

# A Statement on Nuclear Disarmament

## Alliance of Baptists

2010

### **Background:**

The Alliance of Baptists has participated ecumenically in the Interfaith Committee on Nuclear Disarmament since the mid-1990's. To more fully participate in advocacy work on nuclear disarmament, the Peace & Justice Committee is asking the Alliance to adopt this statement today so that staff and Alliance members can speak to these issues on behalf of the organization. The Alliance support of nuclear disarmament is consistent with the Alliance Covenant and Mission, which states:

*In a time when historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions need a clear voice, and in our personal and corporate response to the call of God in Jesus Christ to be disciples and servants in the world, we commit ourselves to ... the larger body of Jesus Christ, expressed in various Christian traditions and to cooperation with believers everywhere in giving full expression to the Gospel. . . . and to the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice....*

*To keep faith with our Covenant ... we work for peace*

It is appropriate to remind ourselves of the calling of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA), one of our closest partners in work for peace and justice. The BPFNA states "As Baptists, we are called by God to the Gospel of Peace. This calling is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ, who is our Peace, in whom God is reconciling the world and through whom God calls us to the ministry of peacemaking. Peace is not only our goal but also our means. The foundation of peace is justice. The force of peace is love."

As congregations and individuals within the Alliance we see conflicts and tensions throughout our world. We yearn for peace for the people of our world. We also know that while the corporate defense industry wields great power in our nation's political decisions, we can be a major force in that same political decision making process for peace, justice, truth, love and light to prevail. The public discussion needs to be enriched and informed by the voice of the prophetic religious community.

We speak today to endorse multi-lateral efforts towards peace. We recognize all people in the world as children of God and know that efforts towards world peace must include all the peoples and all the nations. As citizens of the United States, we reject unilateral determinations and instead encourage our nation's leaders to pursue bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements that advance the cause of peace in our world.

Two treaties currently before the U. S. Senate on nuclear weapons are especially important:

1. The new Strategic Arms Treaty, signed April 8, 2010 by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev is a modest but important step in efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. New START also provides a good framework for the US and Russia to work together to prevent nuclear terrorism, roll back the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, and stop states from pursuing nuclear weapons programs.

This treaty would reduce the number of nuclear weapons each country has. In the 1970's at the beginning of the joint treaties, each country had 12,000 weapons. This treaty reduces the current numbers from 2,200 to 1,550

This treaty is supported by our current military leadership and all former secretaries of state, secretaries of defense and national security advisors who have spoken on the record -- both Republican and Democrat. None have opposed the treaty.

2. In September, 1996, the United States became the first nation to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which “prohibits any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion,” and establishes a global verification network with short-notice, on-site inspections to monitor compliance. The treaty remains on the executive calendar of the Foreign Relations Committee.

There is no military justification to resume U.S. nuclear testing. The United States does not need nuclear tests to maintain an effective nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, global support for the CTBT has grown substantially. To date, the CTBT has been signed by 182 nations, including the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, and ratified by 151, including Japan, Russia, South Korea, and all U.S. allies in NATO. The CTBT’s entry into force awaits ratification by just nine key countries, including the United States, China, India, and Indonesia.

It is in the U.S. national security interest to prevent nuclear testing by others and to improve U.S. and international verification capabilities. Even though the United States has already signed the CTBT and thus assumed most treaty-related responsibilities, it cannot reap the full security benefits of the treaty until the Senate approves it by a two-thirds majority.

Ratifying the new START and CTBT treaties is central to getting U.S. nuclear policy priorities right. It will send a clear signal that the United States is de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy and emphasizing the need to work cooperatively with other nations to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

**Because of our commitment to God’s peace, we -- the Alliance of Baptists -- join other faith leaders and communities in calling on the President of the United States and the members of his Cabinet and the U.S. Congress to secure international agreements for the reduction of armaments, specifically nuclear armaments, as a necessary step towards world peace. We also encourage our nation’s leaders to reduce defense spending and support increases in poverty reduction programs.**

**Specifically, at our 2010 Convocation, we -- the Alliance of Baptists – join other faith leaders and communities in calling upon the U.S. Senate:**

1. to ratify the new Strategic Arms Treaty treaty; and
2. to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

**We pledge to raise our voices in advocacy for peace for all God’s children in communications with our U.S. Senators and other political leaders.**

**We call on our Alliance of Baptist congregations to lead in prayer, teaching, and preaching about the biblical, spiritual and moral basis for God’s peace and shalom.**

*(With thanks to Friends Committee on National Legislation and the Arms Control Organization for educational materials and advocacy information on the need for nuclear disarmament. See [www.fcnl.org/nuclear/](http://www.fcnl.org/nuclear/); [www.armscontrol.org](http://www.armscontrol.org))*