

Confronting the Nuclear Threat

A year later, the attack on Ukraine has confirmed the nuclear threat to be real, imminent, and existential.

Dear Prime Minister,

With the world challenged by climate disasters, pandemics, regional wars, growing numbers of refugees, food insecurity and more, Russia's attack on Ukraine has driven the nuclear threat out of the political shadows, exposing yet another crisis that is real, imminent, and existential.

President Vladimir Putin's direct and implied threats to use nuclear weapons have shocked and angered the world, with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg calling the threats "dangerous and irresponsible." President Joe Biden has warned that Armageddon would be the inevitable result once the nuclear threshold was crossed.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, Russia, UK, France, China) have declared that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." The G20 recently stated that "the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible." Two measures designed to help prevent the "inadmissible" from happening are no-first-use commitments and the de-alerting of strategic nuclear weapons.

Therefore, Prime Minister, we call on the Government of Canada to:

1. Urge NATO and its three nuclear weapon state members (US, UK, and France) to commit never to be the first to launch a nuclear attack, and to work toward

universalizing that commitment (which China and India have already made); and

2. Encourage the United States and Russia to take all their strategic nuclear weapons off high alert (of the nine states with nuclear weapons, only the US and Russia maintain dangerous high-alert deployments).

We also urge you to publicly acknowledge the current nuclear crisis and call on all states with nuclear arms to honour the norm against nuclear weapons use that has been respected for the 77-years since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Adopting these measures alone would, of course, not end the nuclear crisis, but it would make the world safer. It would diminish the likelihood of escalation to nuclear use in a conventional war. It would radically reduce the risk of the inadvertent launch of strategic nuclear weapons in response to false warnings of attack. It would also encourage a geopolitical environment more conducive to further progress in nuclear disarmament.

There will never be an easy time to mitigate and eventually eliminate the nuclear weapons threat to our planet; it is vital to act now.

Sincerely,

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