

# Making nuclear weapons taboo

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Each year when the Nobel Prizes are awarded, I listen for the area I can relate to the most: the Peace Prize. Usually, I have never heard of the person or organization; my study of the winner always engenders much inspiration and admiration.

In October of this year, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo. This is a grassroots movement comprised of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, also known as Hibakusha. [A reason this organization received the Peace Prize](#) was for efforts to “achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.”

Since 1945 many people have set about spreading the news that nuclear weapons must never be used again, thus creating a kind of “nuclear taboo.” Yet, as we have all heard in the news, the threat of using nuclear weapons is very real and threatening. The call to action against this very real danger is coming from several areas.

In 1963’s [Pacem in Terris](#), John XXIII [called for](#) a cessation of the arms race, a reduction of stockpiles, and agreement on the banning of nuclear weapons. This seems to be the stance of the popes until Pope Francis, condemning the use of the bomb; Francis proclaims the very possession of the bomb immoral. Francis also denies the morality of [possessing the atom bomb for deterrence](#) purposes. This is a new development by his papacy.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, NM, says in his pastoral letter [Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament](#),

We can no longer deny or ignore the dangerous predicament we have created for ourselves with a new nuclear arms race, one that is arguably more dangerous than the past Cold War. In the face of increasing threats from Russia, China, and elsewhere, I point out that a nuclear arms race is inherently self-perpetuating, a vicious spiral that prompts progressively destabilizing actions and reactions by all parties, including our own country. We need nuclear arms control, not an escalating nuclear arms race.

Pax Christi USA, unsurprisingly, has taken up the call of Wester: we can no longer deny or ignore the extremely dangerous predicament of our human family. They list [a terrific number of resources](#) to assist us in our study and action. These materials include information on the grassroots group [Back from the Brink](#). What can each of us do to work on making the world free of nuclear weapons? There are suggestions of what folks can do in supporting [House Resolution 77](#); while the 118th Congress has concluded its work, it’s likely that a similar bill could be introduced in the 119th. This resolution calls on the president to embrace the goals and provisions of the Treaty on

the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and make nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of U.S. national security policy. It also calls on the United States to lead a global effort to move the world back from the nuclear brink and to prevent nuclear war.

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), [it is estimated](#) that “plans for U.S. nuclear forces, as described in the fiscal year 2023 budget and supporting documents, would cost \$756 billion over the 2023–32 period, \$122 billion more than CBO’s 2021 estimate for the 2021–30 period.”

The Union of Concerned Scientists states that nuclear weapons are “the most dangerous invention the world has ever seen. Can we prevent them from being used again?” Spend some time [on their website](#) if you’ve forgotten the chills that the Oscar-winning movie Oppenheimer stirred in you!

There are multiple issues that demand our attention. Please make a resolution that you will turn your attention to the existential threat of nuclear weapons. The [Doomsday Clock](#) is set at 90 seconds to midnight!