

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR A LETTER TO UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Dear President ----

On January 22, 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force and becomes part of the canon of international law. According to Article 1 of the Treaty, states party to the Treaty are prohibited under any circumstances from any of the following activities:

- (a) Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- (b) Transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly;
- (c) Receive the transfer of or control over nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices directly or indirectly;
- (d) Use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- (e) Assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Treaty;
- (f) Seek or receive any assistance, in any way, from anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Treaty;
- (g) Allow any stationing, installation or deployment of any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or at any place under its jurisdiction or control.

Because the United States has neither signed nor ratified the Treaty it does not have the force of law in this country. But the Treaty was approved by 122 nations in 2017, and has since been signed by 86 nations and ratified by fifty-one. It is a clear reflection of the frustration and impatience of non-nuclear nations with nuclear weapons states that have failed to fulfill the promise they made “in good faith” in the Nonproliferation Treaty in 1970 to negotiate the cessation of the arms race and complete disarmament “at an early date.” While our country and other nuclear weapons states may attempt to sidestep the legal force of the Treaty, we cannot avoid the compelling moral power it carries.

The Treaty is the result of more than a decade of diligent and careful work by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), civil society, and non-nuclear nation states. It has received the strong support of many faith communities, including the Vatican and the Presbyterian Church, USA. This support derives from the fact that the Treaty’s compelling moral power rests on its focus on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons—not only the devastating and catastrophic impact of the use of nuclear weapons, but the impacts of the mining of nuclear materials, the manufacture of weapons

components, the testing of weapons, and the ongoing risks arising from their deployment and maintenance. Add to this the corrosive spiritual effect that nuclear weapons have on those who possess them and threaten to use them, and the compelling nature of the moral argument becomes clear.

I am writing to you about this because the university you head has the dubious distinction of being listed in the report *Schools of Mass Destruction* because of your involvement and support for nuclear weapons production activities. As awareness of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons spreads, attention will be drawn to those institutions that fall outside the boundaries established by the Treaty. This will include corporate entities that do the hands-on production work, financial institutions that benefit from investments attached to weapons production, and academic institutions that are engaged in the work of producing weapons of mass destruction.

No doubt as students, faculty and administrators become more aware that their institution is engaged in activities that fall outside the bounds of international law, you will be called on to take action. I am hoping you will not wait for those pressures to build, but will instead be anxious to stand on the right side of history and will take immediate action to extricate the University of ---- from any and all activities that support the production of nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

You have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership at the very point that science and morals come together. I urge you to step forward, to take decisions on behalf of the university, and to contact your colleagues at other Schools of Mass Destruction to urge collective action.