

WORLDWIDE PEACE GROUPS URGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES TO TAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OFF

Written by John Hallam

Monday, 06 December 2010 16:20 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 February 2015 22:27

WORLDWIDE PEACE GROUPS URGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES TO TAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OFF ALERT

Abolition 2000, the global umbrella group of over 2000 peace and nuclear disarmament groups worldwide who seek the abolition of nuclear weapons, has written to the heads of every country that has a nuclear weapons capability, urging them to move to as low an operational status for those nuclear weapon systems as possible as a first step to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the implementation of a global nuclear weapons convention that would provide a legal framework permanently outlawing nuclear weapons.

According to Abolition2000 spokespeople Dominique Lalanne of France, John Hallam of Australia, and Manuel Padilla of the USA, 'There have been over the years a number of incidents involving especially US and Russian nuclear weapons systems in which it is not an exaggeration to say that the end of the world has been potentially minutes away. We've been saved by a cool Russian colonel who didn't press a red button, by an aide to President Yeltsin who said 'excuse me mr President let's wait another minute' and by a US minuteman launch control officer who as a practice launch sequence turned into the real thing and wouldn't stop, ordered heavy military vehicles driven on top of silo doors.

We can't keep on in effect relying on divine intervention to save us from the consequences of our own stupidity. Nuclear weapons need to be taken off quick launch status and we need to redouble our efforts to abolish them."

The letter has been sent to Presidents, as well as prime ministers, foreign ministers and secretaries of state and UN diplomatic missions in the US, Russia, France, the UK, China, the DPRK, India, Pakistan, and Israel.

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The letter below, drafted by a working group of Abolition 2000 including Michael Padilla, John Hallam, Steve Starr, Dominique Lalanne, Alyn Ware and Alice Slater, has been faxed to the heads of state and other key decisionmakers (prime ministers, foreign ministers, UN missions) of the USA, Russia, France, the UK, China, India, Pakistan, the DPRK, and Israel, at the following fax numbers:

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Dear President,

Perhaps most dangerous aspect of today's nuclear arsenals are the many thousands of nuclear weapons which remain on high-alert, launch-ready status. There is strong international agreement, shown by the overwhelming support in the General Assembly that "Calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to take measures to reduce the risk of an accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons and to also consider further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security".

The international community, including the leaders of States possessing nuclear weapons, has recognised that any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic consequences - and

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thus a practice and norm of non-use has developed.

However, as the leader of a State in possession of nuclear weapons, you have the possibility to initiate a nuclear war at any time. With more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world, a nuclear first-strike can start a chain reaction that would end in a nuclear holocaust. Recent scientific studies tell us that the detonation of even 1% of the operational nuclear arsenals during a conflict would cause grave changes in the climate and ecology of the Earth; a large nuclear war would end human existence.

Thus, the operational and deployed nuclear arsenals of the States possessing nuclear weapons and the continued policies providing for possible use in a wide range of circumstances, represent a self-destruct mechanism for humanity. It only takes a single failure of nuclear deterrence to trigger global nuclear suicide.

Yet, as the leader of a Nuclear Weapon State, you can choose to act now to prevent such an ultimate catastrophe. We urge you to issue a Presidential Decree which forbids the launch of nuclear weapons based only on a tactical or strategic warning of attack (electronic signals from early warning systems, which could be a false warning or represent conventional warheads), and to de-alert your launch-ready nuclear forces, rendering them unable to be used within only a few minutes. Such de-alerting has to be studied for each specific case, but it MUST be accomplished to remove the appalling danger of instant nuclear extinction.

The world is relying on you to find the vision and will to eliminate the danger of accidental nuclear war and reduce international tensions caused by the permanent maintenance of nuclear weapons on high-alert. It is time to stop threatening the nations of the world with instant incineration.

Of course the only way to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used by accident, miscalculation or intent is to prohibit and eliminate them. This truth was self-evident from the moment the weapons were first created - as evidenced by the unanimous call for their elimination in the UN General Assembly's first resolution in 1946.

Until recently, such an aim appeared utopian. However, the political and technical feasibility of nuclear abolition is now apparent from the statements of world leaders, the agreement at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the Five-Point-Plan put forward by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon which includes a draft treaty (Model Nuclear Weapons Convention). De-alerting is included as the first step in the phased disarmament program outlined in the Model NWC. Such a de-alerting process, with the official participation of your State, would greatly lower the danger to our world, increase the security of all people, and prepare a new era of sharing a common responsibility for the survival of our planet and species.

We urge you to prohibit launch on warning, de-alert your nuclear weapons and join the process to achieve a global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons under a nuclear weapons convention.