

Kyiv, February 24th, 2022

“No democracy without democrats”

By Wladimir Klitschko

I am writing to you from Kyiv, the capital of a country at war, a country being attacked and invaded from all sides. It is not "the war of Ukraine", it is Putin's war. Meticulous preparations were hidden behind the fog of the last few weeks in order to set in motion a plan that had been drawn up for months. No more fog and false diplomatic declarations. Now, the Russian president is using war rhetoric in the purest Bolshevik tradition and is rewriting history to justify his redivision of borders. He makes it clear that he wants to destroy the Ukrainian state and the sovereignty of its people. Words are followed by missiles and tanks. Destruction and death come upon us. That's it, blood will mix with tears.

We must face reality and have the courage to draw the conclusions for our future and that of our children. This is a blatant violation of international law. And, if you listen carefully, this war is also talking about Europe.

Putin wants to call into question the geopolitical balance across the whole of Europe, he dreams of being the defender of the Slavic peoples wherever they live, and he wants to restore a fallen empire whose demise he has never accepted. He looks at our continent through distorted glasses, the glasses of a fantasized glorious past. Yet this megalomania has very real implications. The European way of life is under threat, the freedom of peoples to make their own decisions is under threat, and so is democracy.

The Ukrainian people are strong. And it will remain true to itself in this terrible ordeal. A people longing for sovereignty and peace. A people who consider the Russian people their brothers. It knows that they basically do not want this war. The Ukrainian people have chosen democracy. But: Democracy is a fragile regime. Democracy cannot defend itself; it needs the will of the citizens, the commitment of everyone. Basically, there is no democracy without democrats.

Here, we will defend ourselves with all our might and fight for freedom and democracy. You can also act. Let not fear seize us; let's not remain frozen. Putin shoots at Ukrainian cities, but he aims at our hearts and, more importantly, at our minds. He wants to create doubt and confusion and thus inaction.

You can do something by mobilizing and organizing huge demonstrations. Make your voice heard. Make the voice of democracy heard. Say it loud and clear that international law and democracy are under attack, that war is the greatest evil and that life is sacred. Also say that while solidarity is good, support is better. Say that

the march of imperialism must be stopped now. After all, whose turn will it be after Ukraine?

This war against my country is not only the result of one man's madness, but also the result of years of weakness in Western democracies. This madness must be stopped now by stepping up deterrents. Our governments need to say things loud and clear. If Putin goes ahead with his plan for a change of regime in Kyiv, then democracies around the world must now start thinking about a change of regime in Moscow. Before it is too late.