

Remarkable German Peace Initiative Calls for Rapid Peace Negotiations

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In an open letter, prominent Social Democrats, trade union leaders and well-known representatives from the peace movement are calling on Chancellor Scholz to step up efforts to mediate a cease-fire in the war in Ukraine. Peace, they say, can only be achieved "on the basis of international law and also only with Russia." What are we waiting for in other Western countries to launch a similar initiative?

Former senior SPD politicians, union members and well-known representatives of the peace movement called on **Chancellor Olaf Scholz** in an [open letter](#) to urge urgent negotiations to end the fighting in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. (The full letter can be found below.)

The war has degenerated into "bloody trench warfare in which there are only losers," according to the letter. It is crucial to stop the escalation of the war. "With each passing day, the danger of an expansion of hostilities grows. The shadow of nuclear war hangs over Europe. The world must not slip into another major war."

The world needs peace: "The most important thing is to do everything for a quick cease-fire, to stop the Russian war of aggression and to find the way to negotiations," reads the appeal "Close Peace" ("Frieden Schaffen").

Chancellor Scholz should join France in trying to convince countries such as Brazil, China, India and Indonesia to mediate "to reach a cease-fire quickly." This is a necessary step "to end the killing and explore the possibilities for peace." Instead of the dominance of the military, "we need the language of diplomacy and peace."

The more than 200 signatories of the letter include the son of former Chancellor Willy Brandt, the former head of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), a former president of the German parliament, an ex-Euro commissioner and a former president of the

Evangelical Church in Germany.

Remarkably, the signatories argue that the war can only be ended by including Russia in peace negotiations: “Peace can only be concluded on the basis of international law and only with Russia.”

In Ukraine, this had a considerable impact. “This call for peace is not an April Fool’s joke,” said the [Ukrainian ambassador](#) to Germany. “It is pure cynicism toward the numerous victims of Russian aggression.”

The call is not completely out of the blue. In January, [Rolf Mütznich](#), the Social Democrat (SPD) parliamentary group leader, said that “we must constantly try to resolve the conflict between Russia and Ukraine through diplomacy.”

On Feb. 10, Sahra Wagenknecht of the Left Party (Die Linke) and publicist Alice Schwarzer launched a [“Manifesto for Peace”](#) petition that included a call to end the war and proceed to peace negotiations. Nearly 800,000 people have since signed the appeal.

It is notable that the Greens, originated from the peace movement themselves, are totally absent from the recent peace initiatives. Strangely enough they have developed into the most vehement supporters of arms supplies and are trying to pressure Scholz to take a harder line on this conflict.

The peace appeals come at a time when public opinion in Germany is increasingly won over to a cease-fire. In late January, [a poll](#) revealed that for more than 80 percent of Germans ending the war by means of negotiations is more important than Ukraine winning it. Only 18 percent disagreed with that statement.

Enthusiasm for the war is also waning in the United States. Key Republicans such as Trump and DeSantis side [against further arms deliveries](#). And for [Biden](#), it may be an electorally safer bet to reach a truce even before next year’s presidential election.

And even in Ukraine today there are voices calling for a negotiated peace. None other than [President Zelensky](#) told the Associated Press in late March that if he loses the town of Bakhmut, he will then be forced to make a “compromise” with Russia. “Our society will feel tired” if the Russians win in Bakhmut. “Our society will push me to compromise with them.”

For the signatories of the open letter, it is crucial to stop the escalation of the war. Each additional day of war also means “more suffering and destruction for the people affected, more wounded and dead.” We can only applaud their call for peace. What are we waiting for in other Western countries to launch a similar initiative?

Peace call: full text

Building peace: Ceasefire, negotiations and common security. This is what a peace initiative for Europe, for Ukraine, demands.

The Russian war of aggression on Ukraine has already lasted more than a year. Each additional day of war means more suffering and destruction, more wounded and dead for the people affected. With each day, the danger of the expansion of hostilities grows. The shadow of a nuclear war lies over Europe. But the world must not slide into another

great war. The world needs peace. The most important thing is to do everything for a quick cease-fire, to stop the Russian war of aggression and to find the way to negotiations.

The war has turned into bloody trench warfare in which there are only losers. A large part of our citizens do not want to see a spiral of violence without end. Instead of the dominance of the military, we need the language of diplomacy and peace.

The policy of peace and détente to which we owe German unity and the overcoming of European division is not obsolete. We have championed these goals in the past and continue to do so today. To paraphrase Willy Brandt, "It is a matter of going against the tide when it tries to dig a false bed once again."

With the concept of common security, the United Nations pointed the way to a peaceful world. It has its roots in the German policy of peace and détente. In this spirit, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter for a New Europe were created. This is what we are building on. Peace can only be made on the basis of international law and only with Russia.

Our world depends on reciprocity; it is the only way to overcome the great challenges of our time. It is crucial to stop the escalation of war. We encourage the Chancellor to join France in persuading Brazil, China, India and Indonesia in particular to mediate in order to achieve a ceasefire quickly. This would be a necessary step to end the killing and explore possibilities for peace. Only then can the way be paved for a common security order in Europe.

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