News



Smoke and flames are seen near a high-voltage line at a site of a Russian airstrike, outside Kharkiv, Ukraine, March 22, 2024. Fifteen U.S.-based religious leaders, including Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio and Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak, have condemned Russia's March 21-22 attacks on Ukraine's energy grid as "war crimes." (OSV News/Sofiia Gatilova, Reuters)

Gina Christian

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

March 26, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and other Christian leaders in the U.S. have denounced Russia's massive recent attack on Ukraine's energy system.

Russia launched more than 151 drones and missiles throughout Ukraine during the overnight hours of March 21-22, including 63 Shahed drones and 88 missiles of various types. According to Ukrainian officials, the attacks targeted 136 energy facilities in several regions across the country, leaving dozens of structures damaged.

The assault is believed to be the largest against Ukraine's energy infrastructure since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, which continued aggression begun in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and the fomenting of separatist factions in Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

In a March 25 statement, "Let the light shine in the darkness," 15 U.S.-based religious leaders said they "condemn these Russian attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure as war crimes."

They noted that across Ukraine "dozens of power facilities were damaged, including thermal and hydroelectric power stations, high-voltage networks and regional energy grids," affecting "millions of civilians" who now "face massive power outages and crippling energy shortages, endangering the most vulnerable and threatening all life-support systems."

The signatories noted that Ukraine's city of Kharkiv, home to some 1.5 million inhabitants, "is particularly stricken as Russian attacks targeted its main energy facilities, leaving residents without electricity, heat, and hot water on a night when temperatures will plummet below freezing."

"We beseech the religious leaders of Russia, especially Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church, to stop supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine and to urge President Putin to halt terror attacks aimed at innocent civilians," said the

statement.

In addition, "we likewise urge our government and civic authorities to utilize all available just means to protect Ukraine and its people from this brutal aggression," the signatories said.

Advertisement

Among those signing the statement were Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, head of Ukrainian Catholics in the U.S.

Signatories also included other U.S.-based Ukrainian Catholic prelates, Bishop Paul P. Chomnycky of Stamford, Connecticut; Bishop Venedykt Aleksiychuk of Chicago; Bishop Bohdan J. Danylo of Parma, Ohio.

Other Eastern Catholic signatories were Bishop Gregory J. Mansour of the Maronite Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, New York; Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, who also chairs the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace; Bishop John Alappatt of the Syro-Malabar St. Thomas Eparchy of Chicago; Bishop François E. Beyrouti and retired Bishop Nicholas Samra of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Newton, Massachusetts; and Bishop Robert M. Pipta of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma, Ohio.

Rounding out the list were Metropolitan Anthony and Archbishop Daniel of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of USA; Archbishop Elpidophoros of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; and the Rev. Viktor Prokhor, senior pastor at Life Christian Church in Tacoma, Washington, and chair of the Council of Ukrainian Christian Churches of Washington State.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," the prelates said, quoting Jn 1:5. "We stand firm in our resolve: do not allow the darkness to prevail over the light."