukraine, who in these days are for us an example of loving sacrifice and dedicated service to their people. May the merciful Lord protect them from every danger and crown their efforts with the victory of truth and good.

We call for the gracious blessing of a loving God and Creator upon Ukraine and its people!

The blessing of the Lord be upon you.

+Sviatoslav

Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

Kyiv, Ukraine