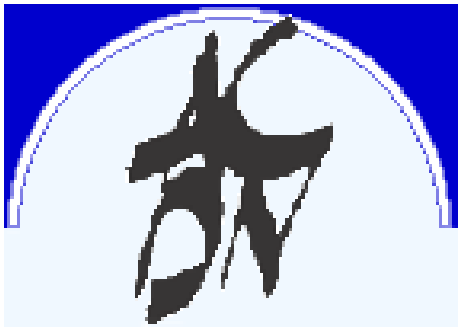
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An Urgent Task: to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

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Donald Trump tweeted early on 21 June that during the night he had ordered the bombing of three Iranian sites, but then cancelled the order 10 minutes before the planes (already airborne) would have reached their targets and would have caused 150 deaths, according to a US general's estimate. Without this last-minute U-turn, what would have happened? A new firestorm in the Middle East? And what then?



Jean-Marie Matagne, Action des citoyens pour le désarmement nucléaire (ACDN).



Jean-Michel Clément | DR

Whatever results from the crisis between the USA and Iran - and the North Korea tensions - one thing is sure: this situation is no longer tolerable. There is no reason for nuclear weapons to be prohibited to some and permitted to others. All must be eliminated. That is the only way to stop them proliferating.

According to their defenders, these arms are said to have "preserved peace by deterrence". Yet since their invention they have not prevented numerous wars, organised massacres, and terrorist attacks (including 9/11) from ravaging the Near and Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, not sparing Europe, and causing more deaths in total than did World War I.

Negotiate to put an end to these weapons

Nuclear weapons are themselves a factor in war. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, provoking the first Gulf War, it was chiefly to finance the acquisition of them. That same desire was attributed to him in 2003 to justify the second Gulf War in 2002... and its dramatic effects are still mounting up. It was the search for "balance of terror" that prompted Khrushchev to install nuclear missiles secretly in Cuba and led humanity "to the brink"in October 1962.

Above all: nuclear arms corrupt international relations, literally. They are weapons of extermination, they threaten the very existence of the Other.

Conversely, to renounce nuclear weapons is to open a new era. In December 1987, Gorbachev and Reagan signed the treaty to eliminate Intermediate Nuclear Forces. It changed the climate. For Reagan the Soviet "Evil Empire"

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became a peaceful and reliable partner. Two years later, with Gorbachev refusing to repeat the Soviet interventions in Berlin (1953) , Budapest (1956) and Prague (1968), the Berlin Wall fell without a shot being fired and the division of Europe into two enemy blocs ended. End of the Cold War. The consequences were easing of tensions and a fall in world military spending by about 1000 billion dollars annually around in the middle of the 1990s. Since then they have risen again, now reaching a new peak - 1820 billion dollars were spent in 2018. (source : SIPRI).

So how can we be rid of nuclear arms? The simple answer is by negotiating their abolition.

The five nuclear nations that signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty - France did in December 1992 - are obligated to do so by its Article VI. Yet they have never met to negotiate their abolition. They have merely spent several long years... just compiling a glossary.

Let's not ask them to disarm unilaterally, because they will refuse. While Russia and China have not said so, France the USA and the UK have explicitly made that clear. Let's just ask them to keep their word. To negotiate among themselves, and also (of course) with the four other states with nuclear weapons but not in the NPT (Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea), for nuclear disarmament that is multilateral, complete, universal and strictly controlled. And to negotiate with the non-nuclear nations for the definitive banning of these weapons, on the grounds of crimes against Humanity.
France can and should initiate these negotiations. And 85% of her citizens want that, according to an IFOP poll of May 2018. So do 30 parliamentarians of a dozen different tendencies - since January 2019 they have been a promoting a Bill aimed at setting up a "shared-initiative" referendum.

We call on all French parliamentarians and citizens to support this Bill. It will permit the French people to open a path to a world without nuclear and radioactive weapons. We cannot live forever on top of a powder-keg.

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Supports from abroad are welcomed

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