

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends - Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand

8 March 2022

Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister

Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dear Jacinda Ardern and Nanaia Mahuta

Quakers in Aotearoa New Zealand and the world over are totally opposed to all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances. For this reason, we are clear that the seeds of the latest Russian invasion of Ukraine were sown by the development of political and military alliances that have divided the world into mutually hostile and heavily armed blocs. In the context in which world military spending was estimated to have reached a staggering US\$2 trillion in 2020 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), major conflict at some point becomes virtually inevitable. Russia is not alone responsible for this situation, as the 'Western' bloc of nations is equally culpable.

Nevertheless, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is killing civilians and military personnel alike is reprehensible and the nations of the world need to condemn this grave breach of international rules-based order.

We write to express our support of the actions so far taken by the Government to condemn the Russian regime's decision to invade Ukraine. In urging that further measures be taken, we hope the Government carefully balances the need for action against the risk of damaging the citizens of Russia, some of whom clearly do not support the decisions of the current regime. General sanctions often have such an effect. However, targeting high wealth individuals is another matter and we would like to see every possible action taken against such high wealth individuals who have benefited from and are fostered by the current regime in Russia. We would for example, support freezing the assets of such individuals and prohibiting further investment by them, including the purchase of land.

We also urge the Government to support the international response to the growing number of Ukrainian refugees by increasing the Aotearoa New Zealand contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and urging other countries to do the same. Fast tracking immigration to New Zealand for Ukrainians escaping the conflict who have family connections here is another measure we would like to see the Government act on.

Ultimately, dialogue is the only way to end conflict. We hope therefore that the Government keeps a diplomatic channel open, even though we recognise that the current regime in Russia has no intention of engaging diplomatically.

We are in contact with Quakers in Ukraine and will be seeking ways to provide support to them. We are pleased therefore to see that the Government has pledged humanitarian assistance.

Yours in Peace and Friendship

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anne Hall' and 'Alistair Hall'.

Anne and Alistair Hall
Co-Clerks, Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand