

Pax Christi International on the crisis in Ukraine

Following the escalating unrest and violence in Kiev and other locations in Ukraine throughout the last part of 2013 and in January – March 2014, Pax Christi International is deeply concerned by the current dangerous developments in Ukraine.

Protests broke out in Ukraine after President Yanoukovich's government rejected a far-reaching agreement with the European Union (EU) in November 2013, in favour of closer cooperation with the Russian Federation. In response, thousands of people engaged in peaceful protests in Kiev, events which have subsequently been referred to as the Maidan Revolution. The protests were strongest in the Kiev area and in western Ukraine, but there have also been protests in eastern Ukraine.

The situation escalated in February, resulting in 82 persons being killed and several hundreds injured. The Parliament voted to remove the President from office and appointed an interim President, Olexander Turchynov. A warrant for Yanoukovich's arrest was reportedly issued.

The overall situation remains volatile, in particular in the eastern part of Ukraine, where demonstrations continue, and in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In response to tensions in Crimea, the United Nations Security Council met on 28 February 2014 in [closed session](#), at the request of the new government and expressed support for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The Security Council emphasised the importance of all political actors in Ukraine exercising maximum restraint. The Security Council furthermore called for an inclusive dialogue recognising the diversity of the Ukrainian society.

Out of concern for the lives and security of all people who are affected by the continuing failure to resolve this situation peacefully, Pax Christi International calls on all parties to refrain from violence, to commit to dialogue and diplomacy, and to avoid escalation by rash words or actions. Political leaders from the different sides have to come together to promote a negotiated solution. The international community must support any initiative for dialogue and a peace agreement. The consequences of failing to do so will inevitably be much greater human suffering in Ukraine, and a deep rift in the social and political fabric of the region.

The situation in the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea is certainly complex but the deployment of Russian armed forces there is unacceptable. As European Union leaders stated on 6 March, all troops have to be withdrawn and a solution based on diplomacy and international standards has to be sought.

Pax Christi International calls religious leaders and all the faithful in Ukraine, as well as in the Russian Federation and in other countries involved in the political tensions, to act as mediators and bridge-builders, bringing people together instead of dividing them, and to support nonviolent ways to find peaceful and just solutions to the crisis.

Pax Christi International asks all its Member Organisations and all people of good will to pray for peace. Let us pray for wisdom, peace and justice to prevail in Ukraine.

Brussels, 10 March 2014