

Pope launches attack on nuclear weapons

World peace cannot be based on false sense of security these weapons provide, he tells UN conference
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Today's threats to global peace and security must be countered through dialogue and development, not nuclear weapons, Pope Francis told the United Nations.

"How sustainable is a stability based on fear, when it actually increases fear and undermines relationships of trust between peoples," the pope asked in a letter sent to a U.N. meeting on nuclear arms.

"International peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power," he said in the message, released by the Vatican March 28.

The pope's message was read out at the U.N. Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination, The Catholic Herald reported.

The conference was being held at the U.N. headquarters in New York March 27-31.

The U.S. ambassador Nikki Haley said it was the responsibility of leaders to keep their nations safe.

"There is nothing I want more for my family than a world with no nuclear weapons. But we have to be realistic," Haley said.

However, the pope said that the strategy of nuclear deterrence was not an effective response to today's threats to peace and security: terrorism, cybersecurity, environmental problems and poverty.

The world needs "to adopt forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security," he said.

The complete elimination of nuclear weapons is "a moral and humanitarian imperative" that should prompt people to reflect on "an ethics of peace and multilateral and cooperative security that goes beyond the fear and isolationism that prevail in many debates today."

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