

Nuclear abolition – a human security imperative

Presentation to the Senate of Jordan

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In commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Your Excellency Speaker of the Senate, Members of the Senate,

It is a great honour to be invited here today to speak to you on the occasion of the 2nd International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

I feel humbled to be in a country that has done so much for peace and humanity – and continues to do so.

The leadership of King Abdullah, and his father King Hussein, in international diplomacy and peace is well known and well respected.

And the way that the government and people of Jordan have opened their hearts and doors to the refugees from conflict and violence in the region is a shining example to others who have been slow to follow suit.

Indeed the very real conflicts that are killing innocent people, destroying historical and cultural sites and forcing so many people to flee make it difficult to focus on nuclear weapons which have not been used in war time since 1945.

The film that we have seen today – a short excerpt from the full feature film “The Man Who Saved the World” reminds us that the threat from nuclear weapons is very real, and that the risks of a nuclear catastrophe rises considerably during times of conflict such as during the Cold War and today.

Tension between Russia and the West is again high, partly due to the Ukraine conflict – but also due to other conflicts. If Russia or the US believe that there is an incoming nuclear attack, they will not wait for that attack to arrive. They will launch their counter-attack before the incoming missiles hit. A mistake by computer error could happen during times of high tension.

Or a terrorist could hack into the nuclear command and control system and simulate an attack. Or we could have another crisis like the Cuban Missile Crisis where brinkmanship between the two sides nearly caused a nuclear war that no-one wanted. Or it could start in a regional conflict between nuclear States like India and Pakistan – or in the Middle East where one country already possesses nuclear weapons.

The threats are real. Those with the nuclear weapons have an obligation to negotiate for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. It's a requirement under the nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty. This obligation has been affirmed as unconditional and universal by the International Court of Justice.

But not enough is being done by those with the nuclear weapons to implement this obligation.

That is why there is another case in the International Court of Justice challenging the nuclear armed states to implement their nuclear disarmament obligations – a case initiated by the very small country the Marshall Islands.

That is why the United Nations General Assembly has established September 26 as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, in order to build public awareness of the issue and support for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The government of Jordan has been a leader for nuclear disarmament at the United Nations and at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences.

Jordan has supported the proposal to establish a Middle East Zone Free from Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction as a way of bringing greater security to this region and to contribute to the establishment of a nuclear weapon free world.

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, the international network of legislators that I coordinate, actively supports the establishment of such a zone. We have promoted the proposal at international parliamentary forums including the Inter Parliamentary Union, Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. And we have promote the proposal to the States Parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to the United Nations through a joint statement endorsed by parliamentarians from around the world.

There are some who say that such a Middle East nuclear weapon free zone is not possible because one country within the zone possesses nuclear weapons and will never give them up. History tells us otherwise. There are a number of countries who have either possessed nuclear weapons, hosted nuclear weapons on their territories or been part of nuclear alliances that have given up the nuclear option and become non-nuclear States. These include South Africa, Kazakhstan and my own country New Zealand. These countries are now part of regional nuclear weapon free zones that many people had previously considered to be impossible or improbable.

Jordan has also supported the proposal of the UN Secretary-General for multi-lateral negotiations to start on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements to establish a nuclear weapon free world. Over 130 countries also support. But not all the nuclear weapon States support, nor their allies such as the NATO countries who continue to rely on nuclear weapons. And so those negotiations have not yet started.

It is vital to build political will for these proposals.

This is why UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon sent a letter directly to every parliament on the eve of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference calling on parliaments to take action.

This is why the Assembly of the Inter Parliamentary Union, which includes 166 parliaments as members, adopted a resolution in 2014 supporting the proposals for a Middle East nuclear weapon free zone and a nuclear weapons convention, calling on parliaments to work with governments to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and calling on parliaments to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in cooperation with civil society.

I am very pleased to see that the Senate of Jordan is answering this call. The “Wave goodbye to Nuclear Weapons” which you did in the Senate during the 2015 NPT Review Conference was noted favourably by governments and parliamentarians, and highlighted by civil society which circulated the video on face-book and other social media.

The Senate of Jordan was also instrumental in the adoption of the 2014 Inter Parliamentary Union resolution. I pay special tribute to Senator Salwa al Damen Masri from the Jordan delegation to the IPU, who served on the drafting committee for the resolution, and ensured that it called on all member parliaments – including those of the nuclear armed States – to support nuclear abolition.

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), in which Senator Salwa al Damen is a leading member, is following up the IPU resolution through a range of actions by our members in both the non-nuclear and the nuclear armed countries.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has indicated another important reason to support nuclear disarmament – to free up the US\$100 billion spent on nuclear weapons annually. The funds, technology and personnel dedicated to nuclear weapons are sorely needed to help address key human security issues such as refugees, climate change, poverty, water supplies and to finance the achievement of other sustainable development goals.

Another reason to abolish nuclear weapons is that they are an affront to Allah/God. No matter what religion you are from, the core values are the same – a respect for life and creation, and a principle of reciprocity - to treat others as you would have them treat you. That is why leaders from all major religious faiths have condemned nuclear weapons – most recently Pope Francis at the United Nations on Friday.

Parliamentarians, mayors and religious leaders from around the world have therefore come together in a *Joint Statement for a Nuclear Weapon Free World* which we presented yesterday to the President of the UN General Assembly in New York.¹

The statement reaffirms UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s description of the abolition of nuclear weapons as a “common good of the highest order.” It says that;

¹ The statement has been endorsed by religious leaders, parliamentarians and mayors from Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States and Zimbabwe.

In special ways mayors are responsible for protecting the safety and welfare of their citizens, as well as for preserving and promoting cultural and environmental values and heritages; parliamentarians for national policies and laws for the benefit of present and future generations; and religious leaders for advancing the shared moral principles and respect for the well-being of all people regardless of ethnicity, nationality or religion.

Together—as mayors, parliamentarians and religious leaders— we support the common good of nuclear abolition. We reject nuclear weapons, which threaten our humanity, contravene our moral principles, violate international law and thwart the safety and well-being of current and future generations.

The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons was established in this week in September because it is when world leaders are at the UN for the General Debate of the General Assembly, and it is just prior to the deliberations in October on disarmament resolutions being presented to the UN.

One of those resolutions will most likely be on establishing a Middle East Zone Free from Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The UN has been asked to convene a conference of all relevant governments to start the negotiations – but this conference has not yet been held.

The UN will likely also consider a proposal to establish an Open Ended Working Group to begin the negotiations on a treaty or package of agreements to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. If an Open Ended Working Group is established, parliamentary support will be important to move the governments to negotiate in good faith, and hopefully be ready to adopt the agreement at the UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament that will be held in 2018.

Your excellency Mr Speaker, Members of the Senate

Let me thank you again for the honour and privilege to speak before you.

Your actions and leadership for nuclear disarmament give support to the diplomatic processes for nuclear disarmament and are an inspiration to other parliaments.

In particular, I would like to thank the Senate for facilitating the Arabic version of this movie “The Man Who Saved the World”, for holding this special commemoration event today, and for producing the Arabic version of the *Inter Parliamentary Union Handbook on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament*. These initiatives can help educate and engage parliamentarians and others from across the Arab world.

I wish us all success for our common goal of the peace and security of a nuclear-weapon-free world Insha Allah.