

October 13, 2022

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Mr. President:

In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin [threatened](#) to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. The United States responded with warnings of “[catastrophic consequences](#)” for such an action. As faith-based organizations, we believe that the possession and use of nuclear weapons cannot be justified and we call for their abolition. We condemn Putin’s recent nuclear threats and remain concerned that an unending cycle of escalation leading to global annihilation is all too possible. We urge you to avoid the path towards mutually assured destruction by resisting pressure to respond with nuclear weapons if Moscow takes the unthinkable step of detonating nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

There is no justification for the use of nuclear weapons. The sheer scale of their destructive capability would risk planetary annihilation and a humanitarian armageddon. A wide array of [faith leaders](#) and [interfaith groups](#) around the world have agreed that nuclear weapons are intrinsically immoral weapons that must never be used. Pope Francis said earlier this year:

“I wish to reaffirm that the use of nuclear weapons, as well as their mere possession, is immoral... Trying to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security and a ‘balance of terror,’ sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust inevitably ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any possible form of real dialogue. Possession leads easily to threats of their use, becoming a sort of ‘blackmail’ that should be repugnant to the consciences of humanity.”

Putin’s thinly veiled threat to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine is a horrifying act of nuclear blackmail that contradicts his own [admission](#) that “there can be no winners in a nuclear war and it should never be unleashed.” Any nuclear response on behalf of the United States would also contradict your own [recognition](#) that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” If the United States responds to Russian nuclear use in kind, it could lead us all down the path to a full-scale nuclear war and the catastrophic loss of human life. As the [Mennonite Church General Assembly](#) proclaimed, “we cannot ignore humanity’s apparent capability of annihilating God’s creation via nuclear weapons.”

A nuclear war would also result in unimaginable harm to the planet. The science is clear: even a regional or so called “limited” nuclear war would bring about unforgivable harm to the global climate. According to the landmark report, [Nuclear Famine](#) (2022), a nuclear war involving less than 3% of the world’s nuclear arsenals would block out the sun, cause a global temperature drop, collapse global crop production, and create mass starvation on a scale never before seen. Societies everywhere would have to adapt to a dark, cold, and inhospitable planet.

As we continue to hear the rattling of nuclear sabers, we reiterate that this era of nuclear coercion must end. Our shared humanity reminds us that despite our differences, we share a moral responsibility to

de-escalate tensions, return to negotiations, and realize a world without nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are incompatible with our fundamental respect for human dignity. They threaten our planet, communities and families, without which we cannot pursue our prosperity, well-being or happiness. As United Nations Secretary General [Antonio Guterres](#) stated, “their elimination would be the greatest gift we could bestow on future generations.”

We urge you to explore every avenue of dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation to ease tensions with Russia, end the bloodshed in Ukraine, and eliminate the nuclear threat to all humankind.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service Committee

California Council of Churches

Center on Conscience and War

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Disciples Peace Fellowship

Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, DC

Faith for Black Lives

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Hindus for Human Rights

InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Colombia

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Moravian Church Northern Province

Moravian Church Southern Province

Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe

National Council of Churches

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore

Pax Christi USA

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Religions for Peace USA

Soka Gakkai International-USA

Sojourners

United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries

The United Methodist Church -- General Board of Church and Society