

VITAL SIGNS

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR (IPPNW)



A pledge to “stigmatize, prohibit, and eliminate” nuclear weapons

The Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW) concluded in December with an extraordinary pledge by the Austrian government to work with all relevant stakeholders “to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.”

The indisputable evidence about the medical, environmental, and social consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war has been presented over the course of three such conferences. IPPNW physicians, speaking in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna alongside leaders of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, climate scientists, experts from dis-

aster and relief agencies, and victims of the nuclear era made a compelling case that the time had come “to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

All of the 158 countries that participated in the Vienna conference have now been invited by the Austrian government to associate with the Pledge and to begin the real work of defining and implementing a political process to achieve a goal that has eluded humanity for 70 years.

IPPNW’s sobering assessment that the climate effects of a limited, regional nuclear war could place at least two billion people at risk of starvation featured prominently at all three conferences and is now being

cited regularly as a reason for banning and eliminating nuclear weapons without further delay. The message from physicians—that nuclear war would be an unprecedented medical, environmental, and humanitarian catastrophe and that no meaningful response would be possible—is now at the center of a global movement to complete the long overdue task of nuclear abolition. **VS**

ACTION STEPS

- 1) Go to www.icanw.org/pledge; if your country isn’t on the list, please contact the foreign ministry.
- 2) Watch the video from the Summit and share it widely! [pg. 2 inset]
- 3) Read the new campaign kit [pg.3], and the WHO report overview [pg. 5].



NUCLEAR ABOLITION NEWS AND UPDATES

➡ Read an overview about the Austria Conference: <http://tinyurl.com/ippnw-blog>



LEYMAH GBOWEE, A PEACE ACTIVIST FROM LIBERIA, DELIVERING THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE SUMMIT.

“Nuclear weapons are not a force of nature; they're not an act of God; they're something that human beings built. And we can take them apart... Eliminating these weapons is going to require the involvement of every one of us...”

“When you come to take stock of your life, [I hope] you will honestly be able to look at yourself and say ‘I helped to save the world.’”

—Ira Helfand, 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates

Nobel Peace Laureates call for a ban on nuclear weapons

The 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, held in Rome this past December, condemned nuclear weapons and called for a treaty to ban them.

Co-Presidents Ira Helfand and Tilman Ruff, and several medical students represented IPPNW at the annual gathering of peace laureates, where they reported on the outcome of the just-concluded HINW conference in Vienna. “If we fail to prevent nuclear war,” the Laureates said, “all of our other efforts to secure peace and justice will be for naught. We need to stigmatize, prohibit and elim-

inate nuclear weapons. We urge all states to commence negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons at the earliest possible time, and subsequently to conclude the negotiations within two years.”

Dr. Helfand, who is on the planning committee for the next Summit, which will take place in Atlanta this November, told IPPNW’s fellow Laureates in Rome, “The continued existence of these weapons alone is a threat, but human beings built them, so human beings can also take them apart. We can all work on this; let’s all help to do it.”



ONLINE: [YOUTUBE: YOUTU.BE/YBDFWHzEKEA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBDFWHzEKEA)

“The facts demand a ban”—IPPNW launches new HINW campaign kit




IPPNW has produced a new online campaign kit on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons (HINW). The kit is intended for ICAN campaigners and

others who need quick access to accurate, easily communicated facts about the medical and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons and their use.

According to program director John Loretz, who produced the kit for the Vienna HINW conference, “The facts about nuclear

weapons—their unprecedented destructive power, their massive and indiscriminate medical and environmental effects, their capacity to wipe out everything that sustains life on Earth—have been extensively documented in hundreds of books, journal articles, and scientific papers.

“Campaigners for nuclear abolition are faced with the challenge of presenting the facts correctly and persuasively, and they must often do so in the few moments they have the attention of a government minister, a parliamentarian, a politician, a journalist, or a person on the street.”

Each section presents evidence related to a specific topic, including blast and burn effects, radiation, nuclear famine and nuclear winter, and the impact of nuclear war on physicians and medical infrastructure. The kit concludes with an “elevator speech” that shows how the facts can be used to support a clear, concise case for banning and eliminating nuclear weapons. 

