

“The Wisdom of the Survivor”

Conference

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***Human Security, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
In an Age of Terror***

Jennifer Allen Simons, Ph.D., LL.D.

My name is Jennifer Allen Simons. I am President of The Simons Foundation which, this year, is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary of working for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

I am very pleased to be one of the sponsors of this conference and to Chair this Panel on Human Security, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in an Age of Terror. I am honored to be among this distinguished group on the panel, and welcome James Carroll, Natalia Mironova and Yuki Tanaka.

I have read the biographies of the speakers at this conference who survived the atom bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and I have listened to their stories of death, survival, suffering and of lifelong debilitating illness. Their suffering makes me feel physically ill. And I am filled with admiration for their courage and perseverance, and for the courage and perseverance of the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who travel the world in their ongoing attempts to have people understand the consequences for humanity of the atom bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – and of their endeavours to have this weapon of terror banned for all time.

Too, ingrained in my memory are the television images of the terrorist aerial attack on the World Trade Centre – images of terrified people, minute figures high in the upper reaches of the building, desperately waving for help. And the sight of those who jumped to their deaths still fills me with horror.

The connection between these two acts of mass atrocity resonates in me because I was in New York during the first terrorist attack in the World Trade Center garage. And recently, General Jack Sheehan, former Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic for NATO and Commander-in-Chief for the U.S. Atlantic Command, told me that a nuclear weapon could be loaded on the back of a truck and some TNT added and driven into a building.

Horrifying though the aerial attack was, I can easily imagine, too, the outcome if a nuclear weapon had been detonated from the truck in the first attack on the World Trade Centre. The one and a half million residents of Manhattan, and the hundreds of thousands who come into the city every day, would have suffered a fate similar to that of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - hundreds of thousands of incinerations, deaths, debilitating injuries and life-long ill-health.

Most certainly, the bomb is designed for cities – the weapon of the industrial and post-industrial age – the weapon for the era of urbanization, the growth of large cities. Military installations do not require the massive destructive power of a nuclear weapon. The design and purpose for nuclear weapons is to target the most densely populated areas, to kill the maximum number of civilians and to destroy their habitats in what would constitute a crime against humanity and an act of genocide. And in contravention – negation even – of the International Humanitarian laws created to protect civilians in time of war.

Currently over half the world's people live in urban areas. In 2006, approximately 75% of the population in developed countries, live in cities. Developing countries are fast catching up with 40% of their populations residing in cities. This is most of the world's people.

It is true that most of the world's people are not under the *direct* threat of nuclear weapons. However, despite the end of the Cold War - the major urban centres of the United States and Russia are still threatened – targeted and the weapons on high-alert status.

The strategic plan for a targeted city is *to attack it*. And because it is targeted it could also suffer the fate of an accidental or mistaken launch. We are fortunate that since Hiroshima and Nagasaki this has not occurred.

It is illegal - under Article 56 of the 1977 Geneva Protocols – to attack a nuclear power plant with any kind of weapon. Yet it is not illegal to target a city with nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are not illegal. It is not illegal to manufacture, stockpile or target a city deemed of military interest. Nor is it illegal to threaten, and to use nuclear weapons if it is believed the survival of the state is at risk. They are not banned in these circumstances.¹

There *are* laws banning nuclear weapons. *It is forbidden* to use nuclear weapons *where there are no people* – no populations. Article V of the Antarctic Treaty forbids nuclear explosions or disposal of radioactive waste in the Antarctic. Article I of the Seabed Treaty prohibits the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and the ocean floor. Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty prohibits nuclear weapons on the moon and other celestial bodies. (Nuclear weapons, thus, are prohibited from planet earth. However, the treaty was written with a pre-Copernican mindset.)

So it is easy to make the connection that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to exterminate populations, their livelihoods and their habitats.

The consequences of the cruel and inhumane destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their citizens have, either not been absorbed by the military security establishments in the nuclear weapons states, or humane considerations do not enter into the strategic planning equation of military security, thus differing little from those of terrorist non-state actors, for whom the sanctity of even their own lives has no meaning.

President Obama acknowledged the responsibility of the United States for using the atom bombs and has pledged to lead the way to work for a world free of nuclear weapons. “*We must stand together*” he said, “*for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. And as ... the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act.*”

¹ See Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity*, 1999.

There can absolutely be no doubt that President Obama will do his utmost to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons; *and* do his utmost to ensure that terrorists will be unable to acquire them. Though the fear driving the current wave of nuclear concern is fear of acquisition by terrorists is – to use the current terminology, ‘*a real and present danger*’ - we should be *equally* frightened by the possibilities of annihilation from the massive United States and Russian nuclear arsenals and the arsenals of the other nuclear powers.

It is not clear how aggressively President Obama will act to rid the world of nuclear weapons. His words on disarmament - this equal third-part of the NPT “grand bargain” - have been *hedged* from the beginning. The “*comprehensive agenda*” he articulated in his Prague speech is not to eliminate nuclear weapons but, rather to “*seek a goal*” for a nuclear free world.

Well, we all know that this goal has had official status since the birth of the United Nations, and that the opportunity has been there since the Baruch Plan of 1946. The fact that President Obama also said “*perhaps not within my lifetime*” – which places it *beyond history* – also suggests that he is not in a hurry to radically cut, eliminate to zero and prohibit nuclear weapons.

However, it is up to all of us to ensure that President Obama’s grand gesture is not, and will not be, a symbolic one; that he will not be another Kennedy or Reagan, both of whom – and without doubt with the best of intentions – made similar statements but only incremental – though important - steps.

Therefore, we must take advantage of the significant opportunity afforded to us by the Obama presidency to *advance* the agenda *from* President Obama’s “to seek the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons” *to* concrete actions to obtain global zero and prohibition of nuclear weapons for all time.

Richard Burt, the United States Chair of Global Zero, says that *all of* President Obama’s *nuclear initiatives* - that is, the New START treaty, the Nuclear Security Summit and the Nuclear Posture Review - *seem designed to build a platform* [for the elimination of nuclear weapons – and is, in his view, “*strategically sound politics.*” It is to be hoped that these cautious, minimal steps, nudging policy and action in the right direction, will help in transforming the mind-set from the Cold War to the new realities.²

Our task is to take President Obama seriously and to hold him to account. There has been an unprecedented global mobilization at all levels to finally rid the world of these genocide weapons.

Parliamentarians and Mayors around the world; host countries of US nuclear weapons calling for the removal of the nuclear weapons from their soil; The Famous Four, Schultz, Kissinger, Perry and Nunn; Global Zero signatories – an impressive group of former

² Richard Burt, “The Goal Remains Nuclear ‘Zero’”, *The Wall Street Journal*, April 12/10

presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, defense ministers, ambassadors, national security advisors, and more than 20 former top military commanders - have added their voices to those of the academics and intellectuals, NGOs and concerned citizens who, since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have been committed and actively working for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This new momentum may be unstoppable. However, it is urgent that we waste no time. The time frame may be short.

Global Zero, of which our Keynote Speaker, Jonathan Schell and I are Principal Signatories, has an Action Plan which demonstrates that the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons, can be achieved by 2030 – within my lifetime I hope, and definitely within the life time of President Obama.³

Thank you!

*Jennifer Allen Simons, Ph.D., LL.D,
President,
The Simons Foundation*

*Senior Fellow, Centre for Dialogue
Adjunct Professor, School For International Studies,
Simon Fraser University.*

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³ see www.globalzero.org