



“God gave us breath so that we can live” - Against the use of poison gas and military retaliation in Syria

We view the present situation in Syria with great concern for world peace. In an alliance with France and Great Britain, on April 14th 2018 the USA attacked three targets in Syria with 110 missiles in retaliation for a supposed use of poison gas. Chemical weapons are subject to an international ban. If chemical weapons were used in Syria, this must immediately be clarified and the perpetrators called to account. Any remaining stocks of such weapons should also be destroyed without delay under the supervision of the international authorities. International legal instruments and institutions exist to this end. Should these instruments prove inadequate, they need to be revised within the framework of UN legislation.

The present retaliatory attack by the USA, France and Great Britain was not authorised by the UN Security Council and thus formally contravenes international law. Moreover, there is no recognisable sign of a policy for peace. On the contrary, the attack runs the risk of raising the spiral of violence in the Near East to new heights.

We recall some sentences of the memorandum on peace of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) (2007). “A military intervention must obtain authorisation and legitimacy in the form of a clear basis in international and constitutional law. The interests of national policies and regional alliances must not usurp the primary competence of the UN and its regional arrangements.” (EKD Memorandum on Peace 2007, no.121, page 42)

We are aware that, in the case of the conflict in Syria, this is a formal argument because here international law has its limitations in view of the intervention by the powers protecting Syria, since these prevented a corresponding mandate. Nevertheless, we are convinced that violence is not the solution for conflicts. Violence only produces more dead and wounded and forces people to flee. We therefore support the approach of the Federal Government to work for political solutions instead of military intervention. In this connection, the EKD Peace Memorandum states, “Military action must remain only one component of a coherent policy [for peace] that ultimately rests under civilian authority” and military operations should always be both accompanied and followed by evaluation (nos. 118 and 123, pp.41-42).

A glance back at history shows that chemical weapons were developed a hundred years ago mainly by German scientists and were used by the German military during World War I. This reminds us of our own responsibility and we call upon the political leaders of our country, in historical responsibility and in the current situation, to refrain from supplying armaments to crisis regions and to do all in their power to promote peace in the Near East by political means.

In his Address to the Nation at the start of the retaliatory attack on Syria, the American President Donald Trump said, “Tonight, I ask all Americans to say a prayer for our noble warriors and our allies as they carry out their missions.” As Christian men and women in a country which launched a war on the peoples of the world twice in the past century, we declare that there are no “noble warriors”. War kills, wounds, maims, destroys and distresses people body and soul. Therefore we pray for peace. We pray for the victims of violence and war.

We trust the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The effect of righteousness will be peace” (Isaiah 32,17). As in every other country, peace with justice in Syria requires strong laws, social security, cultural diversity and the safeguarding of basic human needs. The force of arms is not a means to peace with justice.

Frankfurt/Main, April 2018

Rev. Sabine Müller-Langsdorf
(Officer for peace work)

OKR Rev. Detlev Knoche
(Director)