ONLINE: hinwcampaignkit.org

The campaign kit was produced with support from the Simons Foundation and Soka Gakkai International.


“Hibakusha Worldwide”: poster exhibition helps mark 70th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

A new IPPNW poster exhibition, Hibakusha Worldwide, is dedicated to the millions of people whose lives have been affected by the nuclear era. In addition to the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who commemorate the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings in 2015, the 52-poster exhibition documents the impact of nuclear weapons, uranium mining, and other aspects of the nuclear industry on indigenous communities; the downwinders of more than 2,000 nuclear weapons tests;

and the people affected by radioactive fallout from civilian and military nuclear disasters.

The exhibition, which was launched at the Vienna HINW conference in December, contains case studies of places around the world where these detrimental effects have been studied and documented.

Dr. Alex Rosen of IPPNW Germany, who coordinated a global team of researchers and writers who pro-

duced the exhibition, said that as physicians “we see it as our responsibility to educate people about the connections between the civil and military nuclear industry and about the health effects of ionizing radiation. These posters are illustrations of the problem. They are meant to raise questions, to demonstrate connections and to show the extent to which we, as a human race, have caused harm to our planet, to our environment and to our health.” 

ONLINE: nuclear-risks.org



PHOTO: ALEX ROSEN



PHOTO: JOHN LORETZ

ALEX ROSEN WITH MAP OF HIBAKUSHA WORLDWIDE POSTER SITES, IN VIENNA'S HOFBURG PALACE.

AIMING FOR PREVENTION NEWS AND UPDATES

➡ For more information about any of these projects, please contact Maria Valenti (mvalenti@ippnw.org), or go online: www.ippnw.org/afp.html

IPPNW Zambia/Austria collaboration to help survivors of violence shows promise



Can a grassroots project with a lot of volunteer enthusiasm but a low budget succeed in helping survivors of violence?

With this question in mind, IPPNW leaders from Austria and Zambia embarked on an ambitious project to improve care outcomes for victims of violence in Lusaka.

The project was designed to raise awareness about the social, legal, educational, and clinical services available to survivors of violence, and to improve care by facilitating networking and communications among service organizations and agencies. The project team, headed up by Drs. Michael Schober and Robert Mtonga, included volunteer medical students, medical supervisors, and mentors from IPPNW's networks in Austria and Zambia, as well as a number of local social service agencies.

More than 30 medical students from Austria and Zambia collected data over a one-year period in the emergency room at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, Zambia and at the service agencies.

The results look promising. Surveys were conducted before and after

low-cost interventions, and analysis of the data showed that victims of interpersonal violence had an improved understanding of social services available to them and how to contact those services. They also showed more confidence in articulating health concerns and seeking appropriate help later, if necessary.

Benefits to partner organizations included improved networking among agencies, and the availability

of new informational materials to distribute to victims of violence.

“We focused on developing low-cost intervention tools and building on the existing health and social services infrastructures in Lusaka,” Dr. Schober said.

A project summary has been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Injury Prevention*.^{VS}

ONLINE: tinyurl.com/ojfu3gb

IPPNW Action on Arms Trade

The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force December 24th, and to date, 130 States have signed and 63 have ratified it.

IPPNW members and supporters have played a key role in this success by helping to:

- Launch the ATT at a meeting of Nobel laureates calling for an international code of conduct on the global arms trade;
- Promote a humanitarian-based treaty at the UN and in capitals around the world;
- Attend the signing of the ATT and push for the treaty's entry into force;
- Present a medical perspective at preparatory meetings for the First Conference of States Parties on the ATT to be held this summer in Mexico City.^{VS}

Firearms used in half of global homicides says World Health Organization's report

Firearms were used in about half of the 475,000 murders committed worldwide in 2012, according to the *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*.



Published by the World Health Organization, the UN Development Programme, and the United Nations Office of Crime and Drugs, the report is the first of its kind to assess national efforts to address interpersonal violence, reflecting data from 133 countries.

There is good news: overall homicide rates worldwide declined 16% from 2000-2012. For some countries, however, the news is much


bleaker. Killing has escalated in El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Bolivia, Egypt, Myanmar, and Kenya, among other countries.

