

Making a Difference

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

April 24, 2014

Joint Statement of US Religious Communities on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear War

The continued existence of nuclear weapons forces humankind to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction. They embody the obscene proposition that the mass slaughter of innocents can be justified. Their use would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, but would leave present and coming generations facing a mutilated future.

The moral insights of our traditions teach us that this threat is unacceptable and must be eliminated. A clear understanding of the political and technological realities, and the undeniable dangers of nuclear proliferation and terrorism, convinces us that the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to decisively remove this threat.

The work of realizing a world without nuclear weapons can only succeed if it is firmly rooted in a forthright acknowledgment of the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons.

The catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons cannot be fully communicated by numbers or statistics; it is a reality that frustrates the power of both rational analysis and ordinary imagination. As we approach the 70th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, humanity risks losing contact with that reality as living memory, long preserved and transmitted by the courageous efforts of the *Hibakusha* – the survivors of the atomic bombing of these cities.

The world's faith traditions, with a rich history of engaging ultimate meaning, have a special role to play in enabling humanity to think about the unthinkable, to confront realities from which we would avert our gaze. Our faith traditions can spark the kind of moral imagination that empowers people to reject despair, promoting human solidarity and responsible stewardship for this planet and all of its inhabitants. Our faiths help us envision a new world—a just world free from nuclear weapons, whose resources are consecrated to the cause of human happiness and security—energizing our efforts for its attainment.

The 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) presents an opportunity to accelerate the moral and humanitarian drive to eliminate nuclear weapons. This must be the global enterprise of humanity, in which all states and stakeholders play a role.

As people of faith we pledge to:

1. Communicate with the peoples of the world the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons to challenge the present security discourse and bring humanitarian aspects to the heart of the debate;

2. Promote within our respective faith traditions efforts to elevate the moral imperative of the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to make the abolition of war a paramount value that is taught, studied and lived through daily action;
3. Seek full implementation of Article VI of the NPT under which the nuclear-weapon states have committed themselves to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith;
4. Urge the nuclear-weapon states to pledge that they will never use nuclear weapons against signatories of the NPT at the 2015 NPT Review Conference;
5. Strengthen the current NPT regime to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons so that all peoples and states can enjoy genuine security;
6. Call on the international community to fully utilize the emerging process developing around the successive joint statements on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in parallel with the existing NPT process to catalyze concrete action leading to the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons without further delay.

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