



Faithful Security

National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger

**RELIGIOUS LEADERS PRAISE ADMINISTRATION FOR
AGREEMENT WITH NORTH KOREA
Urge Similar Strategy with Iran**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Wilbanks, 505-758-1206

WASHINGTON, DC, July 17, 2007--A group of prominent religious leaders released a statement today congratulating the Bush administration for successful diplomatic efforts toward the denuclearization of North Korea and urging the administration to apply a similar strategy to the Iranian nuclear standoff. The statement coincides with the announcement early Monday that North Korea has begun to dismantle its nuclear facilities under international inspection, to fulfill its obligations under the February 2007 denuclearization agreement.

Signatories include presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, the head of Church World Service, the chair of the Committee on International Policy for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the national director of the Islamic Society of North America.

"The agreement with North Korea demonstrates the value of diplomacy in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons," the statement reads. "It validates the preferential use of words, rather than war, as a response to conflict. Our religious traditions teach that efforts should be made to explore every alternative in resolving a conflict before going to war."

Bishop Thomas Wenski of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops stated: "On Easter Sunday Pope Benedict said, 'Through the wounds of the Risen Christ we can see the evils which afflict humanity with the eyes of hope.' Nonproliferation is a sign of hope for a more secure world. The administration is to be commended for securing a negotiated resolution of the nuclear question with North Korea. We urge a similar approach with Iran. These two cases point to the wider search for a more peaceful world that respects nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament."

Professor Glen Stassen of Fuller Theological Seminary remarked, "The signatories to this statement join the growing consensus of American religious leaders – in particular notable evangelicals, like Franklin Graham and Rick Warren – who believe in the importance of dropping everything and going to talk with adversaries in order to make peace."

In a July 2006 interview with *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, Graham stated, "I want to encourage the president, I want to encourage this administration, those in Congress—we need to talk to the North Koreans face to face, period. Eyeball to eyeball. And there is a lot that can be accomplished if we simply just do that."

Similarly, Warren said of last July's North Korean missile tests: "I am not a politician. I am a pastor. But I do know that in any conflict—whether in a marriage, in business or between nations—as long as the parties keep talking, there is hope. My plea to everyone involved in this diplomatic process is to please, keep talking."

The statement was shepherded by the National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger (NRPN), a multi-faith coalition devoted to ending the nuclear weapons danger. For more information on North Korea and the full text of the statement, go to www.faithfulsecurity.org.

###

For more information about this statement, or to schedule an interview with one of the endorsers, please call Jessica Wilbanks at 505-758-1206 or jwilbanksfaithfulsecurity.org.

www.faithfulsecurity.org