

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE | 2017 RESOURCE PACKET



United Nations Sunday Service

Arm in Arm: Interfaith Action to Disarm
Our Planet

Part II

uua.org/unsunday

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Disarmament Issues at the United Nations

The United Nations' commitment to disarmament is clear since its first inception at the close of the Second World War. The Preamble to the United Nations Charter is steeped in the language of disarmament - see the text of the preamble below, with key phrases in bold to highlight heavy emphasis on the UN's commitment to disarm our planet:

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

- **to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind,** and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to **practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours,** and
- to **unite our strength to maintain international peace and security,** and
- to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, **that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest,** and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.¹

The UN Charter goes on to refer in Article 26 to the need for the newly created body to establish a system for the regulation of armaments. In 1982, the United Nations established a specific Office for Disarmament Affairs whose aim is to promote:

- Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

¹ *Charter of the United Nations*

- Strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of mass destruction, and chemical and biological weapons
- Disarmament efforts in the area of conventional weapons, especially landmines and small arms, which are the weapons of choice in contemporary conflicts.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) works through the UN General Assembly and its First Committee (which deals with disarmament and global threats to peace) to set norms in the area of disarmament. UNODA also “provides objective, impartial and up-to-date information on multilateral disarmament issues and activities to Member States,... departments and agencies of the United Nations system, research and educational institutions, civil society, especially non-governmental organizations, the media and the general public.”²

BROAD IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND SMALL ARMS:

Our world is plagued by so many interconnected issues that appear in the news and in conversation daily, from climate change to racism, refugees, islamophobia, transgender discrimination, economic inequality, violation of indigenous rights, homophobia, reproductive injustice... All of these issues in some way either have resulted in or have been perpetuated by armed conflict, whether in the form of civil war, police brutality, gang violence, or a more personal conflict.

The proliferation of weapons both large and small is responsible for thousands of deaths every day. National governments are implicated in this devastation when military-grade weapons and even illegal chemical weapons are used by the state or agents of the state against civilian populations. If nuclear weapons were used in today’s world, it would not take many to not only cause absolute devastation of the areas where the bombs are dropped, but also result in widespread famine and displacement across the globe. With accidental shootings causing 3,800 deaths between 2005-2010 in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control³, and many of these victims under 25 years of age, there is so much we can and should be doing to make firearms safer and less accessible to people who should not have access to them.

The United Nations defines “disarmament” as the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the strict regulation of conventional arms. Disarmament has the potential to play an incredibly important role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding both locally and globally. However, in order for anything to happen, it is up to us as civil society to be active and keep this topic at the forefront of people’s minds.

DISARMAMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

In order to create a more peaceful and safe world, right now the UN is focusing on promoting

² <https://www.un.org/disarmament/about/>

³ <http://www.aftermath.com/content/accidental-shooting-deaths-statistics>

sustainable development. The 2015 UN General Assembly adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (also called “Global Goals for Sustainable Development”) as an action plan for the planet as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the recognition that no one country can achieve success alone, the UN is building on the principle of interdependence. Each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals relies on the others, just as each country in the UN relies on the others to be mutually supportive. The 16th Sustainable Development Goal highlights the importance of disarmament for sustainable development - target 16.4 states: “By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.”

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM & DISARMAMENT AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office holds a prominent position within the United Nations community of non-governmental organizations. UU-UNO Director Bruce Knotts serves as the chair of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security. That committee was founded in the 1970s by Unitarian Universalist minister Rev. Homer Jack. The committee is critical for coordinating the efforts of civil society organizations and their advocacy at the United Nations. Due to that position as chair of the Committee, Bruce Knotts also is a member of the NGO Security Council Working Group through which he has access to private meetings of the working group with ambassadors representing members of the UN Security Council.

CURRENT ACTION TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

As of mid-2016, the United Nations General Assembly has been taking major steps towards the establishment of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. Those Member States that do not have nuclear weapons are joining in close collaboration with civil society to convene a gathering to make nuclear weapons illegal under international law. The rhetoric is focused on the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing, rather than on deterrence which has dominated the rhetoric surrounding nuclear weapons for the last several decades. The conference of Member States interested in negotiating such a treaty includes 133 states and convened in March 2017 to begin the negotiations. Treaty negotiations will continue at a conference in New York at the UN Headquarters from June 15-July 7th. A draft treaty was presented to the General Assembly by the President of the Conference on May 22nd, 2017 with the aim of finalizing the ambitious text during the convening over the summer.⁴

By adopting this convention, the United Nations will not be able to take nuclear weapons away from Member States who possess them (and who have decided to boycott the treaty negotiations). However, by making nuclear weapons illegal under international law, there is much greater potential for political, economic, and social pressure to be placed on those Member States. This treaty will set the groundwork for future advocacy and for a planet free of all nuclear

