

Only a decade to bring nuclear weapons under control, says PM's advisor on nuclear proliferation

Written by Administrator

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- Now is the time for nations to commit to a world free of nuclear weapons, say UK Churches

Baroness Shirley Williams is warning that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the greatest threats to the survival of humankind.

The Prime Minister's advisor on nuclear proliferation made the statement just days after the White House indicated plans for dramatic reductions in the nuclear arsenal of the United States of America.

Baroness Williams was endorsing a campaign by an alliance of nine UK Churches, which calls on the British Government to make a commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, building a safer future for all.

The Churches campaign, entitled Now is the Time, joins the World Council of Churches and others in pressing for governments to put all bomb-grade material under international control and commit to making the use and possession of nuclear weapons illegal through a new Nuclear Weapons Convention. They are asking people to sign an [online petition](#) expressing support for these aims.

Baroness Williams said: "The proliferation of nuclear weapons and climate change are the greatest threats to the survival of humankind. We have only a few years, at most a decade or so, to control and eventually abolish nuclear weapons. The support of concerned citizens in the UK and elsewhere is vital.

The Churches have already played a crucial part in breaking the bonds of debt on poor countries and their leadership on this issue is equally important and urgently needed."

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The alliance includes the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the United Reformed Church, the International Affairs Department of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland and the Archbishop of the Church in Wales. The Churches are voicing these concerns in advance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference this May, which they believe will be crucial for international disarmament.

The Rt Revd Dr Tom Butler Lord Bishop of Southwark, said: "We cannot tackle the threat of nuclear terrorism by simply rehearsing old doctrines of defence. The simple fact is that more nuclear weapons do not make for a safer world. We must instead turn to the universal adoption of common rules and standards, enforced by international treaties. It is crucial that all nuclear armed states now demonstrate a willingness to redefine their concepts of security."

"Nuclear weapons instil fear. They are divisive and counter-productive to a sustainable peace between nations," added Steve Hucklesby, Policy Advisor for the Joint Public Issues Team. "The recent commitment by the United States and Russia to reduce their missiles and warheads has injected new life into non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations. We must grasp this opportunity and commit our governments to the road to zero nuclear weapons."