

ICAN Briefing for Faith Based & Community Organisations

How to work on the promotion of nuclear disarmament and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in my community

Why should my faith community work on this issue now?

On 7 July 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons was adopted by 122 States, filling a significant legal gap in the legal international framework on the control of nuclear weapons. This new treaty strengthens the global norms against, manufacturing, using and possessing these weapons and will spur long-overdue progress towards nuclear disarmament. Religious leaders' contribution to a world free of nuclear weapons is recognized in the preamble of the treaty. The involvement of faith communities through reference to their holy books and teachings provide a moral and ethical argument for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons](#)¹ (ICAN) has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 in recognition of our work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and our role in achieving the Treaty. ICAN is a coalition of non-governmental organizations in one hundred countries promoting adherence to and implementation of the United Nations nuclear weapon ban treaty. The call for nuclear disarmament has grown internationally at all levels (diplomatic, expert, civil society, faith communities / institutions and public opinion) and it is therefore more important than ever to use this historical moment and join all efforts to further reshape the debate on nuclear weapons and generate momentum towards their elimination.

On November 10-11, 2017, the Holy See organized [the first international conference](#)² after the adoption of the Nuclear Ban Treaty, convening hundreds of religious leaders, Nobel Peace Prize laureates and civil society representatives from around the world to maintain the momentum of achieving a world free from nuclear weapons. In his exhortation to the gathered leaders, Pope Francis openly denounced the continuing possession of nuclear weapons by various world governments. This has been a great inspiration for all communities to build further on the momentum towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Further, Pope Francis noted that “the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights, are relegated to second place”. As religious and faith leaders and communities we have a duty to protect the sanctity of life and protect the environment that sustains us, the existence of nuclear weapons is a constant threat to these goals. The Treaty is an opportunity to change the course of our future generations.

“ **Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.** ”

*Pope Francis, 10 November 2017
[cf. Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, 27 March 2017]*

How can we contribute?

An upcoming historical opportunity for all us is the **second Sunday in Advent, December 10, 2017**. This is also the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (**Human Rights Day**). On the same day, ICAN Hiroshima survivor and ICAN campaigner Setsuko Thurlow, together with ICAN's executive director, Beatrice Fihn, will **accept the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on 10 December** on behalf of the campaign.

This is a great opportunity to promote and advocate for the nuclear ban treaty within our own faith communities and beyond.

¹ www.icanw.org

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171110_convegno-disarmointegrale.html

Take action

Here are some concrete ideas for actions in the running up to and on December, 10, 2017, itself:

NOW | Start the dialogue and spread the message

- Join the World Council of Churches (WCC) [“A Light of Peace” campaign](#)³ for the Korean Peninsula and for a world free from nuclear weapons. On the first Sunday in Advent (3 December) the WCC invites the global Christian fellowship to express solidarity for the Korean people and to support efforts to ease tensions and sustain hope. By lighting candles during special prayers and worship services two Sundays in a row, people in many nations from many faith traditions can unify and amplify voices of peace.
- Use the story of [atomic bomb survivor Setsuko](#)⁴, Reaching Critical Will's publication [Unspeakable Suffering: The Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons](#)⁵ and the introduction of [ICAN/ Religions for Peace Treaty Negotiations Handbook](#)⁶ for a dialogue on the moral imperatives against the use or possession of nuclear weapons
- Use the words of Beatrice Fihn⁷ and Pope Francis⁸ on nuclear disarmament and the Nuclear Ban Treaty as an inspiration for your own
- Facilitate sermons and /or teachings on your respective day of prayer to call for peace and highlight the moral and ethical imperatives for a nuclear free world
- Keep your community informed about the [latest developments](#)⁹ of the Nuclear Ban Treaty
- Invite a local ICAN partner to speak about the Nuclear Ban Treaty
- Write an op-ed on behalf of your community and call upon your government to sign and ratify the Nuclear Ban Treaty (use the [interfaith statement](#)¹⁰ delivered during the UN negotiations on the Nuclear Ban Treaty as an inspiration)
- Adopt a politician: Find local and national politicians who are part of your community and ask them to openly support ICAN's message by signing the [ICAN Parliamentary Pledge](#)¹¹

10 DECEMBER | Unite in light of Sunday in Advent, Human Rights Day & Nobel Peace Prize

- Unite as a faith community on your day of prayer on December 8, 9 or 10, in light of second Sunday in Advent, UN Human Rights Day and the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to ICAN to pray for success in nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons
- Organize an interfaith celebratory event on December 10, in light of second Sunday in Advent, UN Human Rights Day and the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to ICAN
- Set up a livestream to the official ceremony in Oslo after the prayer or during the celebratory event
- Use the story of atomic bomb survivor Setsuko, and words of Beatrice Fihn and Pope Francis as an inspiration for your own
- Invite local, national and/or international leaders of your community
- Invite your partners and other communities
- Invite your mayor and (local) politicians
- Send out a press release and invite local press

³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/a-light-of-peace-for-the-korean-peninsula-and-a-world-free-from-nuclear-weapons>

⁴ <http://www.icanw.org/setsuko-thurlow/>

⁵ <http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Unspeakable.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Handbook.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.icanw.org/action/nobel-peace-prize-2017-2/>

⁸ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171110_convegno-disarmointegrale.html

⁹ <http://www.icanw.org/the-treaty/>

¹⁰ http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/nuclear-weapon-ban/statements/28March_FaithCommunities.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.icanw.org/projects/pledge/>