

# **Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: A Leadership Challenge for the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S President**

## ***A Statement Addressed to Presidential Candidates***

We the undersigned persons from the faith community believe that the time is long overdue to seek the global elimination of nuclear weapons. The 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, who takes office on January 20, 2009, will have an opportunity to provide creative leadership to move decisively in this direction. Therefore, we ask persons who are considering a run for the presidency in 2008 to seriously consider the following ideas.

### **Our Concerns**

We reaffirm the findings of numerous religious bodies<sup>1</sup> that *nuclear weapons are inherently immoral*. As weapons of mass destruction, their use would kill thousands, possibly millions, of innocent people and would ravage the environment. We also note that respected military leaders have stated that nuclear weapons have no legitimate military utility. Scientists and civilian leaders from around the globe want nuclear weapons eliminated. This goal reflects the highest aspiration of humankind.

We are concerned that people in the United States face *nuclear danger* from two sources:

- Nuclear material or weapons smuggled into the United States by terrorists.
- Accidental attack from the Russian nuclear arsenal.

People elsewhere, especially in the Middle East and Asia, also face the risk of nuclear war.

Because the nuclear danger is global, *solutions must be international*. In both the short- and long-term the United States will gain greater security by joining other nations to (a) eliminate nuclear weapons on a mutual basis with adequate verification and (b) safeguard nuclear bomb material to prevent acquisition by persons of malevolent intent.

### **Commitment Requested**

We ask candidates for the presidency to make a commitment to work vigorously to reduce nuclear danger and to make substantial progress toward the global elimination of nuclear weapons if elected president. Among measures to support are the following:

#### **(1) Reaffirm support for international approaches.**

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an essential instrument for reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear danger. We believe that the next president should:

- Reaffirm solid U.S. support for the NPT.
- Work with other nations to strengthen the NPT.
- Support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and seek to expand its authority to inspect and safeguard nuclear facilities around the globe.

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, go to <http://www.zero-nukes.org/religiousstatements1.html>.

## **(2) Prevent terrorists and hostile states from obtaining nuclear weapons.**

In cooperation with other nations the United States should work vigorously to prevent terrorist organizations and non-nuclear states from obtaining nuclear bomb material or developing nuclear weapons. Specifically:

- Accelerate the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Nunn-Lugar) designed to secure vulnerable weapons and materials in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. Complete this task by the end of 2010.
- Provide leadership to complete a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.
- Encourage and support international diplomatic initiatives to curtail nuclear weapon programs of North Korea, Iran, and any other state with nuclear ambitions.

## **(3) Prevent nuclear attack on the United States from afar.**

Although the Cold War is long over, the United States and Russia retain vast nuclear arsenals with thousands of warheads on hair-trigger alert. The next president should:

- Quickly work out an executive agreement with the Russian president to take all missiles off hair-trigger alert, to be achieved within one year with adequate verification.
- Strengthen the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty of 2002 by (a) adding verification measures, (b) requiring missiles and warheads taken out of service to be dismantled, (c) changing the goal to no more than 200 strategic warheads in service by the end of 2012, and (d) making the treaty permanent.
- Make permanent START I (due to expire in 2008).
- Seek mutual elimination of all tactical nuclear weapons.

## **(4) Work with other nations to achieve nuclear disarmament.**

The United States should engage in negotiations with other states possessing nuclear weapons for their elimination. To lead by example, the United States should:

- Along with other nations maintain the moratorium on testing of nuclear weapons
- Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- Cease development of new nuclear weapons.
- Reverse the current policy of threatened preventive use of nuclear weapons.

To deal with the political and military context of nuclear weapons, the United States should work with other nations to:

- Promote peace processes in the Middle East that seek security for all.
- Encourage peaceful resolution of India-Pakistan rivalry.

## **Conclusion**

We recognize that this is an ambitious agenda. But we believe that is achievable through effective presidential leadership and support from the Congress. We in the faith community affirm that we will promote this agenda and develop public support for it.