



IAPR Newsletter | Q1 2022

Comment on Russia's invasion of Ukraine from the IAPR Board

The International Association for the Psychology of Religion unambiguously condemns the ongoing, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army. This has caused the killing of many people including civilians, some of which have been children, the forced displacement of 10 million others, humanitarian catastrophes in many places in Ukraine, the destruction of the land and of religious and cultural places. All this constitutes a blatant violation of the most basic human rights—and there are no arguments to justify such a violation. We unambiguously reject any appropriation of or appeal to religious language and/or traditions that might appear in any fashion to support this specific invasion or any other action that similarly degrades basic human rights and freedoms. We are well aware of the persuasive power of language in relation to the psychological, spiritual, and physical health of individuals.

The scientific expertise of our field, i.e. Psychology of Religion, pushes us to strongly condemn the use by political and religious leaders of perverse rhetoric supporting, in the 21st century, this war and violence in the name of allegedly moral, religious, and cultural/civilizational values. This perverse rhetoric used includes in particular:

(a) the collusion between nationalism/ethnocentrism and religious superiority & uniqueness. This is an irrational and psychologically unhealthy collusion known to create hate for centuries

(b) the general use of hate speech. In particular, hate speech regarding sexual minorities not only attests to leaders' scientific ignorance but also has lethal consequences for millions of people.

Research is clear: the most important reason why people abandon religion is religious leaders' moral hypocrisy. In parallel, the central emotion of the generations that follow the perpetrators is not pride, but shame.

Killing innocents is immoral; legitimizing it through allegedly 'moral', religious, and cultural values is even worse: it is perverse. Silencing opposite voices is darkness.

Our sincerest hope and well-wishes to those currently suffering,

Vassilis Saroglou,

On behalf of the IAPR Board