



Statement in Commemoration of International Human Rights Day
10 December 2020

Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP) celebrates Human Rights Day today, which commemorates the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights form the International Bill of Human Rights. Together with further core human rights treaties and protocols, this body of law recognizes and codifies essential rights and obligations that aim to uphold human dignity and equality, with direct implications for nuclear weapons.

The pursuit of nuclear disarmament is symbiotic with the promotion, protection, and implementation of human rights. Certain non-derogable human rights in fact inform the necessity of nuclear disarmament—for example, the right to life. LCNP highlights the Human Rights Committee's statement in its 2018 General Comment 36 that:

The threat or use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, which are indiscriminate in effect and are of a nature to cause destruction of human life on a catastrophic scale, is incompatible with respect for the right to life and may amount to a crime under international law....[States] must also respect their international obligations to pursue good faith negotiations in order to achieve the aim of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.¹

Nuclear weapons programs also endanger the right to health and the freedom from discrimination, as nuclear weapons—their development, testing, and use—disproportionately and often irreversibly affect people of color, Indigenous persons, and women and girls. Thus, LCNP welcomes both the acknowledgment of the Indigenous impact of these weapons and the sex-sensitivity in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, set to enter into force January 22, 2021.

We call on nuclear weapon states to urgently reinvest vastly-inflated nuclear weapons budgets into global human health and security through sustainable development and climate mitigation measures, and, in particular, to redirect funds to effective management of the Covid-19 pandemic. For current and future generations alike, we must collectively and intentionally invest in systems that affirm human rights rather than threaten humanity. Fundamental human rights form the bedrock of a thriving society, and the mass destruction caused and threatened by nuclear weapons is irreconcilable with a world that values the rights and dignity of all persons without discrimination.

¹ General Comment no. 36, CCPR/C/GC/36, 3 September 2019, para. 66.