

Hi, everyone. It's great to address People and Peace in Sweden. And I'm so sorry that I can't be here with you in person. I'd love to, of course, start by saying "Happy New Year!" But there really is very little to be happy about at the start of 2024. I mean, how could anyone enjoy a winter break with the knowledge that every day that went by, while many in Europe sat in our central heated homes with families and friends, two million desperate people remain trapped in a nightmare without end, freezing and starving in the open air slaughterhouse of the Gaza Strip, as the Israeli occupation forces continued their genocidal campaign of revenge and mass murder against terrified and defenseless civilians, most of them children.

And never has there been such an open display of inhuman cruelty. And never have the EU leaders be even more blatant in their support of us. I mean, to have refused to call for a ceasefire in October was, of course unforgivable. But to be still refusing now shows you exactly what the EU leaders are really like. Everything they say, about rule of law, human rights, the international order, they never meant a word of it. Because this Zionist apartheid regime is committing a genocide in plain sight, boasting about it. And the European leaders are standing behind them 100%, sending them weapons, parroting their lies, and even trying to ban demonstrations that are organized to stop it.

So your event is taking place at a "mask-off" moment for a lot of people. A lot of people now are looking back at the Ukraine war propaganda of the last two years and beginning to see and understand it in a very different light. After two years of the "glory! glory!" mantra, the results are plain to see. Ukraine is in dire straits. Where's the "glory" now?

Of course, there was never any hope of winning on the battlefield. More and more Ukrainian officials are admitting that there was a peace deal on the table in April 2022. It would have seen Russia withdraw to the pre-invasion borders. Ukraine should have been free to take that deal. But it was the West that didn't want peace. European and American leaders wanted Ukraine to fight and Ukraine was blackmailed into fighting.

And two years later, Ukraine is looking at peace terms incomparably worse than that which they were offered, having sacrificed so much, with only loss to show for us. Half a million casualties. Hundreds of thousands dead who didn't have to die. Vvast tracts of land now lost to Russian occupation, probably never coming back. A country divided, cities flattened. People scattered to the winds, or pauperised in the ruins, and saddled with debt servitude, extending decades into the future. The remedy proposed by European leaders: extreme capitalism, a battering ram of privatization and liberalization, already smashing the Ukrainian economy, with more to come. What remains of Ukraine already being sold off to Western investors, trade unions and opposition parties banned, ultra nationalists on the rise, and the inevitable mass politics of resentment and betrayal in the near future as the reality sinks into Ukrainian society: false friends in the West led their country up the garden path, then sold them down the river.

It's bleak. There is nothing - nothing whatsoever - to feel good about any of this. But there's one thing that can be drawn from it. And that's resolve. That's determination. That's certainty that the peace movement is more necessary now than it ever was.

We were the ones who said that this would be a disaster. And there it is. Proof, if more was needed, that war was not the answer. War is never the answer. European leaders who cheerlead for war, who shill for NATO, who push for militarisation, who destroy our economies with backfiring war sanctions, who ransack the public purse to enrich the military industrial complex, who attack and slander the peace movement as cowards and traitors: they are wrong! And the proof of that is now there, tragically, for all to see.

So every time the war mongers open their mouths, look on their works. Look at the wreckage of Mariupol. See the lines and lines of blue body bags in the mass graves in Khan Younis. Never forget the baby amputees in the ruins of Al Shifa hospital, with doctors and nurses performing surgery under Israeli sniper fire. Know that this is what always happens. And the next time EU leaders get up on the stage to feed us war propaganda, this is what they must be made to answer for.

So I won't say "Happy New Year." War is a permanent blight on happiness. Happiness can come later. First, we must fight for peace. So let's go from this gathering more and more determined to make that happen. And to rest assured that the reason why they slander and vilify us is that they realize that the peace movement - our movement - is the biggest threat to their interests. So in 2024, this is the year where we can - and we must - put the warmongers on the back foot, as we rebuild our efforts to defeat European militarism.

I wish you all the best with the event. I'm really sorry I can't be there in person. I hope it's not as cold there as it is here. And best of luck. Our paths will cross in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Free Palestine! Long live Gaza!