

How we see peace and security

The peace we seek cannot come from weaponry but from a commitment to justice and nonviolent actions which recognise the dignity of every human person and all creation. We reject models of security that rely on fear, the demonisation of others, or on the strength of arms - conventional and nuclear.

Christians **must** have a voice in the public debate which is developing, drawing on the Gospels and the teaching of the Catholic Church, in order to encourage a prophetic challenge to existing and planned Government policy on nuclear weapons and deterrence.

"In view of the risks which humanity is facing in our time, all Catholics in every part of the world have a duty to proclaim and embody ever more fully the 'Gospel of Peace'."

(Pope Benedict XVI, World Peace Day 2006 # 11)

We affirm the sentiments of Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations:

"Nuclear weapons assault life on the planet, they assault the planet itself, and in so doing they assault the process of the continuing development of the planet." (to the 7th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) May 2005)

and the message of Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Easter 2006:

"... now is the time for all men and women of Easter faith, men and women of good will, men and women of peace, to raise our voices. Enter this debate and demand that these weapons of mass destruction be replaced, but not with more weapons. Rather, replace Trident, as the Holy Father has said, with projects that bring life to the poor."

What is being planned

The Government is actively planning to develop and deploy another generation of British nuclear weapons after the existing Trident submarine system is decommissioned some time between 2020 and 2030. (The present system came into force in 1994 - in the form of four Trident missile submarines, each equipped with 16 American-made Trident missiles with multiple warheads - and it is due to be decommissioned within the next 20 years.) Mr Blair, speaking on BBC Newsnight in May 2005 stated "We have got to retain our nuclear deterrent," but who are we deterring and what difference has our possession of a nuclear deterrent made in this era of the so-called 'war on terror'? The cost of the replacement programme will be in the region of billions.

"The time has gone for finding ways to a 'balance of terror'... The Holy See has never countenanced nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure, nor does it today when it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing nuclear disarmament.... Nuclear weapons, even so-called 'low yield' weapons, endanger the processes of life and can lead to extended nuclear conflict."

(Mgr Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's current UN Representative 4 May, 2005)

Failure to act in good faith

In 1997 and 1998 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales issued statements urging the Government to develop a clearer strategy on the international elimination of nuclear weapons and our Government's own goals in particular. This has not been achieved. The failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference and our Government's intention to re-commit Britain to an up-graded nuclear defence policy are just two illustrations of this.

"Because the nuclear weapons States have decisively shown that they consider nuclear weapons permanent instruments of their military doctrine, the Holy See has withdrawn the

limited acceptance it gave to nuclear weapons during the Cold War. In the eyes of the Catholic Church nuclear weapons are evil and immoral and must be eliminated as a precondition to obtaining peace.”

(Hon Douglas Roche, address to the U.S Catholic Bishops' Panel “Ethics, Policy and the Proliferation of WDM”, November 2005)

Our concerns with this model of security

- Trident is immoral, illegal and ineffective for our age. Possession and threatened use of such weapons of mass destruction is an affront to life and a gross misuse of power and status in a fragile world. Nuclear weapons have not and will not bring us security, rather the opposite: they are likely to cause animosity and resentment.
- As an approach to security, the Trident system ties us ever closer to the foreign and defence policies of the United States. In 2004 the British Government renewed the 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement. Within this, the US will continue to keep us supplied with missiles and we continue to be caught in the US-led nuclear forces policy of NATO.
- Within this model of security the Government fails to live up to its existing obligations to disarm under Article VI of the NPT. A programme of replacement would be seen as an act of proliferation. What message does this give to those countries, such as Iran, who are currently being pressured not to develop their own nuclear weapons programmes?

What you can do

- Use information on this leaflet, from the websites listed below or for free the ***Don't Replace Trident*** campaign pack, from Quaker Peace & Social Witness, to help your church community become more informed about this issue. Put information in newsletters and on notice-boards.
- Organise meetings to discuss the implications of these plans for you as a faith community. How do these policies challenge the Christian understanding of security and community? How do they relate to what the Church has to say on peace and security?
- Write to your own MP about the Government's nuclear policy and Trident in particular, using some of the points below.
- Become involved in actions that challenge this replacement programme. Pax Christi is supporting the ***Faslane 365*** project to raise awareness of and disrupt the work at the Trident nuclear base in Faslane, Scotland. Contact us if you would like to join a Pax Christi affinity group. There is also the ***Block the Builders*** campaign at Aldermaston.

We urge

- our Government to take a lead at this time - by not going ahead with a replacement programme and making a commitment to decommission existing nuclear weapons systems - so fulfilling its obligation under Article VI of the NPT to *“pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”*
- our Government to “internationalise” this step by taking a lead in calling for abolition negotiations - based perhaps on the draft nuclear weapons convention lodged with the UN by Costa Rica in 1997. The Canadian Government took a similar lead on the issue of landmines in the 1990s.
- our Government to build on this act of disarmament by committing itself to invest resources, skills and ingenuity in models of security that meet human needs and create just relationships. There could be no better way to fulfil our obligation to *Make Poverty History*.

Useful websites

WMD Awareness Programme:
www.comeclean.org.uk

Quaker Peace & Social Witness:
www.peaceexchange.org.uk

Oxford Research Group:
www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

CND: www.cnduk.org

Faslane 365: www.faslane365.org

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