

# A CALL BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO BAN CLUSTER BOMBS NOW



As the world's governments convene to negotiate and adopt the Cluster Munitions Convention, religious communities are uniquely poised to facilitate dialogue and mobilize urgent action to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions.

The extent of the suffering and loss caused by these weapons has been a powerful call to action for religious communities. Their indiscriminate nature causes death and suffering to civilians during a conflict but also for years afterwards. The lingering threat of these unexploded bombs hampers post-conflict rebuilding and rehabilitation.

Religious leaders, and their respective communities, can act as channels of communication, helping to ensure the success of the Oslo Process. They have particular cultural understandings, infrastructures, and resources that can unleash urgent common action. Many have issued statements, such as that from Pope Benedict XVI calling for the “adoption of suitable measures for [...] dealing with the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions.”

One way that representatives of diverse faith communities have displayed their commitment to ending the suffering caused by cluster munitions is through a letter signed by nearly 150 religious leaders. It was published internationally and is presented below. This initiative was supported by the Cluster Munition Coalition, Pax Christi International and the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

It is but one demonstration of the instrumental role that multi-religious understanding and leadership can play in guaranteeing the strongest treaty possible, one that not only prohibits future use of this weapon but also reaches out to those already harmed by it. It is an indication of a longer term commitment extending beyond the Dublin conference, acknowledging that without determined action on the part of faith leaders, the civilian harm caused by cluster bombs both during and after conflict will continue to grow.

*“As people of faith, we raise our voices for the protection of life and promotion of peace by calling on all governments to end the production, transfer, stockpiling, and use of cluster bombs.*

*For more than 40 years, cluster bombs have killed and wounded innocent people, causing untold suffering, loss and hardship for thousands in more than 20 countries across the planet. These weapons cause death and injury to civilians during attacks and for years afterwards because of the lethal contamination that they cause. Cluster bombs hamper post-conflict rebuilding and rehabilitation and the dangerous work of cluster bomb clearance absorbs funds that could be spent on other urgent humanitarian needs. Without determined action, the civilian harm caused by these weapons both during and after conflict will continue to grow.*

*The voices of those whose lives have already been shattered by cluster munitions call us to take meaningful and courageous action. Our faith traditions call us to stand with those who have suffered, and to work for the well-being of the human family through relationships of respect, justice, and peace.*

*We are speaking out today on the Global Day of Action to Ban Cluster Bombs where people across all continents, cultures and faiths are taking action and calling for a ban on cluster bombs.*

*A comprehensive ban on cluster bombs can and must be negotiated one month from now in Dublin, Ireland, in May 2008. We urge governments to take up this heavy responsibility by seizing this opportunity to take concrete action for the protection of the vulnerable and for the promotion of peace.”*

## **-Faith Leaders Letter, 19 April 2008**

**The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu**  
Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town

**Dr. Christoph Cardinal Schönborn**  
Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna, Catholic Church of Austria

**Archbishop John Dew**  
Archbishop of Wellington, Catholic Church of New Zealand

**Archbishop Anders Wejryd**  
Church of Sweden

**Chief Rabbi David Rosen**  
Chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, Israel

**Archbishop John Onaiyekan**  
Archbishop of the Abuja Diocese of the Catholic Church and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria

**Rabbi Danni Rich**  
Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism

**Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo**  
Archbishop of Kinshasa, DR Congo and Co-President Pax Christi International

**Reverend Dr. Setri Nyomi**  
Secretary General of World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Presbyterian Church in Canada

**Right Reverend Francis S. Nabieu**  
Head of Methodist Church Sierra Leone

**Dr. Fauzy Khoury**  
Exarch of the Greek Catholic Melkite Church in the Galilee

**Muhammad Amir Kpakpo Addo**  
Ag. Executive Secretary, Ghana Conference of Religions for Peace, Ghana

**Pratap Bhogilal**  
Chairman Emeritus, World Jain Confederation, India

**M. L. Pindolia**  
President, Hindu Council of Africa, Africa

**Samdech Tep Vong**  
The Great Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Cambodia

**Rev. Nichiko Niwano**  
President, Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan

**Dr. Khurshid Khan**  
Ameer/President of the Islamic Circle of North America, USA

**Karen Hurley**  
President General, World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations

**Marie Dennis**  
Director, Maryknoll Global Concerns, Co-President, Pax Christi International

**Ela Gandhi**  
Editor/Chair of Satyagraha, In Pursuit of Truth, South Africa

**Serigne Mansour Sy**  
Federation des Associations Islamique de Senegal

**His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrosios**  
Metropolitan of Kalabryta and Aigialeia, The Orthodox Church of Greece

**Archbishop Gunnar Stålsett**  
Committee World Council Religions for Peace, Lutheran Church of Norway

**Sister Emmanuelle**  
Founder and Honorary President of ASMAE (Association Soeur Emmanuelle), France.

**Archbishop Antonio Ledesma**  
Vice President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and Bishop-President of Pax Christi Pilipinas (Philippines)

**Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari**  
Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain

**Indarjit Singh**  
Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK

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Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of Freetown and Bo (Roman Catholic), Sierra Leone

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President, Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone

**Sheik Abu Bakarr Conteh**  
1st Vice President, Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone, Imam of Freetown Municipality Council and Masjid Hamdallah

**Sheik Abu-Bakarr Tejan-Jalloh**  
Chief Imam of Freetown Central Mosque, Sierra Leone

**Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo**  
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**Bishop Émile Destombes**  
Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, the Catholic Church in Cambodia

**Bishop Anthony Sami**  
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**Bishop Yves Ramousse Gustave**  
The Catholic Church in Cambodia

**Bishop Ragnar Persenius**  
Diocese of Uppsala, Church of Sweden

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**Bishop Denis Browne**  
Bishop of Auckland, Catholic Church of New Zealand

**Bishop Barry Jones**  
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**Bishop David Stancliffe**  
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**Bishop William Kenny**  
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