

Universal Declaration on Non-Violence

The Incompatibility of Religion and War

October 7, 1990

This document is an attempt to set forth a vision of non-violence within the context of an emerging global civilization in which all forms of violence, especially War, are totally unacceptable as a means to settle disputes within and among nations, groups and persons. This new vision of civilization is global in scope, universal in culture, and based on love and compassion, the highest moral, spiritual principles of the various historical religions. Its universal nature acknowledges the essential fact of modern life: the interdependence of nations, economies, ecologies, cultures and religious traditions.

As members of religious groups throughout the world, we are increasingly aware of our responsibility to promote Peace in our age and in the ages to come. Nevertheless, we recognize that in the history of the human family, people of various religions, acting officially in the name of their respective traditions, have either initiated or collaborated in organized and systematic violence or War. These actions have at times been directed against other religious traditions, groups and nations, as well as within particular religious traditions. This pattern of behavior is totally inappropriate for spiritual persons and communities.

Therefore, as members of world religions, we declare before the human family that:

Religion can no longer be an accomplice to War, to terrorism, or to any other forms of violence, organized or spontaneous, perpetuated by the human will against any member of the human family. Because this family is one, global and interrelated, our actions must be consistent with this identity. We recognize the right and duty of governments to defend the security of their people and to relieve those afflicted by exploitation and persecution. Nevertheless, we declare that religion must not permit itself to be used by any state, group or organization for the purpose of supporting violent aggression for nationalistic gain. We have an obligation to explore social and political alternatives to actions and reactions which inflict suffering and destruction, and to promote a new vision of society--one in which War has no place in resolving disputes between and among states, organizations and religions.

In making this declaration we, the signatories, commit ourselves to embrace this vision. We call upon all the members of our respective traditions to embrace this vision. We urge our members and all peoples to use every moral means to dissuade their governments from engaging in War, terrorism, and violations of

fundamental human rights. We strongly encourage the United Nations Organization to employ all available resources toward the development of peaceful methods for resolving conflict among nations.

Our declaration is intended to choose and sustain an emerging global society in which non-violence is pre-eminent as a value in all human relations. We offer this vision of Peace, mindful of the late M.K. Gandhi's "Truth Weapon," Satyagraha, and of the words of Pope Paul VI to the United Nations in October of 1965: "No more War; War never again!"

Signatories

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