

# **Joint Interfaith Statement to the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

## **November 2023**

We gather as people of faith – religious leaders, practitioners, believers of many different traditions – to affirm with one voice our opposition to nuclear weapons and our absolute belief that a world without nuclear weapons is not only possible but that a nuclear-free future is already being made.

We take great joy in the existence of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and take this occasion of the Second Meeting of States Parties to celebrate how the TPNW and its supporters worldwide have found the courage, determination and imagination to work for a world of justice and equality.

We live on a beautiful planet with the splendor of forests, mountains, rivers and oceans that we share with other creatures. Yet this planet and all who dwell here are threatened by the terror of nuclear weapons. It is our responsibility as people of faith to redirect the moral outrage of the world towards the re-making of that which is good. In this light, we celebrate the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by the UN General Assembly last year, and send our prayers for successful outcomes of COP28, which also starts during the same week as this meeting.

We honor the ancestors who have gone before us – the global hibakusha who suffered the horrors of nuclear weapons testing and use as well as the generations of diplomats, religious leaders, activists, researchers, artists and advocates – who dedicated their lives to making the world a safer place. Being together in this moment, with this landmark piece of international law and with the determination to universalize it, we know that this is only possible because of the work that went before us. At the same time, we are encouraged by the surge in a new generation of young leaders who have the courage, brilliance and hope to carry this work forward into the future. We work with integrity and unflinching determination because we owe so much to both the past and the future.

Our religious traditions are vast and represent many millions of people, each trying to pursue lives of meaning and goodness in a world that has never felt more threatened with catastrophe. Our faith that humanity is meant for peace, wellness, joy and love remains unwavering even as we see with clarity the devastation of the planet and our fellow human beings who are threatened globally by the double violence of climate catastrophe and rampant militarism. Nuclear weapons represent the worst of both of those threats – an evil unleashed upon this beloved planet with the power to wipe out everything that we hold most dear – our water, our air, our land, and each other.

Even as we call on all States to join the TPNW, we take seriously our role as faith communities to denounce nuclear deterrence as a false ideology which violates our most sacred commitments. We not only decry any use of nuclear weapons, we oppose wholeheartedly the preparations for and threats to use nuclear weapons as immoral. We urge States Parties at this meeting to move forward with practical commitments to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation under Articles 6 and 7 of the treaty. We commit to doing our part to care for those members of our community who have suffered the direct impacts of nuclear weapons and to act as good stewards to remediate the land and waters which have been harmed.

We celebrate the inclusivity of the TPNW with its attention towards the intersectional harms of nuclear weapons. Our faith communities take seriously our unique commitments to the Indigenous peoples who have been most affected by these weapons of utter destruction. As our faiths direct us to exercise special love and care for the people who are most marginalized, we recognize in the treaty a meaningful avenue to addressing the violence of the past and committing to a more just future.

As diplomats, policy makers, advocates and activists gather in New York City this week, we know their work is supported by a much larger circle of people around the world who believe that another

world without nuclear weapons is possible and who will continue to work, write, march, pray, chant, meditate and speak that new world into being. Nuclear weapons can never provide nourishment for our bodies, courage for our hearts, creativity for our minds or inspiration for our souls. Nuclear weapons can only annihilate, threaten and destroy everything that gives our lives meaning. Nuclear weapons drain financial resources away from addressing poverty, racism, illness and premature death. And yet, we remain resilient and vibrant in the face of their obliteration, refusing to let nuclear ideology also steal our hope, our vision and our boldness in demanding justice and a right to live in peace for all people.

There is so much work to be done. We commit, as people of faith, to working to address the roots of violence in our own religious traditions that have justified nuclear violence or that have chosen to ignore the greed and aggression that undergirds nuclear ideology. We can and will weave together a deepening of inner contemplation and reckoning that strengthens us to confront and survive threats to our collective security. We know that there is no true safety, security and peace for any of us until there is safety, security and peace for all of us.

We recognize the urgency of this moment and what is at stake for all of us – the beloved natural world and the beloved community of humanity. Our fates are intertwined and we cannot ignore the resounding threats that confront us. We feel acute fear and anxiety as an ever-present menace as we contemplate our shared future. This fear is not unique to this moment in time. Let us draw courage from the audacity and vision of past struggles for justice, taking comfort in the wisdom that immense challenges always feel impossible until they are done.

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**Endorsed by:**

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