



Open letter

To the members of the German Bundestag

9. Dezember 2015

Regarding the decision on December 4, 2015 by the German Bundestag to undertake military action in Syria

Honored Members of Parliament,

By a wide margin you have voted to take action with the German military in Syria. We are deeply concerned by this decision and emphatically distance ourselves from it, informing our international community of our concern as well.

We understand:

- that you feel obligated to act following the horrendous terror attacks that shocked us all and which we also strongly condemn.
- that you want to stand with the French government in their call for help in battling terrorism.
- that you are concerned about the security of the German population.
- that you want to take responsibility for others in the international community to prevent further crimes committed by the so-called Islamic State and to promote peace in Syria.

From our perspective, however, it does not follow from all of these motivations that military action in Syria is the appropriate response.

The terrorist attacks in Paris were criminal acts, not a military attack on France and her allies. As a result, those involved should be prosecuted according to the respective criminal justice systems.

We agree that our French neighbors should not be left feeling alone during this time of trial. A sign of true friendship, however, would be to offer accompaniment in a discerning manner. To us the talk of war and the call to arms seem to be driven by the reactionary wish to punish and seek retaliation against the supposed attackers. Solidarity should prove itself by not giving in to blind rage but rather encouraging levelheadedness and prudence.

We are in no way convinced that military action will achieve greater security. In fact we fear this would result in an increase of terror acts, since military action plays right into the violent logic that terrorists seek to cultivate.

We are of the opinion that this action calls into question the German government's vow in recent years to "assume Germany's responsibility in the world". Drawing on her historical experience, Germany's refusal to employ military action would be the responsible decision, lending credence to a politics of peace. Possible measures would include cutting off the financial resources of the so-called "IS", preventing the transport of weapons, and putting a halt to the oil trade!

The development of a political future for the people in the effected areas seems to us of the utmost importance. This requires political savvy and diplomatic inclusion of all involved parties in the civil war in Syria, irrespective of our own economical interests. This would involve working towards a future for the

region that is economically just, providing adequate support, initially through relief organizations and also long-term in the development of democratic civic and social structures.

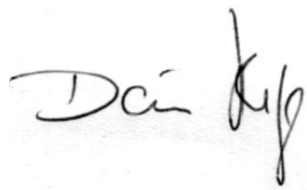
Through our church contacts in the region we know that trust is the cornerstone for building such a future. This in particular makes your decision so concerning, by drawing our country so clearly and so unnecessarily onto the playing field of this conflict, instead of -- as would be politically responsible -- playing a negotiating, intermediary role.

Apart from the questionable validity of this military action, as well as the dubious prospect of military success, we want to be clear:

You may have made this decision, but it was not made in our name!

Sincerely,

On behalf of the executive board of the Association of Mennonite Churches in Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doris Hege". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

(Doris Hege, Boardchair)