



MAYOR OF ROTTERDAM

ROTTERDAM, February 28<sup>th</sup> 2022

The Governor of St. Petersburg  
Mr. Alexander Beglov  
191060, St. Petersburg, Smolny  
Russian Federation

Dear Governor Beglov,

I am writing you this letter with a heavy heart. It is with deep sorrow that we learned this past week of the war in Ukraine. As long-term partners and sister cities Rotterdam and St. Petersburg share a bond that has lived through both hopeful and difficult times, because our focus has always been on real people-to-people contacts. On the basis of the nearly forty years of friendly cooperation between our cities, I feel compelled to write you to ask for your support.

As fellow mayors of cities that have lived through the horrors of the Second World War; of cities that have been bombed and burned down without reason and still carry the marks of that destruction; of cities whose innocent men, women and children starved and suffered through war and oppression; we carry a historical responsibility to firmly condemn the war that is being waged on Ukraine right now and speak out against violence and the destruction of Ukrainian cities.

As leaders of the second largest cities in our countries, we might not be in the position to control geopolitical events. Nevertheless, we know that as mayors our voices are heard not only by our citizens but also by our national governments. That is why I am asking you to use your influence to urge the Russian government to end the war in Ukraine and to respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

There are only losers in war, and it pains me to see that ordinary Russian and Ukrainian citizens who did not choose this war suffer from its inevitable consequences. I know that many Russians have family and friends in Ukraine and are deeply saddened by the war. We have learned of the protests in Russian cities, also in St-Petersburg. As a mayor of a city full of people with different opinions, with 173 nationalities living together, I cannot stress enough how important it is to give all voices the space to express themselves freely, even when their opinions do not match our own

The cities and citizens of Rotterdam and St. Petersburg have been building bridges since 1984, transcending cultural and political differences, on the basis of our shared humanity and our belief that differences can only be overcome through dialogue, not violence. I'm appealing to you now to do everything in your power to bring peace back to our continent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ahmed Aboutaleb', written over a white rectangular background.

Ahmed Aboutaleb