

Presentation in the Ukraine conflict workshop at the World Conference Against Nuclear Weapons

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Dear friends, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the situation in Ukraine and advocate peace by peaceful means.

Our government prohibited all men in age from 18 to 60 to leave Ukraine. It is enforcement of harsh military mobilization policies, many people call it serfdom, but President Zelenskyy denies to cancel it despite many petitions. So, my apologies for inability to join you in person.

I would also like to thank the Russian panelists for their courage and call for peace. Antiwar activists are harassed by warmongers in Russia as well as in Ukraine, but it is our duty to uphold human right to peace. Now, when the Doomsday Clock indicates only a hundred seconds to midnight, more than ever we need strong peace movements in every corner of the world raising popular voices for sanity, for disarmament, for peaceful resolution of international disputes, for a more just and nonviolent society and economy.

Discussing the current crisis in and around Ukraine, I will argue that this crisis illustrates systemic problem with a global radioactive militarist economy and we should not allow warmongering propaganda on all sides to advocate violent competition for power and profits between few stockholders, so-called great powers or rather their oligarchic elites, in cruel game with non-changing rules dangerous and harmful to the vast majority of the people on Earth, so the people should resist the war system, not the fictional enemy images created by the propaganda of war. We are not small kids to believe in these fairy tales of Russian and Chinese propaganda about a hegemonic Western empire of lies and in fairy tales of Western propaganda about a few crazy dictators alone disrupting world order. We know from scientific conflictology that deceptive image of enemy is a product of ill imagination, which replaces real people with their sins and virtues with demonized creatures supposedly unable to negotiate in good faith or peacefully coexist, these false enemy images distort our collective perception of reality because of lack of rational self-control over pain and anger and makes us irresponsible, more and more willing to destroy ourselves and innocent bystanders to do maximum harm to these fictional enemies. So we should get rid of any images of enemies to behave responsibly and ensure responsible behavior of others, as well as accountability for misbehavior, without inflicting unnecessary harm to anyone. We need to build more fair, open and inclusive societies and economies without enemies, without armies and without nuclear weapons. Of course,

it would mean that great power politics should give up its doomsday machines and step aside facing a massive demand of peace-loving people and markets of the world for big historical changes, universal transition to nonviolent governance and management.

My country was torn apart in the great power struggle between Russia and United States, when society was divided to pro-Western and pro-Russian camps during Orange Revolution in 2004 and ten years later, when United States supported Revolution of Dignity and Russia instigated Russian Spring, both were violent seizures of power by militant Ukrainian and Russian nationalists with foreign backing in Center and Western Ukraine, on the one side, and in Donbas and Crimea, on another side. Donbas war started in 2014, took near 15 000 of lives; Minsk II accords approved by UN Security Council in 2015 were not led to reconciliation because of all-or-nothing militarist policies and permanent ceasefire violations on both sides during eight years. Threatening military maneuvers and drills with nuclear component by Russian and NATO forces in 2021-2022 as well as Ukrainian threat to reconsider non-proliferation commitment because of Russian aggression preceded lethal intensification of ceasefire violations on both sides of the frontline in Donbas reported by OSCE and subsequent Russian invasion of Ukraine with internationally condemned announcement of decision to increase the readiness of Russian nuclear forces. What was left without proper international condemnation, however, is serious plans in near-NATO circles to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine engaging in war with Russia and even using tactical warheads. We see that both great powers are inclined to nuclear brinkmanship dangerously lowering the threshold for nuclear weapons use.

I speak to you from Kyiv, capital of Ukraine. At the end of World War Two, in September 1945, Pentagon's memorandum on atomic bombs production suggested that United States should drop A-bombs on tens of Soviet cities. U.S. army assigned 6 atomic bombs for turning Kyiv into ruins and mass graveyard, six bombs of such sort that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kyiv was lucky because these bombs were never exploded, though I am sure military contractors produced the bombs and got their profits. It is not wide-known fact, but my city lives a long time under a threat of nuclear strike. This memorandum I refer to was top secret for many decades before the United States declassified it. I don't know what secret plans of nuclear war Russia has, let's hope these plans will be never enacted, but President Putin in 2008 promised to target Ukraine with nuclear weapons if the United States stationed missile defenses in Ukraine, and this year in the first days of Russian invasion he ordered Russian nuclear forces to move to the heightened alert status explaining it is necessary to prevent NATO intervention on Ukrainian side.

NATO wisely refused to intervene, at least for now, but our President Zelenskyy continued to ask the alliance to enforce a no-fly zone over Ukraine, also he speculated that Putin could use tactical nuclear weapons in his war against Ukraine. President Joe Biden said that any use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would be completely unacceptable and entail severe consequences; according to The New York Times, Biden's administration has

formed a tiger team of national security officials to plan U.S. response in that case. Apart from these threats to wage nuclear war in my country, we have a dangerous situation at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant turned by Russian occupiers into a military base and recklessly attacked by Ukrainian killer drones.

According to the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, at the public opinion poll, asked about dangers of war to the environment, more than half of Ukrainian respondents expressed concerns about the possibility of radiation contamination because of shelling of nuclear power plants. From the first weeks of invasion Russian army undermined security of Ukrainian nuclear power plants, and there was a time when some people in Kyiv were sitting in their homes with all windows closed reluctant to walk by the street into shelter during Russian bombing because it was known that Russian military vehicles in Chernobyl disaster zone near the city raised radioactive dust and slightly increased a level of radiation, though authorities assured level of radiation in Kyiv is normal. These horrible days thousands of people were killed by conventional weapons, our everyday life here under Russian shelling was a deadly lottery, and after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kyiv region the same massacres are continuing in Eastern Ukrainian cities. In a case of nuclear war, millions could be killed. And scenarios of attrition warfare for indefinite time publicly announced on both sides of Russia-Ukraine conflict increase the risk of nuclear war, at least because Russian nuclear forces will presumably remain on alert.

Now we see that great powers turned the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference into a shameless blame game seeking deceptive justifications for the new nuclear arms race, and also they refused to recognize the new norm of international law established by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. They say that nuclear weapons are needed for national security. I wonder what sort of “security” could threaten to kill all life on the planet for the sake of so-called sovereignty, in other words, arbitrary power of government over particular territory, this outdated concept which we inherited from dark ages when tyrants divided all lands into feudal kingdoms to oppress and prey on enslaved populations.

True democracy is not compatible with militarism and violently governed sovereignties, bloodshed for so-called sacred land which different people and their leaders supposedly can't share interdependently because of some dumb old superstitions. Are these territories more precious than human lives? What is a nation, fellow humans which should be spared from burning into dust, or maybe a colony of viruses able to survive horror of atomic bombing? If a nation is essentially fellow humans, national security has nothing to do with nuclear weapons, because such “security” scares us, because no sane person in the world could feel safe until a last nuke will be scrapped. It is inconvenient truth for arms industry, but we should trust common sense, not these advertisers of so-called nuclear deterrence who shamelessly exploit conflict in Ukraine to convince governments to align with aggressive great powers foreign policy and hide under their nuclear umbrellas, to

spend more on weapons and warheads instead of dealing with social and environmental injustice, food and energy crisis.

In my view, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a tragic mistake when in his infamous speech at Munich Security Conference he suggested that nuclear capability is a better security guarantee than international agreements and even dared to place in doubt non-proliferation commitments of Ukraine. It was a provocative and unwise speech five days before full-scale Russian invasion, and it poured oil on the fire of escalating conflict.

But he said these wrong things not because he is evil or dumb person, and also I doubt that Russian President Putin with all his nuclear saber-rattling is such evil and crazy person as Western media portrays him. Both the presidents are products of an archaic culture of war which is common in Ukraine and Russia. Both our countries preserved the Soviet system of military patriotic upbringing and conscription which, in my strong belief, should be prohibited by the international law to limit undemocratic powers of governments to mobilize populations for wars against popular will and to turn populations into obedient soldiers instead of empowering free peace-loving citizens.

This archaic culture of war is gradually replaced everywhere with progressive culture of peace. World is changed a lot since the second world war. For example, you can't imagine Stalin and Hitler being asked all the time by journalists and activists when they will end the war or being forced by the international community to form negotiation teams for peace talks and to limit their warfare to feed African countries, but Putin and Zelenskyy are in such a position. And this emerging culture of peace is a hope for better future of humankind, as well as a hope for peaceful resolution of conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which is needed according to UN Charter, resolution of General Assembly and presidential statement of Security Council, but yet not pursued by warmongering leaders of Russia and Ukraine who bet on achieving their goals on the battlefield, not at the negotiation table. Peace movements should change it, demanding reconciliation and disarmament from helpless national leaders corrupted by the war industry.

Peace-loving people in all countries on all continents should support each other, all peace-loving people on Earth suffering from militarism and war everywhere, in all tens of current wars on the planet. When militarists are saying to you "Stand with Ukraine!" or "Stand with Russia!", it is bad advice. We should stand with peace-loving people, real victims of war, not with warmongering governments who continue the war because the archaic war economy incentivises them. We need big nonviolent changes and a new worldwide social contract for peace and nuclear disarmament, and we need peace education as well as peace media to disseminate practical knowledge about nonviolent way of life and existential dangers of radioactive militarism. Economy of peace should be better organized and financed than the economy of war. We must invest in diplomacy and peacebuilding ten times more resources and efforts than we invest in war.

Peace movement should focus on advocacy of human rights to peace and conscientious objection to military service, saying loudly that any kind of war, offensive or defensive, violates human rights and should be stopped.

Archaic ideas of victory and surrender will not bring us peace. Instead, we need immediate ceasefire, good-faith and inclusive multi-track peace talks and public peacebuilding dialogues to achieve reconciliation between the East and West as well as between Russia and Ukraine. And most of all we should recognize as our goal and concretize in serious realistic plans our further transition to future nonviolent society.

It is hard work, but we must do it to prevent nuclear war. And make no mistake, you can't avoid nuclear war between great powers without telling them that nobody sane should dare to be such a great power that could kill all life on the planet, and also you can't eliminate nukes without getting rid of conventional weapons.

Abolition of war and the build-up of future nonviolent society should be a common effort of all people of Earth. Nobody can be happy in isolated, armed to the teeth radioactive empire at the cost of death and suffering of others.

So, let's abolish nukes, stop all wars, and build perpetual peace together!