

## Support for Humanity: A Statement on Russia and Ukraine

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The NVC Academy is mourning the great suffering of the peoples of Ukraine as a result of an armed attack by the Russian Federation on a sovereign, independent neighboring state - Ukraine. These attacks came by air, land, and sea, and involved attacking people, including civilian men, women, and children; damaging, destroying, and looting homes, hospitals, schools, churches, other community buildings, businesses, farming installations, machinery, crops, and other infrastructure and resources; and damaging or extinguishing the lives and habitats of other living beings in Ukraine. We mourn, also, the suffering of others elsewhere in the world, including in Russia, that has arisen from the choices made.

We are also mourning that we have not written similar manifestos before in relation to other situations of war and crisis affecting other regions. We are still choosing to do this, to start somewhere and move towards increasing our capacity to take such risks over time.

### Space for Mourning Observations of War

What we hear about the conflict fills us with shock, anguish, and grief. For example, according to the Council on Foreign Relations:

By December 2021, more than 100,000 Russian troops were stationed at the Russian-Ukraine border. On February 24, 2022, while the United Nations Security Council met to dissuade Russia from attacking Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of a full-scale land, sea, and air invasion targeting Ukrainian military assets and cities. By late March, observers estimated that more than 90% of Mariupol had been damaged or destroyed by Russian bombardments. By April 29, 2022, there were 2,685 civilian casualties and more than 4.1 million refugees had fled from Ukraine. Reports from other sources include that as of May 3, 2022, at least 220 Ukrainian children had been killed and at 406 children were injured. In addition, Russian soldiers were witnessed raping girls and women; some of these girls and women died as a result of the soldiers' actions. Mass graves have been discovered in areas occupied by Russian soldiers, including in Mariupol and the Kiev area. In Bucha, citizens were shot in the back of the head and were found with their hands tied behind their backs. There are photographs of Russian military vehicles that displayed the sign of the Red Cross containing munitions. These are a few examples of the violence and infractions of international law that have been reported.

We recognize the importance of trying to be objective and clear, and know that, in war, it can be especially challenging to know what is happening. We remain open to new information.

### Support for Protection and the Alleviation of Suffering

The NVC Academy recognizes that, when opportunities for open dialogue that hold the needs of both sides in full do not exist, protective use of force may be warranted to protect life. We understand the choice of Ukrainians to resort to protective use of force under the current circumstances. We also recognize that no doubt, for at least some, their response to the Russian invasion does include enemy images and a desire to harm. There are two potential dangers that we see could be disturbing by developing enemy images: One extreme is the risk of a surge of unconstructive hatred. The other extreme is indifference and inaction in defending their country, people, land and property. We bring compassion and tenderness to this choice, recognizing the extreme circumstances the Ukrainian people are living with, and knowing it's not ours to tell those who are harmed how to respond.

We express our heartfelt hope that the citizens of Russia will call upon their government to cease their military operations in Ukraine so that peace can be restored. We also recognize that many have done so, at great risk to themselves, and that thousands have been detained and suffer consequences to their courageous willingness to stand up to the government.

We recognize that the pain is deep and that much aid will be needed now, and in the future to support ongoing healing for all parties, Ukrainian, Russian, and others.

We request that members of the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) community and individuals, groups, and organizations around the world pause to connect with their deepest human values and compassionate intentions. From this place, take specific, positive steps to contribute to the short- and long-term wellbeing of all those affected by the war in Ukraine, including sharing the values of independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and supporting them in resisting Russian forces by providing moral, financial, defense, and political support from democratic governments and people across the world.

It is our hope that we, as humans, connect with our deepest universal human needs and make choices that support peace, harmony, connection, and healing in the spirit of awareness, self-responsibility, and choice, and in keeping with our sense of integrity.

The NVC Academy recognizes that those who have suffered may well, in their raw anguish, be experiencing strong emotions including hatred toward Russian aggressors. We invite you to offer empathy and support and to hear the severity of their pain.

While it is extremely painful to accept that fellow humans can contribute to such suffering, we strive to hear and acknowledge this pain so that those who have suffered or are suffering can be seen and heard. We hope that by offering our empathic presence, we can support healing.

The NVC Academy wishes to thank everyone who is working towards peace and supporting those who are suffering in this incredibly difficult time. Each of your contributions, financial and otherwise, are appreciated and give us hope for our shared humanity and faith in long-term peace.