

**A Call for the United States to Acknowledge and Address the Harm
Caused by Nuclear Weapons Testing in the Pacific and to Meet Its Obligations to
the Marshallese People**

December 5, 2022

TO: President Joseph R. Biden

CC: Secretary of State, Antony Blinken
Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations Joseph Yun
Ambassador of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United States, Gerald Zackios

We are writing to respectfully urge the White House and the Department of State to prioritize issues of nuclear justice in the ongoing negotiations between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) on an updated Compact of Free Association (COFA).

As you know, between 1946 and 1958, the United States government conducted high-yield nuclear weapons test explosions in the atmosphere and underwater in the Marshall Islands, which produced profound and long-lasting adverse health, environmental, and cultural impacts.

As the 2012 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the impact of the U.S. nuclear testing program on human rights in the RMI concluded:

“The nuclear testing resulted in both immediate and continuing effects on the human rights of the Marshallese...radiation from the testing resulted in fatalities and in acute and long-term health complications. The effects of radiation have been exacerbated by near-irreversible environmental contamination, leading to the loss of livelihoods and lands...many people continue to experience indefinite displacement.”

The scale of nuclear testing was immense. The 67 U.S. atmospheric nuclear weapons tests—23 at Bikini Atoll and 44 at Enewetak Atoll—spewed radiation over the entirety of the Marshall Islands and produced a total explosive power of 108.5 megatons (TNT equivalent). That was about 100 times the total yield of all atmospheric tests conducted at the Nevada Test Site.

These dangerous nuclear detonations produced incalculable harm to the land and people of the Marshall Islands. Whole islands were vaporized by these tests. Radioactive fallout affected all of the islands, and lingering radioactive contamination has made some islands uninhabitable. But to this day, the only individuals considered by the United States as impacted by U.S. nuclear testing are those specified in Section 177 of the original Compact: the people of Rongelap, Utrik, Bikini, and Enewetak atolls, including their descendants.

The U.S. nuclear tests have led to serious illnesses such as radiation poisoning, elevated cancer rates, birth defects, and contamination of food and water sources that continues to this day. The nuclear test explosions seriously disrupted cultural traditions and ways of life. Many Marshallese were dislocated and exiled from their homes; many are still unwilling or unable to return, especially given that the RMI does not have the capacity to independently determine the risks and

to monitor them. A massive nuclear waste site, the Runit Dome, is leaking and is threatened by rising sea levels and the possibility of stronger storms due to climate change.

The U.S. government clearly has an ongoing moral obligation to help address the adverse impacts of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. We do not believe that any new Compact of Free Association can be considered fair or equitable without fully addressing these issues in a way that is acceptable to the Marshallese people.

While we defer to the Marshallese people and leaders involved in the negotiations of the Compact to determine the specific provisions relating to their longstanding claims for nuclear justice, we want to add our voice to the calls from many quarters—from Marshallese people, to the RMI National Nuclear Commission, to the halls of Congress—for:

- A formal apology from the U.S. government to the people of the Marshall Islands for the profound and adverse health, environmental and social consequences of the United States’ nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands;
- Meeting the compensation claims of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal in a serious and fair manner;
- Working collaboratively with appropriate parties in the Marshall Islands to expeditiously address environmental monitoring and remediation requirements across the whole country, and to collaboratively develop, implement and provide the necessary financial support for long-term environmental remediation programs and activities;
- Expanding access to health care and improving health care capacity especially as it relates to treatment related to illnesses associated with radiation exposure;
- Prompt declassification of all documents related to U.S. nuclear testing in the region, cleanup activities, and decisions relating to the relocation of displaced Marshallese peoples, and providing full and complete transparency and accessibility to all relevant post-detonation environmental and health assessment studies and data;
- Sufficient and dedicated financial and technical support for building independent, national capacity in the RMI to monitor, assess, and address environmental and health needs so that the Marshallese people have the ability to make and implement better informed decisions concerning their health and environment in the years to come.

We were pleased to see that following the Pacific Islands Summit in September 2022, the United States declared that it remains “committed to addressing the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ ongoing environmental, public health concerns, and other welfare concerns.”

