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War in Ukraine, war in Gaza, terrorism, nuclear threats,
a ravaged planet...

Can we make peace in the shadow of atom bombs?

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Crimes against Humanity are thus defined in Article 6c of statute of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal: "assassination, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and any other inhuman act committed against any civilian population, before or during a war, or persecution for political, racial or religious motives..." It adds: "The leaders, organisers, provocateurs or accomplices who have taken part in elaborating or executing a concerted plan or plot to commit any one of the crimes defined above are responsible for all the acts committed by all the persons carrying out the plan."

To murder civilians - men, women, children, old folk - to take hostages, to machine-gun a rave party, to kill hundreds of young people celebrating, **that is horrible and totally unacceptable**. Such acts, clearly planned, are not acts of war, they are not even "just" war crimes, they are **crimes against humanity**. To bomb methodically an overpopulated strip of land and make victims of thousands among the enclosed population, that too is a crime against humanity, and **equally unacceptable**.

And to threaten to annihilate cities with nuclear weapons, that amounts to promising to commit a monstrous crime that would place its agents outside the pale of humanity, as was affirmed by the UN in its resolution 1653 XVI of 24 November 1961.

And what are nuclear weapons capable of doing, apart from such mass crimes?

NATO's atom bombs did not prevent Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine on 24 February 2022, or his troops from subsequently committing numerous war crimes. His bombs, on the contrary, encouraged him to think he was omnipotent and to trample on Russia's commitment to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and frontiers (Budapest memorandum of 5 Decmeber 1994).

Simiarly, Israel's nuclear weapons did not prevent Hamas from attacking Israel and committing the horrible crimes of 7 October 2023. Nor did they prevent Israel from committing similar crimes against the civilians of Gaza. On the contrary, they have incited Israel to believe it has permission to do anything and to flout for decades the Oslo Accords and UN resolutions concerning a just and sustainable solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

France's nuclear arms, which do not deter any terrorist, are similarly useless if a conventional attack was launched from a country also possessing them. To use them against such an attacker as a "final warning", would just provoke a nuclear retaliation. To use them to avenge a nuclear attack, would be provoking our annihilation. These weapons are both criminal and suicidal.

They are "fundamentally dangerous, extraordinarily expensive, militarily ineffective and morally indefensible", according to US General Lee Butler, former chief of the Strategic Air Command (1992). Far from ensuring world order, they maintain chaos by presenting the destruction of the Other as a final and dominant principle. They threaten our very existence, as individuals and as a species. We are on the edge of the abyss, and a policy of threatening to commit crimes against humanity to avenge crimes against humanity will certainly not draw us back from the brink.

The atom bomb is the quintessence and the "godmother" of the violence of this world. It is high time to get rid of them. **Yes, but how?** That is the question we face and must resolve at the risk of collective death. Besides, we need to gather our strength to face the ecological catastrophes. **The debate is urgent**. Let us begin it.