

Dear

My name is Andre Kamenshikov. I have devoted my life to the cause of peace in this world. 30 years ago, I began my journey as a civil peace and humanitarian activist in the countries of the former USSR. For the last 7 years I have been living in Ukraine, trying to contribute to a lasting peace and wellbeing of this country, which, I believe, is crucial for a peaceful and successful future in many other areas of Eurasia.

However, today I am appealing to you to contribute to a cause that will have crucial consequences for the future of all humankind – preventing the threat of nuclear war. And I am not speaking of an important, but long-term cause, such as the global elimination of nuclear weapons. I am calling on your role in addressing a real and significant danger of nuclear confrontation in the immediate future – in a matter of months or even weeks from the time I am writing this letter.

The war between Russia and Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, following an 8-year confrontation between Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists in the east of that country, has developed in a way that surprised most of the world, though could be predicted by those, who understood the on-ground realities of the two countries. Ukraine was not only able to stop the advance of a seemingly much more powerful adversary, but, backed by wide international support, is turning the tide of the war against the aggressor. While it is impossible to predict the actual sequence of events, there are all reasons to believe that in the coming months Ukraine's military will have the advantage in numbers, equipment and motivation. Even if Russia's leader Vladimir Putin initiates a general mobilization, he will not have the advantage in numbers for quite a while and he has no hope of gaining the advantage in neither technology nor motivation. Most likely, the next three months will be decisive for the future course of the war.

With such a layout it is not unimaginable, that faced by the perspective of military defeat which will inevitably put in jeopardy his political regime, the Russian leader will turn to his only remaining "trump card" – weapons of mass destruction, most likely tactical nuclear weapons. This may be seen by Russia's political and military leaders as an effective way to prevent a successful Ukrainian counter-offensive, especially considering the fact that offensive operations require a high concentration of troops in key areas, thus creating potential military targets for the use of such weapons.

And, besides purely military objectives, the decision to use such weapons may also be seen as a way to reach a serious political effect, to demonstrate to the world that Russia sees no limits in using any types of weaponry to protect what it considers as its vital interests.

If this does happen, it's hardly necessary to point out that the world will witness immense loss of life and human suffering. Even more important - our entire world will have entered a new, uncharted territory where nuclear weapons can be used on the battlefield. And it is impossible to predict where this new reality will bring not only Russia and Ukraine, but all of humankind. There is a possibility, that the world may witness a chain reaction, when steps made by many parties will eventually lead to a further escalation with disastrous global consequences. Even a global nuclear holocaust cannot be excluded, once the Pandora box of nuclear weapons is opened. A century ago, the world has already experienced a situation, when one terrorist act led to an avalanche of consequences, resulting in a world war, many millions of casualties and a fundamental change of the world order. If something of that sort happens today – the consequences will be on a totally different scale.

Under these circumstances it is essential to apply all possible means to avoid that disaster. However insignificant our actions may appear, we must all do whatever we can.

It is important to consider, that while some authoritarian political leaders may live in a world of outdated or inhumane concepts and beliefs', they still usually are able to make rational calculations

within their own worldview. Today Russia's relationships with major western powers have been destroyed and economic cooperation with them is coming to a halt. This makes Russia extremely dependent on other countries, with whom it is still able to maintain a decent relationship. And, in this sense the two key countries for Russia today are China and India. Severing relationships with these two rapidly developing world powers would destroy any hope for Russia's ruling elite to ever recover from the current disaster. Thus, a clear message from the leadership of these two countries (or from either of them) is something that Mr. Putin and his surroundings will need to seriously consider as they make decisions regarding the future course of their actions.

Both China and India have long-standing relationships with Russia, which are important politically and economically. Both countries have their own historical legacy of confrontation with imperialist western powers and clearly see elements of hypocrisy in today's anti-Russian standing and rhetoric of western leaders. The world is not black and white, and, while there is no excuse for Russia's aggression against Ukraine, key western powers have committed their share of serious mistakes and faults which, inadvertently, resulted in today's situation.

However, for all of us to build a better future, one that would enable us to address past mistakes and deal with grievances – this future should exist, it should be protected from nuclear winter and clouds of radioactive fallout. And while the relevance and effectiveness of economic or political sanctions against Russia and its leadership may be debated, the goal of preventing the use of nuclear weapons in today's world should be a common cause for all. This is why it is so important today for the leaders of the great nations of China and India to put aside all other matters and send a clear message, draw a red line against the use of nuclear weapons. As the inevitable flow of time will move current events onto the pages of history books, the role of those leaders who prevented a nuclear disaster will no doubt be remembered.

Thus, I call on everyone to seek all potential means to address the leaders of China and India, General Secretary Xi Jinping and Prime-minister Narendra Modi, to send a clear message to the leadership of the Russian Federation and personally – to Mr. Vladimir Putin, calling to exclude any use of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances that the current war with Ukraine (or, in Russian terms, the "Special military operation") may take. Future relationships between these countries and Russia should be clearly conditioned by such a limitation. At the same time, both these countries could offer their good offices to play an important role in bringing the current fighting to a halt and restoring a lasting peace for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine.