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Zones free of nuclear power plants and the Human right to peace

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Zoning for Peace or for any other purpose is considering, dedicating or recognizing a delimited geographical – or sometimes a time – zone, this for a certain objective. Here we are talking about zones free of nuclear power plants.

Some zones evolve more than others, moving from one goal to the next, once the first one is achieved.

Zoning is common in public management of land and not at all unusual in peace and security issues.

Here are, amongst many, a few examples, though precluding that some zones are declared as such and that some others are totally informal:

- South America is a peace zone since 2002.
- South Atlantic and Indian Ocean UN peace zones.
- Humanitarian law zones, decided by the Security Council or possible under the Geneva conventions, including non-defended localities.
- 21st of September international day of peace, as a peace zone in time. Moreover because it is meant to be not only a day of celebration but also a day of ceasefire.
- Countries without armies indeed.
- Local communities here and there.
- Spaces created in schools or any building for peaceful moments or at the opposite for peaceful conflict solving.
- And indeed “nuclear free zones” referring so far to zones free of nuclear weapons. But at the day of today, they can well and should be extended to civilian nuclear activities as well.

Here we briefly explore to see if the concept of these “nuclear free zones” (both military and civilian) has links with the human right to peace.

But first, let me highlight a few specificities of Peace Zones.

Conceptually, if not geographically, peace zones can usually be said to have a “core”, which is a state of – ideally total – harmony, of lasting peace. A peaceful core!

Then the peace zone has a border, may be a place “not so at peace” or a place where peace is still in a stage or at a process of peace building.

There is here a first link with the human right the right to peace.

But let us extend it to the right to life. Traditionally, the right to life is said to have only a core and so forth no possible restriction. You are either alive or there is no life, and therefore no right to life. Having a good life is part of subsequent rights, including a life in peace, a right to live in peace.

In some regards, the Human right to peace is similar. It has only a core, you are either at peace or you are not and there is no right to peace left. So it is hard to conceive restrictions to the right to peace that would not breach peace and therefore the core of the right.

However, as is the right to life – we live together ! – the right to peace is a mediating right. This means that if the right to peace (or the right to life), or more precisely the freedom to be at peace, cannot be breached or restricted, it can and needs to be coordinated with all the other rights and freedoms. This is being done by all our actions tending towards what can thus be called “unconditional” peace. Or are actions tending at the best for the best peace we can give at any given time, under circumstances and with our best practices and capacities.

There: at the border of the right to peace and or of the peace zone, similarly, there is a space for growth and peace building. Which means, not only that we bear for and learn from our mistakes, but also, working at the border of the peace zone means that we take the world as it is, working at making a better place for ourselves, for our children and sometimes for our forefathers.

I hope this theoretical introduction, helps both the concepts of peace zones and of the human right to peace to grow and somehow to merge in their similarities.

Practically, we have Nuclear power plants in 30 countries (Wikipedia source). This means that we have 166 countries in the world do not have any nuclear power plants. They could of course declare themselves, individually, regionally or worldwide a “zone free of nuclear plants”. They should and I hope they do. Spread the message and act upon it!

I think there is great new challenge there for both the antinuclear, the peace and the environmental movements as it overarches the distinction between civilian and military nuclear activities, bringing them both, beyond the border of the zone as they may be so far, to the responsibility to build peace. And such declarations of “nuclear plant’s free zones” would or could stem a worldwide movement towards stopping the production of nuclear electricity to replace them by renewable energies. And it must here be recalled, that nuclear power plants produce only 14 % of the world’s electricity. Is it worth putting all humanity in danger and some regions in very great danger for so little of our electricity? Let us make the change!

I must add that theses declarations do not need to be only at the country’s level. As an example, under its present constitution, the State of Geneva is a “zone free of nuclear power plants”. And

as the constitutional article is written, it is a very active zone towards ending the use of nuclear electricity and promoting renewable energies. So forth, any local community can declare itself a “nuclear free zone” or a “zone free of nuclear power plant’s”, which will also help the worldwide movement to grow. In encourage local communities to do so.

Now as we see, the consequences, as a breach of peace, of civil nuclear accidents are tremendous. The right to a safe environment is a part of the right to peace. Peace zones will have a preventive effect where they are located and an informative effect elsewhere. But they could also have a contrary effect: where there is no such zone, is it permitted to set up a nuclear power plant? Thus a peace zone might differ from a human right to peace, this right being universal.

This is a rather superficial presentation of peace zones and of their links with the human right to peace. But I think that the practical application of the concept to the reality of nuclear power plants can be fruitful. I wish to see many “nuclear free zones” and “zones free of nuclear power”.

The changes we are undergoing this year in the world are great: democracy and energy means are evolving. Peace, as a state of harmony, but just as much as a relation mode between people, institutions and concepts is a needed tool for these changes, for happy changes we bear.

May the energy of peace be peace for energy!

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