

# Faith leaders laud Korean nuke shutdown: The value of diplomacy

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An interfaith coalition of religious leaders is congratulating the Bush administration for reaching an agreement with North Korea to shut down its nuclear weapons facilities. "The agreement with North Korea demonstrates the value of diplomacy in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons," the leaders said in a statement July 17.

The signatories included Episcopal Church presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, Sayyid M. Syeed, national director of the Islamic Society of North America, and Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Another signer, Church World Service executive director John L. McCullough, called the decision by North Korea to close its reactor in Yongbyong "a great and hopeful moment for North Koreans and for the larger world."

The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed July 18 that five facilities, four at Yongbyon and one at Taechon, have been shut down. "The United States should engage Iran in direct negotiations without preconditions to achieve the goal of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and enhancing regional security," the religious leaders wrote.