⁴ <http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/DraftTreaty.pdf>

weapons.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – DISARMAMENT

The following articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are particularly relevant to disarmament:

- Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and **should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.**
- Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status...
- Article 3: Everyone has the right to **life, liberty, and security of person.**
- Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to **cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment** or punishment.
- Article 7: **All are equal before the law** and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
- Article 25: Everyone has the right to a **standard of living adequate for the health and well-being** of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control...
- Article 28: Everyone is entitled to a **social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.**

Disarmament and the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

Here is a brief breakdown of UU principles and their connection to disarmament:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person:

Recognizing the value of each individual life is an essential step towards achieving disarmament. Armed conflict globally and locally perpetuates dehumanization of the Other. Particularly the utilization of unmanned drone strikes as a war tactic normalizes the act of killing, and disregards the value of the lives being cut short.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations:

Disarmament commits the world community to a more compassionate and peaceful approach to conflict resolution. This will ensure more just outcomes to conflict. Justice, equity, and compassion are important tools to encourage peaceful and successful resolutions as opposed to

violent confrontations. Disarmament depends on upholding these facets of humans relations.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations:

Conflicts arise from lack of understanding and acceptance of one another. By increasing acceptance, violent conflicts decrease. Disarmament can thrive under an accepting society. Spiritual growth is necessary to practice acceptance of all people.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning:

In order to achieve just, peaceful, and inclusive societies (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #16) we must educate our communities and ourselves on the consequences of nuclear war and the global proliferation of small arms, as well as what the global powers at the United Nations are and can be doing to create and maintain peace.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in societies at large:

Every person has the right to voice their own opinions, and for those opinions to have as much weight as another person's. The threat of violence should never be a determinant for how decisions are made. The democratic process is not functioning properly when armed violence and threats can influence political power and global action.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all:

The prevalence of armed violence in local towns and cities worldwide, as well as the continuous threat of nuclear war, prevents the achievement of a peaceful world community as millions of people live in constant fear for their lives. Disarmament removes the threat on individual life thus promoting peace, liberty, and justice for all. The goal of disarmament is to maintain peace in our world communities.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part:

All people are interconnected and dependent upon one another. An attack on the citizens of one country harms all other countries. Additionally, ceasing armed violence protects the environment on which we all depend. It is critical to remember that all issues are interdependent, but also that to solve them, all people must recognize our common humanity and band together. We must rely on each other.



2017 Intergenerational Spring Seminar

**INTERFAITH ACTION TO
DISARM OUR PLANET**

Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

UU United Nations Office Intergenerational Spring Seminar

Arm in Arm: Interfaith Action to Disarm Our Planet

Summary of what was discussed at this year's Spring Seminar:

Unitarian Universalists gathered in April 2017 for a whirlwind 3-day conference in New York City. The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office's annual Intergenerational Spring Seminar this year was centered on the theme "Arm in Arm: Interfaith Action to Disarm Our Planet." From the youth arriving in the evening on Wednesday, April 5th until the concluding activity and group departure in the afternoon on Saturday, April 8th, participants of all ages from high schoolers to senior citizens experienced the rich rewards of intergenerational dialogue and action-centered learning. The conference included workshops, panel discussions, worship, and small group conversations to allow the participants to explore the topic of disarmament from a variety of perspectives.

"LEFT OF BOOM: INTERFAITH ACTION TO DISARM OUR PLANET"

Keynote speaker Rev. Chris Antal

The Rev. Chris Antal, in his keynote address, introduced participants to the issues surrounding disarmament. He highlighted that the goal for our disarmament activism is to stay "left of boom." He showed an incredible video recreation from BBC of what happened in Hiroshima Japan on August 6th, 1945. The people who survived the blast are known as "hibakusha." Rev. Antal showed part of a video interview he recorded with Tomiko Morimoto West, a hibakusha he knows, who shared how she experienced the bomb dropping on Hiroshima as a thirteen-year-old. She told the story of how she lost her parents and her home in the explosion, and how she and her injured grandfather fled the city to the mountainside where she herself had to bury him when he died shortly after.

Rev. Antal then demonstrated how nuclear weapons technology has developed since the time of Hiroshima. Using a website called NukeMap, he demonstrated the casualty count and reach of the bomb (nicknamed "Littleboy") that was dropped on Hiroshima, if it were dropped today in Manhattan, compared to the largest bomb in the US's current nuclear arsenal. The devastation

was horrifying to see in the map of a city we were familiar with, and this made the issue feel so much closer to home. Rev. Antal's keynote presentation is one of two events from the Spring Seminar that were recorded and are available to [watch on the UUA International Office's YouTube page](#).

“GLOBAL EFFORTS TO DISARM OUR PLANET”

Theme panel at Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center

The cornerstone of the 2017 Spring Seminar was a panel discussion at the Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center near the United Nations Headquarters. The discussion emphasized how various types of weapons have impacted the world and its populations in a variety of ways. While much of the panel focused on how we can come together to work for change, we also learned about the factors that have contributed to the rise in the number of arms present in our world, and how arms are tied to many other social problems.

The event started with an opening in which participants were warmly welcomed to the Buddhist Center and learned a bit about the close partnership between Rissho Kosei-kai and Unitarian Universalism. The former Ambassador representing the Permanent Mission of Palau to the United Nations, Ambassador Caleb Otto, then painted a picture of an island ransacked by war. The island of Palau is still suffering from the effects of nuclear testing, and the remains of heavy artillery can be found in various spots across the island. Today, Palau is advocating for disarmament at a global level, but due to the island's limited size and influence, its voice is often lost amongst the crowd of diplomatic powers. Palau knows that the fight is far from over and promises to continue lending its voice to the effort.

The next speaker, Ray Acheson of Reaching Critical Will, proposed legislation that is being advocated for right now at the United Nations. Unfortunately, there is often political backlash and tension preventing disarmament from being achieved. Ray spoke of how civil society plays the biggest role in passing legislation; when organizers are able to pull off events such as rallies and marches, their voices are harder to ignore. Collective action and executing our right to vote is how we can make a difference.

As we sat in Rissho Kosei-kai, we were constantly reminded of how interfaith partnerships help to make our voice stronger and our actions more noticeable. Hiro Sakurai from Soka Gakkai International spoke of the imperative of the religious community to work together and engage youth, in order to keep the momentum high toward making change, and to foster the next generation of experienced advocates. Through intergenerational mobilization, we are able to showcase how nuclear and small arms impact everyone, rather than a select grouping. As we continue to advocate for change, it is necessary that we understand the power of education and personal connection.

Bringing the issue closer to home, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout focused his remarks on gun violence and systemic racism. We learned about the high percentage of people with small arms and how

cities with high economic inequality and poverty are consistently facing higher numbers of firearm-related deaths. He reminded us that amidst our efforts to draw attention to the need for disarmament, we cannot forget about other major issues and about people whose voices are being silenced by society as a whole.

The final panelist was Chris King from the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs. He gave an overview of the work his office is involved in and the obstacles they encounter. The United Nations defines “disarmament” as the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and the strict regulation of conventional arms in accordance with the UN Charter. Chris King began by sharing a number of alarming facts and statistics about the impact of weapons such as that detonating just 100 of the existing 15,000 nuclear weapons would create enough smoke to block out the sun and cause a famine that would kill 2 billion people. He went on to explain how, as we have observed the devastating impacts that access to weapons in conflict has on civilian populations, it is key to recognize how important disarmament and arms control can be as a method of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Many of the global issues we are facing today exist because we’ve forgotten the important role that disarmament can play. He ended by highlighting how important civil society is to the fight for disarmament, whether through demonstrations in the streets, taking action online, or making a statement through the ballot box.

This panel discussion was one of two events from the Spring Seminar that were recorded and are available to [watch on the UUA International Office’s YouTube page](#).

Read more about the Spring Seminar at UUA.org/UNSpringSeminar – Including summaries of additional activities that were part of Seminar 2017.

2017 Intergenerational Spring Seminar Statement

ARM IN ARM: INTERFAITH ACTION TO DISARM OUR PLANET

Whereas:

We recognize the value of human life and the fragility of existence.

We affirm values of justice, mercy, and compassion, and seek to promote equity and peace throughout our interconnected web of existence,

We acknowledge that the Unitarian Universalist movement consists largely of individuals with privilege in regards to access to education and socioeconomic status, and we also know there are those in our movement who do not have those privileges,

We recognize and name the intersectionality of oppressions stemming from white privilege and white supremacy, such as race, poverty, gender, sex, and marginalization of indigenous peoples,

We remember that the United States developed and used the first nuclear weapon, and is a leading global distributor of arms,

We know there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons remaining in the world. And each of these weapons has the capacity to destroy millions of lives and wreak havoc on the environment,

We believe that cooperation between and among nations can be a bulwark against violence, and the United Nations is the organization which most effectively facilitates this cooperation,

We recognize that:

Much of our world community suffers from systemic oppression and lack of access to basic needs, and that violence stems from that inequality and lack of opportunity,

Dehumanization of the Other perpetuates violence while disconnecting us from our common humanity,

Violence has been normalized, glorified, and desensitized in our society,

Militarism plays a key role in contributing to racial, social, and ideological discrimination on the mass scale,

Drone usage in current warfare results in high counts of civilian casualties,

Any use of nuclear weapons could lead to planetary suicide,

We Therefore Resolve to:

Deepen understanding in our congregations and youth groups about the function and importance of the United Nations.