In addition to the deadly legacy of U.S. atmospheric nuclear testing during the Cold War, the people of the Marshall Islands are on the frontlines of the unfolding global climate disaster. Now is the time for the United States to step up and meet its responsibilities by delivering on these important steps for Marshallese people through the new Compact of Free Association.

Thank you for your consideration.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

David Hawks, Acting Executive Director
Alliance of Multicultural Physicians

Nadya Dutchin, Executive Director
American Humanist Association

Daryl G. Kimball,
Executive Director
Arms Control Association

Shatabhisha Shetty, Executive Director
Asia Pacific Leadership Network

Peter Wilk, MD, Administrative Chair
Back from the Brink

Cindy Folkers, Radiation and Health Hazard Specialist
Beyond Nuclear

Shea Leibow, National Organizer
CODEPINK

Bo Jacobs, President
CORE Hanford

Estella Owoimaha-Church, Executive Director
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities

Wenonah Hauter, Founder and Executive Director
Food & Water Watch

Andrew Albertson, Executive Director
Foreign Policy for America

Allen Hester, Legislative Representative for Nuclear Disarmament and Pentagon Spending
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Mary Olson, Founder
Gender and Radiation Impact Project

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Co-Executive
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Mari Faines, Partner for Mobilization
Global Zero

Norma Torres, Executive Director
Greenpeace

Arjun Makhijani, President
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, Director
Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice

Alan Owen, Founder
Legacy of the Atomic Bomb, Recognition for Atomic Test Survivors (LABRATS)

John Burroughs, Senior Analyst
Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

Matthew Davis,
Senior Director of Government Affairs
League of Conservation Voters

Susan Gunn, Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Keith Kiefer, NAAV National Commander
National Association of Atomic Veterans, Inc.

Bemnet Alemayehu, Senior Staff Scientist
Natural Resources Defense Council

Michael Beer, Director
Nonviolence International

Ivana Nikolic Hughes, President
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Libbe HaLevy, Producer and Host
Nuclear Hotseat Podcast

Diane D'Arrigo, Radioactive Waste Project Director
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Kevin Martin, President
Peace Action

Emilie McGlone, Director
Peace Boat US

Robert Gould, MD, Chair
Peace Caucus in affiliation with the American Public Health Association

Jeff Carter, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Emma Belcher, President
Ploughshares Fund

Robert K. Musil, Ph.D., M.P.H.,
President and CEO
Rachel Carson Council

Christian N. Ciobanu, Coordinator and Co-Founder
Reverse The Trend: Save Our People, Save Our Planet

Norman Solomon, National Director
RootsAction.org

Tim Dewane, JPIC Director
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province

Leslie G. Fields, National Director, Policy Advocacy and Legal
Sierra Club

Paul Magno, Program Director
The Isaiah Project

Tara Drozdenko, Director, Global Security Program
Union of Concerned Scientists

Rev. Michael Neuroth, Policy Advocate for International Issues
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries

George Friday, National Coordinator
United for Peace and Justice

Gerry Condon, President
Veterans For Peace Golden Rule Project

Faith Gay, Government Relations Associate
Win Without War

Cynthia Lazaroff, Founder
Women Transforming Our Nuclear Legacy

Darien De Lu, President, WILPF US
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom US

David Swanson, Executive Director
World BEYOND War

ARIZONA
Matthew Capalby, Spokesman
Downwinders of Mohave County Arizona

Jack and Felice Cohen-Joppa, Coordinators
the Nuclear Resister

Barbara H. Warren, MD, MPH, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Arizona

ARKANSAS

Melisa Laelan, Founder and Executive Director
Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese

Benetick Kabua Maddison, Executive Director
Marshallese Educational Initiative

CALIFORNIA

Mary Beth Brangan, Co-Founder and Co-Director
Ecological Options Network

Matt Harper, Associate Director
Los Angeles Catholic Worker

Denise Duffield, Associate Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles

Catherine Crockett, Board President
Monterey Peace and Justice Center

Robert M. Gould, MD, President
Physicians for Social Responsibility-San Francisco Bay

