

To the Government of Ukraine and to the People of Maidan

We, the presiding representatives of the member Churches of the Christian Council of Sweden, have with great concern and worry been following the dramatic political development in Ukraine. In our prayers for a peaceful solution of this grave crisis, we urge both the Government of Ukraine and the People of Maidan (or other similar places, where people assemble in serious demands for democracy) to avoid any kind of violence and stick to peaceful and responsible negotiations for the benefit of all the people of Ukraine and its future. Violence is always a denial of the other, and can only increase hate, irreconcilability and lack of confidence.

From the perspective of the Ukrainian Government: We remind you that democracy is not a mere unlimited use of power, bestowed upon an elected governmental assembly. Democracy means sharing the power with the parliament, including the opposition. Denying the opposition its voice is nothing but oppression, even if a government be an elected one. Humiliation and repressive viciousness from the civil authorities do not belong in Europe, or in any part of the world. We wish to remind that the surrounding world is watching every step of the government in this conflict, and that nothing will be forgotten. We urge you to stop the violence immediately, so that Ukraine may start prospering!

From the perspective of the People of Maidan: We remind you that Maidan is the very place of the birth of the Ukrainian democracy. The way you act at Maidan is to be a model for future Ukrainian generations. Use of violence will shadow the message; unlawful acts, not necessitated by the situation, will cloud your dreams; denying others to share your Maidan-dreams could easily make your so longed for democracy stillborn.

To the European Union and Russia: We remind you of the truth that a truly free society is a place where the state serves the needs of its people, not the other way around. This counts regardless if it be the National Government, the Russian Federation or the European Union. The future of Ukraine is not given in Brussels or in Moscow, not even in the Governmental Palace in Kiev. The future lies in the hand of the Ukrainian people, whose dreams are served by a truly democratic government, through education, securing the freedom of speech, sustaining the dialogue between opposing parties, and promoting justice, peace and equality. Free elections are just the beginning of democracy.

To the USA, the European Union and Russia: We remind you that Ukraine can never be equated only with Western Europe, or only with Russia. The country with its people belongs to both worlds. Forgetting this is denying Europe and building a new wall, thus recalling the shameful remembrance of the cold war. We believe that Ukraine belongs to Europe, but can never deny its relation and bonds to Russia and Asia. Ukraine is a bridge between the European Union and Russia, and should be treated and cared for as such. We have to learn together with Ukraine, through education, dialogue and mutual understanding, how we can tear down the remaining walls of Europe unfortunately still separating us. Any other alternative will contribute to conflict and violence, even at the risk of civil war, which would be devastating for the future of both Ukraine and Europe.