



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CORPORATE STANCE: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The Dominican Sisters of Springfield call upon the United States government to lead the way for the global abolition of nuclear and all weapons of mass destruction by adopting a plan to lock down, reduce, and eliminate nuclear and all weapons of mass destruction. We call for immediate development, adoption and implementation of a plan that will ensure that there will be no new nuclear weapons, no new materials for nuclear weapons, and no testing of nuclear weapons. We will work with all people of goodwill until there is no chance that a nuclear weapon or other weapon of mass destruction can come into the hands of anyone wishing to do harm.

June 2011

EXPERIENCE

Security? Deterrence? Is the world really more safe because nuclear weapons are the basis for a number of states' national security policies? The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has maintained the Doomsday Clock symbolizing the gravest perils facing humankind, including the threat of nuclear war. At 100 seconds to midnight, it is now closer to midnight than at any point since its creation in 1947.

Nuclear weapons have been tested in all environments since 1945: in the atmosphere, underground and underwater, and in places from the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Marshall Islands, to Novaya Zemlya, a remote island in the Arctic Circle, to the Nevada Test Site in the desert north-west of Las Vegas.

The human and environmental devastation caused by decades of nuclear testing is still being felt today. The Bikini Atoll is still too dangerous for the inhabitants to live on. People near test site regions, as well as their children and grandchildren, suffer and die from radiation-induced cancers. The by-products of plutonium production leak into major river and aquifer systems.

ANALYSIS

The U.S. and Russia have the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Significant arsenals on high alert are ready to launch at a moment's notice, against a backdrop of a deteriorating relationship across a range of fronts. In February 2019, the United States pulled out of a nuclear arms control treaty with Russia, ending a cornerstone Cold War agreement and raising fears of a new nuclear arms race.

The 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) prohibits non-nuclear weapon state parties from developing nuclear weapons. However, the NPT exempts France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States from this ban. These five states had tested nuclear weapons before the treaty was negotiated in 1968.

This exemption is, however, countered with a legal obligation in the NPT for the five nuclear weapon states to fully disarm. Three other nuclear armed states—India, Israel, and Pakistan—have never joined the NPT, but possess nuclear weapons. North Korea also possesses them, but unlike India, Israel, and Pakistan, was previously a member of the NPT and obliged not to develop nuclear weapons. North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and has tested nuclear devices multiple times since 2006 despite international condemnation and sanctions.

On July 7, 2017, a United Nations conference adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the first international treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons comprehensively, including banning the development, acquisition, test, use, threat of use and possession of nuclear weapons. Although no nuclear weapons possessing states have signed the treaty, the treaty's passage is a significant development in disarmament politics.

In addition to the huge financial costs of building and maintaining a nuclear weapons arsenal, there are great human and ecological costs: loss of lives from the use and testing of nuclear weapons; tons of hazardous and radioactive materials released into the air and soils from the manufacture and testing of nuclear weapons; inability to safely dispose of nuclear wastes; by-products of plutonium production leaking into major river and aquifer systems.

REFLECTION

The pope issued the church's first unqualified condemnation not just of the use of nuclear weapons, which has long been deemed morally unacceptable, but of their mere possession. In a letter welcoming participants to a November 2017 Vatican conference on "integral disarmament," Pope Francis wrote, "If we . . . take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of [nuclear weapons'] use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned."

Nuclear weapons, the pope said, "create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity."

ACTION

1. Be informed so you can help raise awareness and educate others.
2. Learn about the nuclear installations in your area.
3. Engage governmental representatives negotiating on nuclear issues.
4. Oppose the investment of hundreds of billions of dollars in modernizing nuclear weapons systems that, ultimately, we must work to dismantle.