

The Total Illegality of Nuclear Weapons and The Imperative Need for Their Abolition

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It gives much pleasure to send a message to the Peace and Planet Conference, held by civil society on the eve of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Never since the human race evolved has it faced a danger so devastating to all its past achievements and so destructive of its future expectations as it faces today. Thousands of weapons are today assembled in the arsenals of the world, each of which, even by itself, is fraught with greater peril to all humanity and to future generations than all the brutality of all the weapons cumulatively used in the wars of past centuries. The cruelty of all the tyrants of the past pales into insignificance in comparison with the proven cruelty of the nuclear weapon.

Yet, the legal professions of the world, the governments of the world, the religious assemblies of the world, the educational systems of the world and the general public of the world, who should be crying out from the rooftops for the immediate abolition of the weapon, are not even heard in the corridors of power.

It is amazing that this danger should have continued not merely to exist but also to expand in intensity through nearly three generations after the brutality of the weapon was demonstrated to all the world through its use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We, who should now be at the very apex of human civilization, seem on the contrary to be ready at a moment's notice to plunge all humanity into the very depths of brutality.

This is what the nuclear weapon means to every citizen on planet earth and every citizen who will inhabit the planet for a thousand generations to come. Future generations, whose inherent rights to health and a pure environment are being trampled under-foot by our generation, would raise their hands in disbelief that a weapon of such known brutality should have been permitted to remain on the planet. They would be even more shocked to know that these weapons were permitted to increase in intensity through three generations, and even more surprisingly through three generations during which human rights and the rights of future generations have been the subject of much attention.

The next time a nuclear weapon is used it will not be on a helpless target, with no possibility of retaliation. In a world of multiple conflicts, of proliferation of nuclear weapons, of

burgeoning terrorist movements, of spreading knowledge regarding their manufacture, of easy availability of raw materials and of a plenitude of funds for this purpose, the need for control and elimination of nuclear weapons is a thousand times greater than it was in the days of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Moreover, when the weapons start flying in both directions, all scientific studies make it patently clear that a nuclear winter will result, blotting out sunlight from large sections of the planet, devastating crops, depriving all humanity of food and reducing human life to the darkness of the Stone Age.

It is remarkable also that world religions and systems of humanitarian thought for thousands of years have condemned the use of hyper-destructive weapons. For example Hinduism, over three thousand years ago, condemned the use of a hyper-destructive weapon which was said to have the potential to ravage the enemy's countryside and decimate its population. The Lateran Council in the twelfth century condemned the use of even the crossbow as being too cruel to be used in warfare. Islamic law condemned even the use of a poisoned arrow.

Humanitarian law has for centuries condemned the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering. Yet, strangely enough, the nuclear weapon defies all these prohibitions and hangs like the sword of Damocles over the entire human race. The Dum-dum bullet which explodes on entering the victim's body was condemned in the 19 century as too cruel to be used amongst civilized nations, yet strangely enough the nuclear weapon persists.

The weapon contradicts every principle of humanitarian law, every principle of international law and every principle of religious teaching. Either its days are numbered or the days of human civilisation are numbered.

It is for us to make the choice.