



## Hiroshima and Nagasaki

### Japanese cities devastated by the deadliest of weapons 70 years ago

On 16 July 1945, the first nuclear weapon was tested by the United States in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Less than a month later – on 6 and 9 August 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in Japan, killing more than 100,000 people.

Seventy years after that destruction, many governments still rely on nuclear weapons. In 2014 nine states possessed approximately 15,850 nuclear weapons, of which 4,300 were deployed with operational forces. Roughly 1,800 of those weapons were kept in a state of high operational alert.<sup>1</sup> About 94% of the total of nuclear weapons is held by the USA and the Russian Federation. Those weapons of mass destruction pose an intolerable threat to humanity and our planetary home.

In commemorating this anniversary we should all be listening to the cries of the *hibakushas* – the survivors. Their presence is the most compelling argument that the use of nuclear arms should never happen again. Yet nuclear weapon-possessing states continue to modernize their stocks instead of taking steps towards abolishing them.<sup>2</sup>

In May 2015, at the deeply disappointing 9th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the United Nations, the world watched as the resistance of the nuclear-weapons-states prevailed over numerous states supporting the humanitarian initiative against these weapons.<sup>3</sup>

Nuclear weapons programmes' use of public funds is grotesque. It is estimated that world governments will spend about US \$1 trillion on nuclear weapons over the next 10 years. Modernising nuclear weapons defies logic when human and environmental needs cry out for funds.

*"Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price."* (Pope Francis, 7 December 2014)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/2015/yb-june-2015>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2014\\_05/Nuclear-Weapons-Modernization-A-Threat-to-the-NPT](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2014_05/Nuclear-Weapons-Modernization-A-Threat-to-the-NPT)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/all-eyes-on-the-humanitarian-initiative\\_2677.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/all-eyes-on-the-humanitarian-initiative_2677.html)

In recent months, especially with the prophetic statements of the Holy See<sup>4</sup> revoking moral justification for nuclear deterrence and therefore for the design, development or possession of nuclear weapons, wide circles of civil society are increasingly asking their governments a basic question: "Why are nuclear weapons still legal when all other weapons of mass destruction are banned?" An international outcry for a total ban on nuclear weapons is growing and many Pax Christi member organisations are deeply involved.<sup>5</sup>

The humanitarian initiative is a new call to take decisive steps towards a world without nuclear weapons. It signals a fundamental shift in response to the urgent demands of a large percentage of the world's population who would be the first victims of a nuclear accident.

Communities should reflect on the morality of nuclear weapons, the role that ethics can play in abolishing nuclear weapons, and the peace-making power of religious leadership and action. Ethics based on the threat of mutually assured destruction are not worthy of future generations. Nuclear weapons are in essence inhumane and unethical. Only an ethic rooted in solidarity and peaceful coexistence is a worthy project for the future of humanity.

*"Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states."* (Pope Francis, 7 December 2014)

Brussels, August 2015

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<sup>4</sup> See "Nuclear Weapons: Time for Abolition," Vienna, December 2014 - <http://www.paxchristi.net/news/world-without-nuclear-weapons-possible-holy-see-takes-leading-role-abolishing-nuclear-weapons#sthash.93CePCLS.dpbs>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.icanw.org/why-a-ban/positions/>