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Catholic Workers protest nukes and drones in Nevada

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NCR Today

Last weekend, a national gathering of Catholic Workers in Las Vegas, Nevada concluded with a demonstration protesting nuclear weapons and drones.

About 100 people held an interfaith liturgy at the entrance to Nevada's nuclear testing grounds on Sunday. After the prayers, the group walked towards the Nevada National Security Site, formerly known as the Nevada Test site. Thirty-seven men and 22 women crossed the white line delineating one of the test site's boundaries and were promptly arrested by Nye County sheriffs.

Upon release, many of the activists went to nearby Creech Air Force base where 18 were arrested by Clark County police. Those arrested at the Nevada site received citations and were released, but at the Creech site the activists were charged with jaywalking, unlawful assembly. Most of those were given court dates of Dec. 5

Sunday's anti-nuclear, anti-drone demonstrations also marked the tenth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. The military base at Creech is the headquarters of the Air Force's 432nd Air Wing of Predator and Reaper drones, which operates armed, remotely-piloted aircraft in various foreign countries including Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, and Pakistan. For more on drones:
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec11/drones1_10-10.html

More than a thousand atomic weapons have been detonated at the Nevada site, making it the most bombed place on the planet. Jim Haber, coordinator for the Nevada Desert Experience, an organization working to end weapons testing there, says the site continues to support the country's nuclear weapons programs, has a mandate to restart full-scale nuclear bomb tests within two years if so ordered by the president and receives and stores radioactive waste.

The nuclear test site and Air Force base are on lands belonging to the Shoshone and Paiute native peoples. Speaking just before demonstrators crossed the line at the Nevada test site, Johnny Bobb, Chief of the Western Shoshone tribe said, "We want our young kids to have a clean future. I want my grand kids to have a clean future. We came here today not just for us but for everyone."

The Catholic Workers, who had gathered for the weekend from across the country, released a statement describing their intentions with the protests. It follows below:

Final Statement for Las Vegas Catholic Worker Gathering

We Catholic Workers from around North America gather in Las Vegas on this 10th anniversary of the U.S. bombing and invasion of Afghanistan with the theme "From Empire to Servanthood."

We renounce all war-making as a affront to the God of Creation and we reject the false gods and religion of Empire that dominate our national spirit. We call on our church and nation to join us in repenting for the violence the U.S. has inflicted, and make reparations to all of its victims at home and in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere.

At this critical point in history, when we face unending wars, nuclear perils, occupations, and economic collapse, when human life and creation itself has become so devalued and killing has become the norm; when greed, exploitation, racism and discrimination are at the heart of social injustice; when our earth and environment is endangered as never before; we recommit ourselves to the God of creation that calls us to revere all life as sacred, and to resist the way of violence, oppression, and empire.

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As we hear the cry of the suffering and the poor of our country and world, we demand that all resources being squandered for weapons and war be instead spent to meet urgent human needs.

As the U.S. government continues its immoral and illegal occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and its murderous drone attacks, especially in Pakistan, we heed the monumental example of Jesus and Dorothy Day.

In the name of Jesus, who calls us to love unconditionally and be peacemakers, we call on all followers of Jesus to embrace and practice the Gospel of Nonviolence. We urge our church leadership to break their silence and prophetically proclaim Christ's gospel by calling the entire nation to repent for the war crimes we have committed. We invite them and all followers of Jesus to join us in making the following appeal to the political, military, and economic power structure of our nation:

Mindful of all political prisoners, including those Catholic Workers and other resisters imprisoned for acts of peacemaking, we commit ourselves, to nonviolently resist all forms of state-sanctioned violence and oppression.

In our efforts to come out of and resist US Empire we concluded our weekend gathering by doing nonviolent direct actions at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site and at Creech AFB, a center of U.S. drone warfare.

In solidarity with sisters and brothers around the world calling for an end to political repression, corporate domination and militarism, we seek to build a new society in the shell of the old. We commit ourselves to help create the Beloved Community, where all God's people can live together in peace with justice.

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