

Reflection on Hope – for APF Prayers 22/1/26

How can we stay hopeful when it seems like the world is on fire? Well, here are two hopeful signs, of progress on nuclear disarmament:

One is what I have called the Nuclear Morality Flowchart project (now called “You Decide”), and the other is the TPNW (the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons).

Some of you will be very familiar with both of these, but I’ll briefly explain each one and identify the signs of hope.

The Flowchart is basically a tool: it enables people to examine the ethics of nuclear deterrence. If you think it is totally unacceptable for us to be engineering the means to destroy millions of innocent lives for the purpose of our “defence”, then you might be thinking that we don’t need such a tool. But you will also know that here in the UK for example, there is a mindset, centred in Government, but widespread everywhere, inherited from 20th Century history, that says that nuclear deterrence is effective and acceptable.

It is a complex question, and people are misled by simple answers. The flowchart presents all the relevant questions, assembled in a logical network, which anyone can answer for themselves. They may then find themselves facing their own moral inconsistencies. Most people don’t really want to do this. One person told me he would not be tricked into answering my questions! But it can be a powerful tool to help us all be more rational and then more effective in bringing our country nearer to a moral, and indeed physical, safety.

At a political level it could be an extremely powerful tool. In this field, policy makers effectively take moral decisions for us. Their

moral decision path should therefore be transparent; their inconsistencies should be exposed to all, not just to themselves. We can challenge them to show us their route through the questions.

It’s not been an easy task, but here is new hope: In our time, I find more people commending the moral approach and recommending the flowchart. New people are open to the idea of it. We have a new person managing the project. (I’m talking of Jude Madubuike; he is here with us today). The project is now registered as a Community Interest Company. It has a new simple name: “You Decide” which calls us to take individual responsibility for nuclear deterrence.

And also for our hope, we have the treaty – the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Elimination of ‘Atomic weapons’ featured in Resolution No.1. of that first UN General Assembly, 80 years ago at Central Hall Westminster. But for more than 60 years the nuclear armed nations reserved this topic for themselves and effectively resisted progress towards an abolition treaty. You will know that the TPNW came about through several years of development and negotiation, not at the highest levels of nuclear state power, but of people at all levels, and all countries, focussed on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, not on the security of superstates. Eventually a draft text was agreed by 122 nations at a special meeting of the General Assembly.

It’s a different sort of treaty. In its objectives it acknowledges the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament. And it includes for example, provision of support for the victims of nuclear weapons, including those who suffer the effects of around 2000 nuclear test explosions.

In 2019 the Treaty came into force upon being ratified by 50 nations. Today we celebrate the 5th Anniversary of that event. And following the accession of Ghana in September 2025 we can now celebrate that more than half of all UN nations are signed up to the treaty. The nine nuclear armed nations are getting increasingly isolated. How can they rejoin humanity?

The TPNW is the treaty that will see the end of nuclear weapons. It is like no other nuclear treaty. It is not just an agreement on limitation, between the nuclear nations, it is explicitly a total ban, along with a framework and procedures to achieve that. When the first one of those nine nuclear nations can see the light, and decides to disarm, they will have the means to do it. They will be joining a club with established rules for a time-controlled, internationally-supervised disarmament process. In passing the necessary legislation, to ensure compliance in their own country, they will be following 100 other countries that have already done so. What we have here is the means to achieve the goal of abolition.

Now it is up to us. Many of us are the citizens of what I think will one day be called the former nuclear-rogue-states. We will assert the outcome of our moral discernment, and change the course of our governments. The weapons are incredibly dangerous, difficult to maintain, militarily useless and vastly expensive. Given the means, the TPNW, what sane government would not cast them aside in exchange for moral high ground and the chance to meet the real needs of its people?

Dare I suggest that two possible first steps arise from this reflection:

1. Send our flowchart to your MP and demand a morally-considered response.
2. Provide some active support for Jude; in launching the You Decide project.

And let us be, ourselves, signs of hope.

Martin Birdseye 22 January 2026

The Flowchart is at <http://nuclearmorality.com/>

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