



Amsterdam/Berlin/Geneva/Milan/Lund/Paris/
Strasbourg/Vienna

March 4, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Europe has, most unfortunately, entered an era in which nationalistic aggression and violation of international law lead once more to hideous warfare. Values such as national sovereignty, independence and democracy — indeed the core of international law — were most brutally trampled down. Ukraine was cruelly invaded, turning innocent people into victims and refugees. This is an extremely violent one-sided attack on a nation that refused to submit to imperialistic ambitions.

Religions and theology have played ambivalent roles in cases of armed conflict - some have blessed weapons, others have resisted warfare and bloodshed. For centuries, theologians, as well as humanists and non-religious philosophers have struggled with the issue of warfare, developing criteria to curb warfare or taking pacifist stances altogether. The 20th century has forced us, due to the cruel wars we witnessed in that era, to intensify our reflections on violent conflicts and to insist on the importance of international law. Moreover, to be aware of the ideologized role religion possibly plays in these conflicts.

Last week, we were extremely shocked by the unprecedented and hideous character of the new war in Europe. But much more, we profoundly admired the bravery and strength of the Ukrainian resistance against this imperialistic attack. This admiration also goes for our Russian colleagues who dared to stand up against this war. Also, unfortunately, we heard religious voices pledging allegiance as it were to these hegemonic ambitions. Alas, an easy solution to this crisis is not in sight: neither economic sanctions nor military measures - with the threat of all-out nuclear war looming large - seem to be able to deter Russia from invading and subduing Ukraine. Perseverance and solid convictions are therefore indispensable.

Consequently, as members of the Board of EARS, we feel the need to express our deeply felt solidarity with our colleagues in Ukraine, as well as with all the Ukrainian people. Secondly, we strongly protest against this blatant breaching of international law, as well as against the violation of human rights. Thirdly, as scholars in religion and society, we are indeed keenly aware of the role often played by religion in conflicts like the one we are facing. This role, representing the ideologization of religion due to nationalistic and imperialistic policies, needs to be critically scrutinized on an international level to enable agents in civil society to do their part to

counteract such developments. Finally, we also call on our members to join us in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, as well as in our scholarly duty to extend our analysis of the role of religion in modern geopolitical conflicts.

On behalf of the Board of EARS,

Kind regards,

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