



Statement of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly France

Invasion of Ukraine by Russia

Assemblée Européenne des Citoyens (AEC HCA-France), together with its Ukrainian civil society partners, condemns in the strongest terms the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army on 24 February 2022 on the orders of Vladimir Putin.

This is a "crime of aggression" as defined by the Statute of the International Criminal Court (Article 8 bis) and an absolute violation of the United Nations Charter of 26 June 1945. Since the beginning of the offensive, the invading army has already committed numerous war crimes. The dictatorship in power in Belarus has actively contributed to this operation.

This aggression is accompanied by an insane and paranoid war speech by the President of the Russian Federation, claiming to intervene "in response to a threat from the West", warning of a so-called "genocide of Russian speakers in Ukraine" and explicitly aiming to destroy the Ukrainian state and its leaders, who are described as "Nazis" or "drug addicts".

This aggression has already caused hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries due to numerous bombings. It is forcing millions of people to flee and more than a million have already left the country to take refuge in neighbouring states.

Since its creation in 1990, the Assemblée Européenne des Citoyens has been involved in citizens' movements in Europe, particularly in Ukraine and Russia. Following the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the beginning of the armed conflict in Donbass in 2014, AEC stands in solidarity with Ukrainian civil society. AEC is a member of the European platform CivilM+ where we find, alongside Ukrainian and Russian associations, organisations from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland... AEC maintains close relations with NGOs defending human, social and cultural rights in Ukraine and Russia.

The resistance of the Ukrainian people and their legitimate national and local authorities to this aggression must be resolutely supported. AEC supports Ukrainian civil society, especially its partner organisations and all our friends.

Support for the anti-war movement in Russia is also imperative. This movement takes various forms, despite police and judicial repression, media blocking and government propaganda. The dissemination of information to the Russian population is a decisive factor in stopping the aggression.

A ceasefire and the withdrawal of all Russian and Belarusian armed forces from Ukrainian territory within its internationally recognised borders is a prerequisite for any negotiations. A lasting peace, based on genuine collective security mechanisms in Europe, taking into account the interests and fears of all states and all peoples, will then have to be built - something that has not been done, despite the hopes and promises in the early 1990s after the end of the division of the continent into two blocs.

It is equally essential to strengthen sanctions against the economic and financial interests of the Russian leaders and the circles close to them and to demand the withdrawal of French investments in Russia.

But today the emergency is to support the Ukrainian people, the Russian peace activists and, of course, to welcome, in the best possible conditions, the refugees and provide aid for people displaced by the conflict. On this topic, AEC together with many associations supporting migrants and refugees, protests against the discrimination observed at the borders against foreigners from the European Union residing in Ukraine, and against the disgraceful speeches of certain political personalities or media, including in France, who, in absolute contempt of the Geneva Conventions, make an odious "selection" between "good Ukrainian refugees" and "bad migrants" in absolute contradiction with the principles that these people and institutions claim to defend.

Together with many citizens' and human rights organisations in France, AEC is today fully engaged in solidarity initiatives and calls in particular for joining the demonstrations organised in Paris and in many other cities.