



Archdiocese of Santa Fe

Office of Communications/Social Media

4000 St. Joseph's Place NW | Albuquerque, NM 87120-1714

Leslie M. Radigan, Director

Voice: 505.831.8180

lradigan@asfnm.org | archdiosf.org

NEWS RELEASE

Statement in Support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons On Its Third Anniversary

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Today marks the third anniversary of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons becoming international law, just like other long-standing treaties that banned chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. This nuclear weapons ban treaty has been signed by 93 countries and ratified by 70. Regrettably, no nuclear weapons powers or their allies have stepped forth to support the treaty, even as the geopolitical climate continues to deteriorate and the risk of nuclear accident, miscalculation, or war increases.

On August 9, 2023, the 78th anniversary of the Nagasaki atomic bombing, we Catholic leaders formally created an enduring partnership to work on nuclear disarmament. Together, our four dioceses include the birthplace of nuclear weapons (the Archdiocese of Santa Fe), the most deployed nuclear weapons in the United States (the Archdiocese of Seattle), and the only two cities that to date have suffered horrendous atomic attacks (the Diocese of Hiroshima and the Archdiocese of Nagasaki). Because of these direct connections to the catastrophic dangers of nuclear weapons, we are compelled to express our unequivocal support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In July 2017, the Vatican was the [first nation-state](#) to sign this treaty. In 2019, at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Pope Francis declared, “The possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral.” He also said at the hypocenter of the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, “We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.”

We note that the nuclear weapons powers have never honored their long-held obligations under the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty (NPT) to enter into serious negotiations leading to global nuclear disarmament. Moreover, the last three NPT Review Conferences, held every five years, have ended in complete failure. In May 2023, we called upon the Group of Seven leaders meeting in Hiroshima to honor these promises and persuade others to do so. However, our message of hope fell upon deaf ears, and we received no response.

In contrast, the [entry into force](#) of the ban treaty in January 2021 was a great step toward the light of peace and brought hope to those who seek a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-armed states have a moral obligation to hear the voices of the majority of the world and to listen to those who are threatened by annihilation at the decision of any one of the nine leaders of the nuclear weapons states. Russia’s nuclear saber-rattling over Ukraine has made this very clear, while the ongoing crisis in the Middle East has further escalated the risks. Meanwhile, the nuclear

weapons powers are engaged in massive “modernization” programs designed to keep nuclear weapons forever.

The international legal force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is limited to those states that have formally ratified the treaty. But its moral power does not recognize boundaries between nations nor lines on a map—the moral power of this treaty is global and universal. It is another historic step on the journey toward hope, toward the light, toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is the duty of our dioceses to support this treaty while working toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament. We lend our voices in strong support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Moreover, we specifically call upon world leaders to demonstrate measurable progress toward nuclear disarmament by the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings. We know the serious negative consequences for humanity are ever-increasing. August 2025 will be a compelling and highly relevant time to hold world leaders accountable for progress made on long-delayed, promised nuclear disarmament.

Please know of our continued prayers for peace, for healing, and for positive action toward nuclear disarmament.

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe, USA

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne
Archbishop of Seattle, USA

Most Reverend Peter Michiaki Nakamura
Archbishop of Nagasaki, Japan

Most Reverend Alexis Mitsuru Shirahama
Bishop of Hiroshima, Japan

Most Reverend Joseph Mitsuaki Takami
Archbishop Emeritus of Nagasaki, Japan