

December 21, 2018

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Re: The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We, the undersigned, representing all 26 member denominations of The Canadian Council of Churches, write to urge that the Government of Canada support the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Our Call

Our call for the elimination of nuclear weapons is rooted in our belief that the Earth is God's and that all that is in it is under both God's love and judgment. As Pope Francis stated last year, "The threat of their use as well as their very possession is to be firmly condemned." Nuclear weapons "exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race."¹ The World Council of Churches stated "Nuclear weapons cannot indeed be reconciled with real peace. They inflict unspeakable suffering with blast, heat and radiation. They wreak destruction which cannot be bound by space or time. Their power is indiscriminate and their effects cannot be matched by any other device. As long as nuclear weapons exist, they pose a threat to humanity."²

¹ Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the International Symposium "Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament". Clementine Hall. Friday, 10 November 2017.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171110_convegno-disarmointegrale.html

² World Council of Churches Statement towards a Nuclear-free World. 07 July 2014

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/statement-towards-a-nuclear-free-world>

Nuclear arsenals cannot defend against attack nor protect humanity or any part of God's Creation. We believe that to rely on nuclear weapons, to threaten nuclear attack as a foundation for security is ineffective and ethically problematic. Peace needs to be based on justice and on building mutual respect between nations and Peoples.

Canada's Nuclear Policy

We are concerned that Canada continues to embrace the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's nuclear deterrence doctrine as a valid security policy, effectively legitimizing the stockpiling and potential use of nuclear weapons. In the present situation states that possess nuclear weapons are engaging in a multibillion-dollar modernization of their nuclear arsenals, thereby extending their shelf life and indefinitely delaying the goal of complete nuclear disarmament, while diverting money that could be used for other programs into a fruitless enterprise that benefits no one.

The lack of progress toward the elimination of nuclear weapons has led to this new political reality in the nuclear disarmament realm. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bears witness to the widely-held perception that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) does not constitute a sufficiently credible or effective path to abolition.

We appeal to you and the Government to work with allies and to engage would-be adversaries to formulate security arrangements that do not rely on the threat of nuclear annihilation. As a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member, it is Canada's prerogative to raise such issues within the alliance.

This would be consonant with the values of the Government as stated by the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada: *"By definition, the path we choose must be one that serves the interests of all Canadians and upholds our broadly held national values; that preserves and nurtures Canadian prosperity and security; and that contributes to our collective goal of a better, safer, more just, more prosperous, and sustainable world. One we can pass onto our children and grandchildren, with a sense of having done the right thing."*³

³ 6 June 2017. Address by Minister Freeland on Canada's foreign policy priorities.
https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2017/06/address_by_ministerfreelandoncanadasforeignpolicypriorities.html

We Welcome the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

We wish to express our profound concern about Canada's resistance to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Nuclear weapons pose a threat to the existence of life and there is a real risk that they may be used by accident, miscalculation or design. They have a capacity for mass, indiscriminate destruction, with a power so great that it threatens the very existence of the human community and the environment that sustains it. This is what makes the TPNW so important for our world's safety and peace. Therefore, we welcome United Nations resolution 71/258 to convene a conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons and launch the TPNW process as a responsible and peaceful effort to create a more safe and secure world.

Our Persistent Role

As Christian leaders we understand peace to be core to the mission and identity of all the member churches of The Canadian Council of Churches. Peacemaking requires abolishing war and transforming conflict, including eliminating weapons of mass destruction.⁴

In 1982, we wrote to, and met with, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to affirm that "nuclear weapons in any form and in any number cannot ultimately be accepted as legitimate components of national armed forces."⁵ In 1988, we sent the same message to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, stating that "nuclear weapons have no place in national defence policies."⁶ In 1998 we wrote to Prime Minister Chrétien affirming that "We believe it to be an extraordinary affront to humanity for nuclear weapon states and their allies, including Canada, to persist in claiming that nuclear weapons are required for their security."⁷ And in 2010 we wrote to Prime Minister Stephen Harper saying that "We cannot conceive how the use of nuclear weapons could be justified and consistent with the will of God, and we must therefore conclude that nuclear weapons must also be rejected as means of threat or deterrence."⁸

⁴ The Canadian Council of Churches Principles of Peace. Adopted by consensus May 23, 2018.

https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CCC_PrinciplesOfPeace_English.pdf

⁵ 1982. Letter to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on Nuclear Weapons. Archived.

⁶ 1988. Letter to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Archived.

⁷ 18 February 1998. Abolish Nuclear Weapons. https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/1998_Letter.pdf

⁸ 25 June 2010 . A World Without Nuclear Weapons. https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/CCC-Church_Leaders_Letter_on_Nuclear_Disarmament-Final.pdf



On October 26, 2017 the Chair of the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace wrote Minister Freeland to urge Canada to become an early signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons⁹.

Your Role

We submit that Canada's signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons would be a valuable and essential step in supporting collective global action to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We call on you to lead a process leading to Canada's signature and ratification of the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. We would like to request a meeting with you, Prime Minister, to discuss how Canada can play a leading role in eliminating nuclear weapons and to learn more about how people of faith and all people of good will can work for nuclear disarmament.

We wish to assure you and the members of your government of our prayers as you exercise your responsibility to work for peace with justice.

Sincerely,

Rev. Stephen Kendall

President

The Canadian Council of Churches

Cc: The Honourable Andrew Scheer, MP, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Guy Caron, Parliamentary Leader, the New Democratic Party of Canada
Mario Beaulieu, Interim Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Erin O'Toole, Critic for Foreign Affairs, Conservative Party of Canada
Hélène Laverdière, Critic for Foreign Affairs, New Democratic Party

⁹ 6 October 2017. Canada's absence from multilateral process to ban nuclear weapons.

<https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Canadian-Council-of-Churches-Canada%E2%80%99s-absence-from-multilateral-process-to-ban-nuclear-weapons-EN.pdf>

Signatories



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Archbishop and Primate
The Anglican Church of Canada



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Primate of the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church Diocese of Canada



Rev. Robert Ogilvie
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His Eminence Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos
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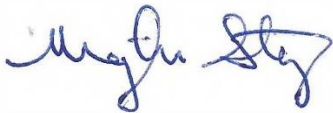
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Diocesan Bishop
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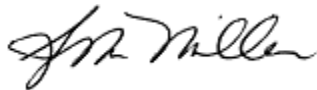
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The Rev. Daniel Cho
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The Presbyterian Church in Canada
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The Right Reverend Dr. Richard Bott
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