

the world (after Tlatelolco) which excludes nuclear weapons from an inhabited area of the globe. (The Antarctic is not considered inhabited.)

The Rarotonga Treaty confers nuclear-weapon-free status only on land areas (up to the 12-mile sea limit) in the South Pacific (the numerous islands, as well as Australia and New Zealand), not on the vast stretches of ocean in between. However, unlike Tlatelolco and the Antarctic Treaty, it bans the dumping of radioactive nuclear wastes at sea, and thus touches on issues of civilian nuclear energy. One of its main concerns is banning nuclear tests, which France still carries on in the area (France has not recognized the treaty). Unlike Tlatelolco, it bans all nuclear explosions, even those for peaceful purposes. Another big concern is keeping nuclear-armed ships from harbours, a provision which New Zealand has carried out, as noted above. The treaty does not oblige members to prohibit such visits or other transit, but leaves it up to the discretion of member states.

The small new state of Palau has proclaimed itself nuclear-weapons-free in its 1979 constitution, and has had a long struggle about this with the US, the former administering power of this newly independent territory. In 4 separate elections and 6 different plebiscites since 1979, the people of Palau voted to uphold their constitution, but the last referendum in August 1987 decided for a change, and acceptance of the US conditions for forming a "Compact of Free Association." Fifty Palauan women elders filed suit to challenge the referendum results, but threats of violence and the murder of an anti-compact activist in September 1987 caused them to drop the case. (Bedford, 1988.)