Dennis Nelson, Director
Support and Education for Radiation Victims (SERV)

Marylia Kelley, Executive Director
Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment (CAREs)

Jacqueline Cabasso, Executive Director
Western States Legal Foundation

GEORGIA

Glenn Carroll, Coordinator
Nuclear Watch South

HAWAII

Kip Goodwin, Founding Member
Kaua`i Alliance for Peace and Social Justice

James V. Albertini, President
Malu 'Aina Center for Non-Violent Education & Action Action

Mele Stokesberry, President
Maui Peace Action

Colonel (Ret) Ann Wright, Chapter Coordinator
Veterans For Peace Chapter 113-Hawaii

ILLINOIS

David Borris, President
Chicago Area Peace Action

MAINE

Sydney Sewall, MD, President of Board
PSR Maine

MARYLAND

Max Obuszewski, Founder
Baltimore Nonviolence Center

MASSACHUSETTS

Joseph Gerson, PhD, President
Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security

Anna Linakis, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Greater Boston

MINNESOTA

Dave Logsdon, President,
Mike McDonald, Secretary
Twin Cities VFP, Veterans For Peace Twin Cities Chapter 27

NEVADA

Brian Terrell, Outreach Coordinator
Nevada Desert Experience

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Will Hopkins, Executive Director
NH Peace Action

NEW JERSEY

The Rev. Robert Moore, Executive Director
Coalition for Peace Action

NEW MEXICO

Joni Arends, Co-Founder
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety

Petuuche Gilbert, Vice President
Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment

Susan Gordon, Coordinator
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment

Jay Coghlan, Executive Director
Nuclear Watch New Mexico

Teracita Keyanna, Community Member/Executive Alternate
Red Water Pond Road Community Association

Don Hancock,
Nuclear Waste Program Director
Southwest Research and Information Center

Jean Stevens, Director
Taos Environmental Film Festival

Gregory Corning, President
Veterans For Peace Joan Duffy (Santa Fe, NM) Chapter

NEW YORK

Mari Inoue, Co-Founder
Manhattan Project for a Nuclear-Free World

Emily Rubino, Executive Director
Peace Action New York State

Ellen Ferranti, MD, Secretary
Physicians for Social Responsibility-New York

OHIO

Tanya Maus, Director
Peace Resource Center at Wilmington College

Vina Colley, President
Portsmouth/Piketon Residents for Environmental Safety and Security (PRESS)

OREGON

Betsy Toll, Board Chair
Living Earth Gatherings

Fredrick Schafer, State Commander
Oregon Association of Atomic Veterans

Jesse Gasper, Executive Director
Oregon Marshallese Community Association

Kelly Campbell, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Oregon

Debra Higbee-Sudyka, Conservation Committee Chair
Sierra Club Oregon Chapter

Daniel Shea, President
Veterans For Peace Chapter 72

PENNSYLVANIA

Tonyehn Verkitus, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Pennsylvania

SOUTH CAROLINA

Tom Clements,
Director
Savannah River Site Watch

TENNESSEE

Ralph Hutchison, Coordinator
Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

Coordinator
Pax Christi Memphis

UTAH

Kristen Rogers-Iversen, President
Gandhi Alliance for Peace

Deb Sawyer, Coordinator
Utah Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

WASHINGTON

Leonard Eiger, Communications Coordinator
Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action

Shirley Shimada, Member, Board of Directors
From Hiroshima to Hope

Tracy W. Powell, Founder
No More Bombs

Glen Anderson, Founder and Chairperson
Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Liz Moore, Executive Director
Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane

Bill Dole, Policy Committee Member
Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice

Mary Hanson, Chair
Seattle Fellowship of Reconciliation

Max Savishinsky, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Washington

Aline Prata, Executive Director
Whatcom Peace & Justice Center

Hollis Higgins, Secretary
Veterans For Peace Spokane Chapter #35

WISCONSIN

Hannah Mortensen, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Wisconsin

Kelly Lundeen, John LaForge and Lindsay Potter, Co-Directors
Nukewatch