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Washington Summit on Nuclear Security

In Washington, Sarkozy is defending France's nuclear deterrence

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According to http://lci.tf1.fr/monde/amerique/2010-04/a-washington-sarkozy-defend-la-dissuasion-nucleaire-francaise-5807737.html" class='spip_out' rel='external'>TF1 News (with agency): « A world free of nuclear weapons: can we share this hope that Barack Obama has outlined? President Nicolas Sarkozy does not think so. On the eve of the Washington Summit, he has reaffirmed during a prime time interview on Channel CBS that France needs nuclear weapons, calling them "guarantees of my country's security" ».

France the Black Sheep of the Nuclear-Armed States

ACDN MEDIA RELEASE

Nicolas Sarkozy had already written to us on 26 March 2007, saying that for him : *« deterrence by nuclear means is the Nation's life-insurance. »* He repeated this just before the first round of the presidential election, in a letter to ACDN dated 18 April 2007. We then called French citizens not to vote for him. However, the very day when Nicolas Sarkozy took office, calling himself « the president of all the French », we requested an interview in order to expound the reasons why, in our view, France ought to negotiate the abandonment of her nuclear strike force, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT, in the context of a process for eliminating all nuclear arsenals.

After that letter dated 10 May, an ACDN delegation was received on 29 June 2007 at the Foreign Ministry, in the section dealing with disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. At that 2-hour meeting the delegation :

* *underlined* the links between proliferation and non-disarmament, and the urgent need, at that time recognised by the British Foreign Minister, to start a general process for nucelar disarmament, in which France could take the initiative ;

* *suggested,* as a first sign of willingness to disarm, that France could suspend the programmes for modernising the nuclear strike force (M51 missiles, ASMP-A, new nuclear warheads, 4th nuclear sub Laser Méga Joule, etc.) ;

* *submitted 120 signatures* of members of international NGOs and American parliamentarians supporting this initiative ;

* *voiced the wish* for a national debate in the Parliament, and a referendum of all citizens on France implementing her undertaking under Article VI of the NPT ;

* *submitted 3000 signatures* for the banning and elimination of munitions containing Depleted Uranium ;

* *requested* that the rights of veterans and civilian victims of nuclear testing be recognised, and of the Gulf War and the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia.

All our documents and arguments were forwarded to the Presdient's office and that of the Foreign Minister.

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To no effect.

On 21 March 2008, President Sarkozy said in a speech given in Cherbourg:

« Deterrence (by nuclear means) remains an absolute imperative. It is a guarantee for our Nation, as for our European neighbours. I will strengthen the political and technical credibility of our arms systems. I am convinced also that it is indispensable for us to maintain two nuclear components, a oceanic one and an airborne one. (...) Guaranteeing our Nation's security carries a considerable cost. The annual budget for nuclear deterrence for the French people equals half the justice budget or half the transport budget. (...) I stand as guarantor of it. France will not lower her guard. »

Today he is persisting with this line. While the US President has taken the lead in a process for abolishing nuclear weapons with support from the UK, Russia and China, France's president uses the pretext of our dangerous world to dig in and hold things back.

"These nuclear arms, guarantees of my nation's security, I will not abandon unilaterally, in a world as dangerous as it is today", he told CBS - though really nobody is asking him to do so « unilaterally ». He affirmed that the possession of nuclear weapons is indispensable for a State to guarantee its security, a view which actually provides a justification to any other states that might want to obtain them for themselves. **What is valid for France is valid for others, including Iran.** By promoting a view, France is contributing to making the world even more dangerous.

On 11 March 2010, we wrote to President Sarkozy requesting that he:

1) commit France, resolutely and without delay to join the other nuclear nations - whether or not they are signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty - in a process leading to the elimination of all nuclear weapons, with strict and effective verification and in the context of a genuine system of international security ; and

2) consult the French people by referendum on the following question:

"Do you wish France to propose to all nations that she renounce her nuclear strike-force and dismantle its component parts, in the context of nuclear, biological and chemical disarmament - comprehensive, universal and verified - and with a genuine system of international security?"

As part of the « Very Last Atom ! » campaign launched by 3 French NGOs (ACDN, Friends of the Earth, World Without Wars or Violence), we call on all French citizens, starting with elected members of the National Assembly, Senate and European Parliament, to express the same demands. With the NPT Review Conference (the 8th quinquennial conference) opening on 3 May in New York, these actions are particularly urgent.

The French people have never been consulted on the question of nuclear weapons and have not even heard them discussed during the election campaigns, not even in the 2007 campaigns. The voters have therefore given nobody a mandate to decide these matters, and no one can claim to be pursuing defense policies chosen by the French people or even by the majority of voters. Before he can speak *« in the name of France and all the French »,* Nicolas Sarkozy must start by asking the people their opinion.

A model letter to be sent by French citizens to the President requesting a referendum is available on the ACDN website www.acdn.net.

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The French original can be read THERE.

Letter (English translation)

- To President Sarkozy

Request for a Referendum

Monsieur le Président,

As a human being, citizen, voter and tax-payer:

I oppose the preparing, threatening and possible committing of a crime against humanity by means of weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear or other kinds.

I reject any plan that could some day make me and my loved ones the accomplices or the victims of such a crime.

I object to the situation where we or other individuals and populations could be condemned to death, without trial or appeal, by one man: yourself or the leader of another nuclear state.

I do not accept that the security of us all should depend on such insecurity, such denial of justice, such defiance of democracy, such inhumanity, and that the committing of such a crime should be determined by you.

Therefore I say no to all nuclear weapons, those of France and those of other countries.

For these reasons, Monsieur le Président, let me humbly request:

1) that you commit France, resolutely and without delay to join the other nuclear nations - whether or not they are signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty - in a process leading to the elimination of all nuclear weapons, with strict and effective verification and in the context of a genuine system of international security ; and

2) that you consult the French people by referendum on the following question:

Do you wish France to propose to all nations that she renounce her nuclear strike-force and dismantle its component parts, in the context of nuclear, biological and chemical disarmament - comprehensive, universal and verified - and with a genuine sytem of international security?

Yours respectfully,

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