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Appeal from Pope Francis, visiting Nagasaki and Hiroshima: "Rid us of these criminal weapons!"

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Speaking in Nagasaki, he said:

"Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction, or the threat of total annihilation... The possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed they seem always to thwart it. Our world is marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust... a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary."

Speaking in Hiroshima, he said:

"The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home. The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, as is the possession of atomic weapons.

We will be judged on this. Future generations will rise to condemn our failure if we spoke of peace but did not act to bring it about among the peoples of the earth. How can we speak of peace even as we build terrifying new weapons of war?"

This call is not new. Pope Francis said the same thing when he wrote to the Vienna conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, for its opening in December 2014:

"Nuclear deterrence and the threat of assured mutual destruction cannot form the basis of an ethic of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states..."

To spend resources on nuclear weapons is to waste the wealth of nations... the desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest wishes of the human heart... This desire can never be satisfied by military means alone, and certainly not by the possession of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction..."

"Peace needs to be built on justice, socio-economic development, freedom, respect for fundamental human rights, the participation of all in public affairs and the establishment of confidence between peoples... A world without nuclear weapons is a goal shared by all nations, repeated by world leaders, and is the aspiration of millions of men and women. The future and the very survival of the human family rest on building on this ideal and ensuring that it becomes a reality."

« I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity deeply rooted in the human heart will bear fruit thanks to concrete means for guaranteeing that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, for the benefit of our common home... It is my great hope that this responsibility will inspire our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament, for a world without nuclear weapons is truly possible."

But those declarations were not mentioned at the time in the French press, which still today dates the Holy See's position back to 2017 at most, to the nuclear Ban Treaty. Five years after Vienna, will the pope's views finally break through the wall of silence which hitherto have protected France's so-called "deterrence" from popular contestation and control - and which have helped it to proliferate despite being absurd, costly, incoherent and criminal?

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In reality, despite this code of silence, the great majority of France's French people share the Pope's views: 85 % of them (IFOP poll 2018) want France to participate in the abolition of nuclear and radioactive weapons, and to engage with all the states concerned in the negotiations necessary to eliminate them. (1)

Now it is over to the France's bishops to ensure that the Pope's voice is heard in France, and over to the parliamentarians to enable the people to state their collective wish clearly on the subject, by referendum.

Over forty MPs and Senators belonging to a dozen parliamentary groups have now signed a Bill aimed at organising this referendum. (2)

They are calling on their colleagues to join them. The voters have begun to do the same. To abolish nuclear weapons is a moral and judicial obligation and a question of survival. To consult the citizens is a democratic imperative.

(1) Poll IFOP/ACDN, May 2018

(2) Sophie Auconie, Jean-Félix Acquaviva, Esther Benbassa, Justine Benin, Eric Bocquet, Moetai Brotherson, Alain Bruneel, Marie-George Buffet, André Chassaigne, Jean-Michel Clement, Laurence Cohen, Yves Daniel, Pierre Dharreville, Olivier Falorni, Michelle Gréaume, Nadine Grelet-Certenais, Sébastien Jumel, Claudine Kauffmann, Mansour Kamardine, Jacques Krabal, Joël Labbé, Bernard Lalande, François Michel Lambert, Jérôme Lambert, Jean-Paul Lecoq, Paul Molac, Jean-Philippe Nilor, Pierre Ouzoulias, Bertrand Pancher, Hervé Pellois, Christine Pirès Beaune, Loïc Prud'homme, Christine Prunaud, Sabine Rubin, Fabien Roussel, Maina Sage, Gabriel Serville, Bénédicte Taurine, Jean-Claude Tissot, Michèle Victory, Hubert Wulfranc.