



Pacific Conference of Churches

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7th July, 2020

The Honourable Prime Minister of Australia and Leader of the Opposition:

Warm greetings from the Pacific Conference of Churches!

On behalf of the 30 member churches and 9 national councils of churches across 18 countries and territories, and representing 80 percent of the Pacific Christian community, I write to affirm the call of religious organisations and faith groups across the land now called Australia, who, with one voice, are urging the Australian Government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I write this letter to you on the 3rd Anniversary of the Treaty by the United Nations and as one of your Pacific sister nations, Fiji, prepares to deposit its instrument of ratification, the Fiji Parliament having unanimously approved the ratification on 28th of May this year.

The Pacific Conference of Churches has been calling for a total ban on nuclear weapons since 1975 and has consistently advocated for this, most recently at its 11th General Assembly in 2018.

The people and environment of the Pacific have suffered as the guinea pigs for the proliferation of nuclear weapons. These experiments designed to secure world domination were undertaken by the United States which held 109 tests in the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Johnson Atoll, Alaska and in the open ocean;¹ the United

¹ Reported and verifiable tests by the USA: 66 atomic and hydrogen tests in Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, 24 tests in Kiritimati island in Kiribati, 12 tests in Johnson Atolls, 3 underground tests in Alaska, 4 in the open ocean. (Source: WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs meeting in Brisbane, Australia, February, 2020).

Kingdom/Great Britain which held 21 tests in Australia and Kiribati²; and France which held 340 tests in Maohi Nui/French Polynesia.³

To put the impact of these tests in scale – the uranium fuelled atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima had a blast equal to 12-15,000 tons of TNT, destroying five square miles of the city. The subsequent tests in the Pacific in the 50 years following the end of World War 2 from 1946 to 1996 by the US, UK and France is the equivalent to “9,010 Hiroshima bombs” or between 108 to 135 kilotonnes – 108,000 to 135,000 tonnes of TNT. ⁴

The failure of the nuclear powers to disarm has heightened the risk of other countries acquiring nuclear weapons. The only guarantee against the spread and use of nuclear weapons is to eliminate them without delay. Although the leaders of some nuclear-armed nations have expressed their vision for a nuclear-weapon-free world, they have failed to develop any detailed plans to eliminate their arsenals and are modernising them.

Their impact on the fragile ecology of the region and the health and mental wellbeing of its peoples has been profound and long-lasting. Pacific Islanders continue to experience epidemics of cancers, chronic diseases and congenital abnormalities as a result of the radioactive fallout that blanketed their homes and the vast Pacific Ocean, upon which they depend for their livelihoods.

Despite being the most destructive, inhumane weapons ever invented, nuclear weapons are the only “weapons of mass destruction” that are not yet banned under international law. (Chemical and biological weapons are both banned internationally.)

Who controls nuclear weapons is of no consequence – they are no good for the Pacific, they are no good for the World.

Today, portions of the Pacific stretching from Enewetak in the North to Kiritimati in the Central Region and Moruroa in the East remain not only uninhabitable but gradually leak toxic effluent into an ocean which is the food source of the region and the fishing ground of the world.

Today, three quarters of a century after the Bikini Atoll test by the United States, the people of that once beautiful coral paradise remain displaced or physically scarred.

² Reported and verifiable tests by the UK: 12 tests and 600 “minor trials” such as the testing of bomb components and the burning of plutonium, uranium and other nuclear materials in Monte Bello Islands, Maralinga and Emu Field in Australia and 9 atomic and hydrogen tests on Malden and Kiritimati islands in Kiribati. (Source: WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs meeting in Brisbane, Australia, February, 2020).

³ Reported and verifiable tests by France: 193 atmospheric tests and 147 underground tests on Moruroa and Fangataufa. (Source: WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs meeting in Brisbane, Australia, February, 2020).

⁴ Source: WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs meeting in Brisbane, Australia, February, 2020.

Servicemen from Fiji, New Zealand and the UK and their descendants battle the illnesses caused by exposure to radiation from hydrogen bomb tests from 1957 to 1958.

And in Maohi Nui – French Polynesia – a quarter of a century after France terminated its nuclear testing programme, the people continue to cry for justice, for compensation, for medical treatment as waste slowly but surely leeches into the sea. Currently there are strong indicators of an imminent collapse of Morurua Atoll, which will cause the remaining radioactive substances from the French tests to spill into the Pacific Ocean.

Hon. Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, I urge you to listen to hear the cries of our Pacific communities who struggle to sing the Lord's song as songs of freedom and justice in their own land. These cries are not only for the people but for the land and sea of which the Pacific people are a part.

We firmly believe that God created the world in which we live as a means to sustain mankind – to provide life through water, air food and shelter.

Today we renew that call.

The world must end any possibility of nuclear war; there must be no chance of even one weapon being ever detonated again.

The Pacific must have justice and reparation for its forced role in nuclear testing.

And that justice must take place now.

The Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati New Zealand, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu have signed and ratified the treaty, while Nauru and Tuvalu have signed but are yet to ratify.

In the name of peace, justice and abundant life, please take this small step for Australia and a giant step closer to a world without nuclear weapons.

May the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you all who call Australia home. Vinaka vakalevu.

In Peace,



James Shri Bhagwan (Rev)
General Secretary