Advocate for the United States' full involvement in the United Nations process including financial support and ratification of critical UN treaties.

Urge all 193 member states of the United Nations to complete the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty and put it into force.

Promote international condemnation of the use of drones as weapons, as we have done for biochemical weapons.

Affirm the need for the United States to adopt universal national gun control laws.

Educate our faith communities about the destructive toll of nuclear weapons, small arms, and state-sponsored violence.

Remind UU congregations to recognize their roles in systemic oppression, while using our own privilege and power to create solutions in partnership with affected parties.

Ask our congregations to dedicate at least one worship service each year to recognize victims of armed violence, and to use that service to initiate sustained dialogue and action.

Commit to lift up the voices of people who are directly impacted by armed violence.

Encourage our members to write letters to our elected officials and other individuals in positions of power.

Promise to continue to educate ourselves and advocate for disarmament at a personal level, societal level, and governmental level.

Use this education and advocacy to collaborate with the UU-UNO to effect systemic change and the recognition of the power of the world's citizens to create peace.

Affirmed by the participants of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office Intergenerational Spring Seminar, New York City, 8 April, 2017.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

As part of the Global U/U Story, Unitarians and Universalists around the world work for social justice causes they care about. Here are just a few examples of the many issues related to disarmament that you can incorporate into your congregation's celebration of UN Sunday to promote Interfaith Action to Disarm Our Planet.

RALLY TO BAN THE BOMB

Promote nuclear disarmament through a rally with your congregation. Join with groups representing different faith traditions to raise awareness and action to ban nuclear weapons that could have devastating effects to all aspects of our planet's environment. Call to redirect the money and effort that goes into the creation of nuclear weapons toward furthering social and economic justice for all. Find a march or rally in your community, or hold your own.

GUN CONTROL

We need to adopt new laws to make sure there are protections against guns being used improperly. There have been too many tragedies that could have been prevented with regulations of gun safety, distribution, and rules against open carry. Urge your local elected representatives to introduce (and help them promote) legislation to make guns safer and keep them from those who should not have access to them. Communicate information among your communities about the real potential for change and lives saved by the proposed reforms. Implement education plans about gun violence for all ages.

DRONE QUILT

Host a square of the drone quilt in your congregation to honor the lives of people killed in US drone strikes. Come together as a community and submit a 10'x10' square of fabric that artistically commemorates the lives taken by drones to the drones quilt project and help create a quilt. To learn how to do so, visit the Drones Quilt Project at dronesquiltproject.wordpress.com.

DISARMAMENT WEEK

October 24-October 30th, 2017 is Disarmament Week. Plan something within your congregation to raise awareness and discussion about disarmament. Visit the United Nations website to learn what is going on during disarmament week and share it with your congregation.

Documentaries, Films, and Videos on Disarmament

- Lucy Walker: *Countdown to Zero* (2010, documentary)
- Peter Anthony: *The Man Who Saved the World* (2014, documentary)

- Robert F Frye: *In My Lifetime: A Presentation of the World Nuclear Project* (2011, documentary)
- Meera Patel & Wolfgang Matt: *Beating the Bomb* (2010, documentary; also on YouTube)
- Stephanie Soechtig: *Under the Gun* (2016, documentary)
- TED Talks:
 - o Erika Gregory: *The world doesn't need more nuclear weapons*
 - o Samantha Nutt: *The real harm of the global arms trade*
 - o Jody Williams: *A realistic vision for world peace*

Books, Websites, and Articles on Disarmament

- Atef Abu Saif *The Drone Eats With Me* <http://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Drone-Eats-with-Me-P17908.aspx>
- Dennis A. Henigan *Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People* <http://www.uuabookstore.org/Guns-Dont-Kill-People-People-Kill-People-P18007.aspx>
- Eboo Patel *Interfaith Leadership* <http://www.uuabookstore.org/Interfaith-Leadership-P17952.aspx>
- The Acronym Institute for Disarmament <http://acronym.org.uk/>
- John D'Agata *About a Mountain* February; 8th, 2010.
- UN Office for Disarmament Affairs: *Action for Disarmament: 10 Things You Can Do*.
- Nuclear Weapons Primer, Nuclear Reduction/Disarmament Initiative <http://www.ipjc.org/links/NuclearWeaponsPrimer.pdf>
- Nuclear Age Peace Foundation <https://www.wagingpeace.org/>

More Resources on Disarmament

- Learn more about the UN's push towards disarmament at <https://www.un.org/disarmament/>
- Nuclear Disarmament Resource Collection <http://www.nti.org/analysis/reports/nuclear-disarmament/>
- Move for a world w/ zero nuclear weapons: Global Zero www.globalzero.org