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Montreuil, 21 February 2014

Ukraine: Stop the government's violence against its own people

Over the past three months, thousands of people throughout Ukraine have been gathering to express their democratic aspirations. An entire arsenal of weapons has been deployed in order to disperse them.

How do things stand today? Official reports state that around a hundred people have died and several hundred have been injured in Ukraine.

Punishing civilians is an aberration and is totally contrary to fundamental freedoms and respect for democracy, which are values that Europe espouses. Moreover, this situation has increased social tensions at an alarming rate!

Today Emmaus, a Movement that advocates peace, is speaking out to demand that political decisions are taken in Ukraine to halt the escalating violence and propagation of **confrontation with its own people**.

As our Founder, Abbé Pierre continually reminded those in positions of power: "Power is not meant as a sport for the favoured few but as a means to liberate those who suffer unjustly."

The primary purpose of Emmaus is to take action to ensure respect for the rights of the poorest and the homeless in our communities. Violence and confrontation serve only to aggravate the position of the most vulnerable in society: we strongly condemn and call for an immediate halt to the violence.

Emmaus also wishes to reiterate that wars begin not only as a result of economic problems between countries but also due to intolerable social tensions for the poorest and most excluded.

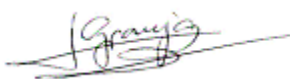
Emmaus has a presence in Ukraine: the Oselya mutual aid community supports disadvantaged people in Lviv and is known for its work to establish a fairer and more peaceful society by means of tangible initiatives. The stores selling second-hand clothing to local people and the day centres run by the Emmaus Oselya group remain open during this time of uncertainty.

Through its tireless work on a daily basis, the group enables individuals to regain their dignity and is helping to build a way of life more focused on solidarity in a constructive spirit of hope. The value of this work must be emphasised as it transcends periods of crisis and shows what can be achieved when men and women of goodwill come together.

Companions, leaders, volunteers and paid employees, we need to make our voices heard to ensure that human rights are applicable to everyone.

Emmaus stakeholders in Ukraine would take great encouragement from your messages of support and assistance. Please let them know you are thinking of them during this difficult time.

With our warm wishes,



Julio de la Granja.
President of Emmaus Europe



Jean Rousseau
President of Emmaus International