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Human Rights and Nonviolence - Basis for a Nonkilling World

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Dear Friends,

I am very happy to be here with you all. I would like to thank Bertrand Delanoë, the Mayor of Paris, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Walter Veltroni for their invitation to this Summit.

It seems to me that we can only have a world without violence, based on a culture of human rights and nonviolence. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, are important documents which set out basic Rights which are universal and indivisible for all the human family. The ongoing work to produce the trilogy to these first two Documents, the International Convention on Human Rights (1) by 2015 deserves all our support.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the UDHR and since its inception there has been an increased awareness of our human rights, and responsibilities. However, sadly this last couple of decades have seen an increase in abuse of Human Rights by both State and Non-state actors. In the name of National Security and with a Policy of 'War on Terrorism' lead by the USA/UK, many Governments have set aside their Human Rights and International Legal Obligations, and used 'violence for violence', 'terror for terror' policies against their own people and foreign Nationals. Such policies by the USA have weakened their moral authority and diluted their ability to give real Leadership in the world. These policies of State terror have in turned fed the anger, fear, despair, of citizens, leading to an increase in militant groups using violence such as suicide bombings, and targeting civilians. The horror of such 'terrorism' came home to the people of Mumbai, in November, when 168 people were killed in terrorist attacks. The murderous attacks of September 11th in New York by violent extremists were horrific events but the response of the USA of 'Terror for terror' made the world a more fearful, dangerous place. Great credit goes to millions of people around the world who united to try to 'Stop the War.' But their voices for dialogue were ignored. These USA/UK's genocidal wars, invasions and occupation of Afghanistan, and Iraq, caused over a million deaths, 90% civilians (mostly women and children) and were 'war crimes' and 'crimes against humanity'. So too was Russia's genocidal bombing of Chechnya. The list of violent atrocities carried out by allegedly civilized people is long, such as in Congo, Darfur, Zimbabwe, etc. Surely the lesson to be learned is that violence begets violence, and we have to start using Nonviolence and uphold human rights, if we are to get peace. It is not possible to have wars, invasions, occupations nor militant violence/armed struggles and at the same time uphold human rights and international Law! The alternative to violence is nonviolence and it does work. We must remove from Governments their right to kill on our behalf, and challenge them to recognize nonviolence as a serious political science, using it as a way to solve problems, and build peace. We must abolish war as an institution insisting on unconditional, all inclusive dialogue to solve problems.

Article 4 - UDHR states everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. Article 13 of the Nobel Charter for a world without violence affirms this right when it says 'we have right not to be killed and a responsibility not to kill others'. Albert Camus, the French Philosopher, posed what he called the great political question of our time: 'Do you or do you not, directly or indirectly, want to be killed or assaulted? Do you, or do you not directly or indirectly want to kill or assault?' Camus said that its necessary to understand what fear means: 'Fear implies and rejects the same fact: a world where murder is legitimate and where human life is considered trifling'. As for his questions, he says 'All who say No to both these questions are automatically committed to a series of consequences which must modify their way of posing problems'. And he said, you have to know your position on this before you can deal with other issues. We are challenged first to disarm our mindset, and to challenge our Governments to find non-violent solutions to problems, instead of resorting to murder of our brothers and sisters, in this our interconnected, inter-dependent world.

One of our basic Human rights is freedom from want and the right to security.

It is increasingly recognized we need to develop a broader concept of Human security, which is primarily concerned

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with people, not Governments and States. Factors necessary for Human security include food, shelter, health care, (physical and mental), and personal safety and security. The Millennium Development Project recognized these basic needs and has set out Goals in order to meet them. However, it is only by Governments re-prioritizing their goals and diverting funds from military budgets to Poverty, education, health care, environment, that a real difference can be achieved. To provide human security we need a Nonviolent Common Security policy for Europe and the world. The framework of a non-violent Common Security policy would include international measures to ensure peace, justice and the integrity of creation with special focus in the immediate future on the developing world, where to all our shame, children die unnecessarily of preventable diseases and hunger.

Currently in Europe, and elsewhere, many Government resources are being put into the military approach and few into alternative Nonviolent Security approaches.

I believe we should replace NATO with a Nonviolent European Common security Community. Establish the same in other world regions (as the USA Imperial power is decreasing, and the world is becoming increasingly regionalized) and also an overall Global Nonviolent Common security Community. It is time to dismantle NATO (this should have been done when the Warsaw Pack was dismantled) as it has no role. NATO (US is NATO) whose member states include Nuclear weapons States, such as USA, UK, France, and who maintain Nuclear strike First Use Option, are indeed a danger to the world. The USA has Nuclear Weapons in 6 states in Europe, and as USA, UK are updating their nuclear weapons they are endangering the Nuclear Non proliferation treaty and ignoring their commitments to disarmament. Steps should include 1) Remove all US Nuclear weapons from Europe and US missile defence installations from the Russian border. 2) France/UK/USA/Israel/Russia and all other nuclear states abolish nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

The money spent on nuclear weapons would be better spent on alternative sustainable energy and would help protect the environment and produce jobs. It would be an inspiration to many if France would give Nonviolent Leadership and move to abolish its nuclear weapons.

Armies: I believe in transforming our culture of war and militarism into a Culture of nonkilling, we need to abolish armies (as has already been done in Costa Rica) and instead establish multi-national community unarmed peacekeepers.

Similar non-violent transformation and training could be used in police, prison and Security establishments.

If we are serious about peace, then the occupation and wars of Iraq and Afghanistan by the USA and NATO must be ended and a Marshall Plan of financial assistance offered to help these Governments and their people to rebuild and reconstruct their countries.

Last month I visited Gaza and have been shocked to witness the depth of suffering of the people under an economic blockade by the Israel Government. Gaza is the largest Ghetto/Prison in the world but it is even worse than a prison as the people have little food, medicines, and are completely cut off from the world with Israeli Government holding all the keys to the prison. This Israeli Government's policy of collective punishment of one and a half million people in Gaza (for over 2 years now) is breaking the Geneva convention. It is barbaric, cruel and inhumane and yet the UK, UN, EU and American Governments continue, for the most part, to remain silent, and indeed connive with this inhumanity by shamefully allowing this punishment of the Palestinians to continue, and rewarding the Israeli Government with funding and special status (USA gives 10 million dollars a day unconditionally to Israel, much of which is spent on the military occupation and repression of Palestinians). Also the continued occupation of Palestine, the Israeli building of illegal settlements, and the establishment of a racist apartheid system, means the Israeli Government is breaking all International Laws. In Palestine/Israel there is a political solution to this political problem, and through ceasefires by all parties, and serious dialogue, (including with Hamas) peace is possible. But the USA Government needs to change its policy of supporting Israel only and give fair hearing to the Palestinians who

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passionately want peace and justice, based on Human Rights and International Laws. The United Nations has a responsibility to act and should, I believe, suspend EU membership of the Israeli Government until it lifts the Siege, and meets with its Legal obligations under UN Resolutions (64 to date, including the Right to Return of Palestinians refugees, which Israel continues to ignore). I myself support the Boycott/Investment/Divestment movement against Israel until it meets its International commitments to democracy and human rights.

I am very hopeful for the future. I know there are so many people, both here, and around the world, working for change, that indeed change will come. We know now we are the interconnected, interdependent, human family. Like all families we will have difficulties and differences, but we know too that violence is not the way and in the final analysis we have to learn to live together, so love will find a way.

Peace and happiness to you all,

Mairead Maguire, 12th December, 2008

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