

Open letter from People in the United States to People all over the World

Statement from the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

It is a troubled time. The drums of war, already loud, are daily being amplified by the megaphones of modern media. The US government is adopting a doctrine of "pre-emptive war." There are large numbers of people in the United States who do not agree. We want to extend our hands to people all over the world to work together for peace, justice, economic equity, and environmental sanity.

The United States government is, sadly, behaving like a global bully-- a role that alarms us greatly because of the threat of war and the destruction that it may rain down on children who have too long suffered for the fights of their fathers. It also increases the risks of terrorism here and all over the world because it is likely to further inflame angry passions, which are already too high.

Our goal is to seek peaceful resolution of conflicts. We also want to strengthen international institutions so that they can accomplish that goal. The United States, against its own best traditions, is undermining the rule of law internationally by trying to muscle other countries as well as the United Nations

We have also been stunned by the speed and depth with which civil liberties at home have been eroded in the name of the War on Terror. US citizens as well as immigrants who are not citizens are being deprived of the most elementary and long-standing freedoms.

We are determined to resist these trends. Hundreds of thousands of people, young and old, have demonstrated in the streets, including many who have never before done so. Local governments are enacting laws that call for non-cooperation with unconstitutional federal procedures to arrest or spy on immigrants as well as citizens.

We know we need to do more. The immense consumption of petroleum in the United States contributes both to the danger of climate change and the risk of war. While the US government resists its obligations to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, California has enacted standards that will help move us there. We must wean the United States away from its most dangerous addiction - vast amounts of oil.

There are also problems we must try to solve together. Specifically, the problem of weapons of mass destruction is a stubborn and difficult reality. We are painfully aware that most of the rest of the world regards the loud US calls for war on Iraq as hypocrisy or worse because the United States itself is refusing to give up its nuclear weapons and abide by its treaty obligations to

abandon reliance on nuclear weapons. The United States incinerated two cities with atom bombs in 1945, the only government ever to have done so. Osama bin Laden has, more than once, including after September 11, 2001, used that fact to rationalize his own violent ambitions for wreaking mass havoc upon innocents.

There are no good or pious hands that can be allowed to wield these terrible, illegal, and immoral weapons. They must never again be used by anyone. There are eight countries with nuclear weapons -- the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, India and Pakistan -- and two others, who have broken their Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments to try to acquire them, North Korea and Iraq.

The illegitimacy of the weapons of the great powers does not and cannot make the weapons of North Korea or Iraq legitimate. We must end the era of weapons of mass destruction in the world. The day when governments can rationalize their use to their people by trading the lives of children of any nationality against the lives of soldiers engaged in war must end. It is time to round up all nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons-usable materials and put them under verifiable international control. It is time to strengthen existing international treaties that ban chemical and biological weapons with strong institutions and authority for inspections everywhere.

In that spirit, we support the UN inspections in Iraq. We do not endorse a US-led war on Iraq even if they should fail, in part because the United States insists on a prerogative of using nuclear weapons, and because it may have ulterior motives, unrelated to the issue of disarmament. The better course would be to strengthen the UN-based structure by investing it with sufficient authority and technical capability to verifiably sequester all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable materials. A similar approach could also be used for other weapons of mass destruction and to arrest persons who are alleged to have committed crimes against humanity, such as the one on September 11, 2001.

Any country that claims leadership in peacemaking or in disarming others must subject itself to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Some of the most powerful countries do not qualify today. No country should set itself above the law. Unfortunately the United States is among those that is doing just that. At the Nuremberg trials of the Nazis, US jurists promised the world that it was not witnessing the justice of victors, but a victory for justice, and that, for crimes against humanity, all the accused, independent of nationality, would stand equally at the bar of justice. In withdrawing from the general jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and in resisting and undermining the International Criminal Court, the United States has broken that promise. We want to redeem it.

We will not allow the ill-considered and short-sighted military and energy policies of the US government to separate us from the fellowship of other human beings across national borders. We write to you to let you know that we stand in solidarity with all those who are working non-violently for peace and justice, independent of nationality, to struggle against the terrible violence that still envelops the world and threatens to engulf us all.

We believe we need to work together to make the twenty first century one in which the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., will triumph over hate, greed, and violence. Even as he led the struggle for India's independence and believed that India had a great deal to offer the world, Gandhi said: "My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount the distress, or exploitation, of other nationalities." We extend our hand to you in that spirit.

Signatories so far include (* means organizations for identification only):

Francisco Argelles Paz y Puente, National Organizers Alliance* Caron Balkany Harriet Barlow, Blue Mountain Center Mavis Belisle, Director, The Peace Farm John Burroughs, Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation Walter B. Clancy, Member of Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice David Close, Professor and Chair, Department of Physics, East Tennessee State University Jay Coghlan, Director, Nuclear Watch New Mexico Joan W. Drake, Gray Panthers, Daniel Ellsberg Richard Falk, Professor emeritus, Princeton University Louise Franklin-Ramirez, founder, Hiroshima Nagasaki Peace Committee Carole Gallagher, author, "American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War" June Goodwin, author Jean T. Gordon, member of Women's Action for New Directions Susan Gordon, Director, Alliance for Nuclear Accountability* Kimi Green, New Cycle Foundation* Corbin Harney, Chairman of the Board, Shundahai Network Adam Hochschild, author Walter Hooke, World War II Nagasaki veteran Hadi Jawad, Member of the Board, Dallas Peace Center Maria Jimenez, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (Board Member) Michael Klare, Five College Professor of Peace and World Security Studies based at Hampshire College Lisa Ledwidge, Outreach Director, United States, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research Arjun Makhijani, President, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research Chris Mechels, Retired Staff Member (1994), Los Alamos National Lab Mary Lou Nelson Meryl Nass, MD M.V. Ramana, Princeton University Indira Ravindran, Johns Hopkins University Leslie Reindl Tony Regusters, Interim General Manager, WPFW-FM, Pacifica Radio Mark Ritchie, President, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Ben Schiff, Professor of Politics at Oberlin College John Steinbach, Co-Convenor, Gray Panthers of Metro Washington Cathie Sullivan, Los Alamos Museum Project Ashwini Tambe, Georgetown University Kalynda Tilges, Executive Director, Shundahai Network Roxanne Turnage,

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