



**Statement on the War in Ukraine  
by the Society for the Study of the Christian East (GSCO)**

1 March 2022

The GSCO is shocked, shaken and stunned in face of the current events in Ukraine and their disastrous humanitarian, social and political consequences. It condemns them in the strongest terms as a massive violation of international law and underlines the admonitory words of Kiev's Metropolitan Onufry (Beresovsky), primate of the Ukraine Orthodox Church, which is under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. He emphasises that the war between the Russian and the Ukrainian peoples repeats the sin of Cain and cannot be justified before God or humankind.

The GSCO is a working group of over 100 academics in German-speaking countries who do research on the Christian East. With their international and ecumenical orientation, they include members of all the nations involved in the conflict as well as the different Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches worldwide. Our longstanding, fruitful research cooperation is founded on the fundamental principles of unconditional respect and mutual appreciation. The GSCO also understands its work as a contribution to peace, mutual recognition and international understanding, and toward closer ecumenical relations among the churches.

The GSCO is convinced that everything in human power must be undertaken to restore peace and not allow the gulf that is today dividing Europe, indeed the world, to remain insurmountable. For us it is clear that the churches bear a great responsibility, as they are called to raise the prophetic voice of the Christian message in the world and to be powerful advocates of peace and reconciliation. We therefore appeal with the greatest urgency to all church leadership bodies and all Christians to carry the message of peace even more strongly into society and to shoulder their own responsibility with determination to reject violence and promote peace.

With great concern, however, we also note the way cooperation agreements and partnerships laboriously built up over decades are, all of a sudden, being terminated. As a scholarly association we argue that, even in view of this dramatic situation, the existing bridges between academics in the different nations and churches should not

be entirely broken. Rather, they should be understood to serve as a basis for restoring peace. The mutual, in-depth knowledge and inward appreciation of the wealth of different cultures can point to paths towards lasting understanding on questions of future significance. We therefore resolutely stand for academic freedom, open communication channels and dialogue for the sake of reconciliation and peace.

In the present situation, our sympathy first goes to the people who are becoming innocent victims of a war of aggression and whose human dignity is being massively violated. We all have colleagues and many good friends who are suffering bitterly as the days go by. We call upon everyone to assist all of them through humanitarian aid and through prayers, and not to tire of standing up for peace.

The GSCO Board:

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