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## **World Religious Leaders Travel in Emergency Just Peace Mission to Pray in Kyiv (24-25 May 2022)**

KYIV, UKRAINE -- A high-level delegation of religious leaders held a prayer service to contribute to ending **aggression against Ukraine**, the bombing of Ukrainian cities, and to pray for a just peace. The leaders arrived in Kyiv on Monday night after a 14-hour bus ride from Warsaw to Kyiv, Ukraine. They will return to Warsaw on May 26.

**On Wednesday, 25 May, the delegation plans to hold a second public outdoor prayer service in the plaza at St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv at 12:30 pm followed by a press conference.**

In March, **Mayor Vitali Klitschko** of Kyiv, Ukraine's besieged capital, issued a call to the religious leaders to come to Kyiv: "I make an appeal to the world's spiritual leaders to take a stand and assume the moral function that is incumbent upon them, and to proudly assume the responsibility of their religions for peace," said Klitschko. "... Come to Kyiv to show their solidarity with the Ukrainian people. To show their compassion, and to join together in a spirit of harmony that my country and the whole world needs. Let us make Kyiv the capital of humanity, spirituality, and peace."

This week religious leaders from around the world have answered Klitschko's plea. Seventeen religious leaders and people of faith from the major world are in Kyiv to engage in prayer, pastoral accompaniment, and distribution of humanitarian aid, as well as key encounters with peacebuilders, religious leaders, and political leaders.

At 9am on Tuesday, 24 May, the religious delegation prayed at Babyn Yar with violin music by **Mr. Pavlo Kaurov** of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. **Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas**, the papal nuncio to Ukraine, met with the religious delegation and offered prayers in Ukrainian.

At the press conference on Tuesday, 24 May the religious delegation shared the purpose of the trip. "We are in Kyiv as people of faith as a multi-religious and international delegation because our faith demands our presence here. We have come to Kyiv in solidarity to pray for a just peace. We are here to demand that the bombing of Ukrainian cities must stop. We are here because God demands that cities are not bombed. We are here to state: Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports must stop. Grain must flow again from Ukraine, if we are to avoid hunger and humanitarian disaster. Humanitarian aid should increase and humanitarian corridors should be provided consistently. We are here to say that we are also open to praying in Moscow for just peace, with the faith communities in Russia. We hope that more delegations could follow. The war in Ukraine unfortunately is not the only war humanity is suffering from: people are suffering in the Middle East, in Asia, in Africa in so many other places. Intervention of religious leaders in a form of vigils for just peace in cities endangered by bombing could provide an important

instrument of peacebuilding. We hope this instrument can be used in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities,” said **Dr. Mateusz Piotrowski**, president of Europe, a Patient, and **Ms. Rose Marie Berger** of Sojourners, two organizers of the delegation.

The prayer service was followed by a press conference, guided tour of Babyn Yar, meeting with Ukrainian government officials, visit to the Muslim Association of Ukraine, visit to Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, a Greek Catholic Church in Irpin and distribution of humanitarian aid with Caritas in Irpin.

**Rt. Rev. Dr. Jo Bailey Wells**, Anglican bishop of Dorking in the U.K. “It was no light thing to lead a prayer vigil with both Jewish and Muslim leaders, quite apart from doing it where countless Jews lost their lives for their faith in a previous era. Yet the very act of uniting in common cause for others united us within this religious delegation. And so our sharing and fellowship is itself a witness, mirroring the common focus of our prayers - for peace in Ukraine.”

**Imam Yahya Pallavicini**, president of COREIS (Islamic Religious Community-Italy) and coordinator of EULEMA, the European Muslim Leaders’ Majlis. “The prayer of Jews, Christians and Muslims near the Menorah at the Babyn Yar Holocaust memorial in Kiyv is a very symbolical moment. We need to remember the dark side of history when hatred, violence, and persecution have already destroyed the lives of many families in Europe. We need to recognize how this invasion is unfortunately repeating those previous atrocities and engage as religious leaders to stop war, invasion, boycotts and promote reconciliation.”

**Prof. Barbara Wien**, American University (USA): “Today spanned 80 years of the suffering and yet also the courage of the Ukrainian people - - from the massacre of 33,000 Jewish people in 1941 to today's bombed homes in Irpin where many died. Our religious delegation was welcomed by Tatar Muslims, Christians, Jews, and government officials wherever we went, even by Ukrainians bombed from their homes.”

**Imam Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra**, Religions for Peace (UK): “We affirmed our common humanity and the dignity of all as we prayed for a just peace.”

The host partner of delegation visit to Kyiv is Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, a non-governmental organization that formed the first modern Holocaust museum in Eastern Europe and is the center for tragedy study. The delegation is organized by Europe, a Patient Association, a pan-European advocacy initiative to respond to humanitarian crises based in Warsaw. And in collaboration with several organizations including Sojourners, a Washington, D.C.-based Christian NGO dedicated to articulating the biblical call to social justice and peace, and members of Georgetown University (USA).

# ENDS #

Notes to Editor:

Members of the delegation will include:

**Rt. Rev. Dr. Jo Bailey Wells**, Anglican bishop of Dorking, U.K., representative of the Church of England and supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury

**Imam Yahya Pallavicini**, president of COREIS (Islamic Religious Community-Italy) and coordinator of EULEMA, the European Muslim Leaders’ Majlis

**Sr. Sheila Kinsey, FCJM**, Executive Co-Secretary of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Union of Superior Generals (male religious congregations) and of the International Union of Superior Generals (female religious congregations), Catholic Church, Rome

**Lord Maurice Glasman**, Labour peer (UK) and director of the Common Good Foundation

**Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon**, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace (USA)

**Ms. Michele Dunne, OFS**, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network (USA)

**Imam Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra**, Religions for Peace (UK)

**Ms. Rose Marie Berger**, Catholic, senior leader, Sojourners (USA)

**Prof. Jose Casanova**, Ukranian-Catholic, senior fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University (USA)

**Ms. Sara Prandi**, Catholic, member of Stopthewarnow (Italy)

**Ms. Maura Galati**, Catholic, member of Stopthewarnow (Italy)

**Prof. Eli S. McCarthy**, Catholic, Georgetown University (USA)

**Prof. Barbara Wien**, Jewish, American University (USA)

**Mr. Alberto Capannini**, member of Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII - Operazione Colomba (Italy)

**Rabbi Dawid Szychowski**, Rabbi of Lodz representing the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich (POL)

**Mr. Aleksander Temkin**, cofounder of Europe, a Patient Association (POL)

**Dr. Mateusz Piotrowski**, President of Europe, a Patient Association (POL).

Source links:

Mayor Klitschko's appeal: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=673481810637538>

Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center: <https://babynyar.org/en/about>

Europe, a Patient Association: <https://www.europeapatient.com/>