Stark contrasts exist among some high-income countries regarding firearm use in homicides. For example, in the US, the majority of murders (68%) have been committed with guns, while rates in other countries are much smaller (Australia 17%, Austria 14% and the United Kingdom 8%). In many low-income countries, such as Nigeria, data on homicide trends and the weapons used are not even available.

Homicides are only the tip of this global public health crisis. Violence has serious, life-long, and far-reaching consequences for survivors as well as their families and communities, as IPPNW has documented in *One Bullet Stories*.

What can we do? Preventing violence is the key and is the central goal of IPPNW's Aiming for Prevention program.

At the 136th WHO Executive Board meeting, in February, Member States endorsed the key role that the health sector has to play in addressing violence. "We know what works to prevent violence in our homes, schools and workplaces and on our streets and playgrounds," stated Margaret Chan, Director-General of the WHO.

Throughout 2015 the Global Status Report will be the focus of numerous regional and national policy discussions leading to the development of a global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system to address interpersonal violence. 

ONLINE: www.who.int

Civil society using creative ways to raise awareness about a better use for firearm materials at the ATT Prepcom in Trinidad and Tobago.




"The ATT ship has now in earnest set sail from shores of Trinidad and Tobago towards a healthier world for all!" said former IPPNW Co-President, Dr. Bob Mtonga (on right).

Parliamentarians as health partners

Increasing engagement between health professionals and parliamentarians, in order to prevent armed violence, will be the focus of two public health sessions this May in Lima, Peru.

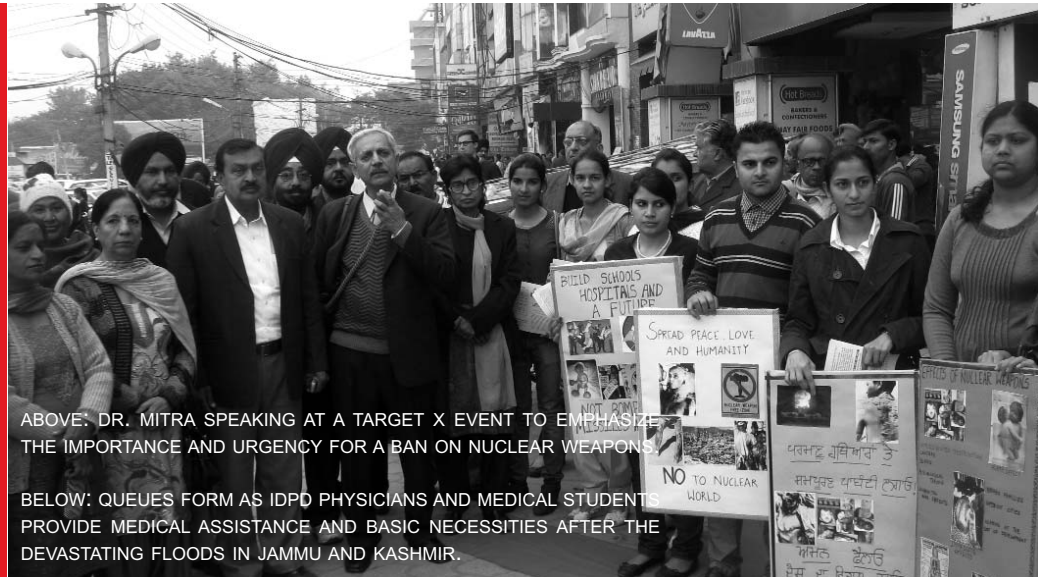
IPPNW has been invited to participate in the upcoming meeting "ATT and UN PoA Implementation through Parliamentary Exchange and Cooperation" organized by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons. IPPNW provided input into an armed violence and health resolution passed recently by the board of the Forum.

IPPNW and the Parliamentary Forum joined together for the first time last year to present the panel "Improving the Health of the UN PoA" at the 5th Biennial Meeting of States in New York City. 

DEVELOPING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE RELATIONSHIPS

INTERVIEW WITH DR. ARUN MITRA, INDIAN DOCTORS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

IPPNW Board member **Arun Mitra** is a lifelong peace and social justice activist, practicing medicine as an ear, nose, and throat surgeon in Ludhiana, India. As General Secretary of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD), he was the key organizer of IPPNW's 18th World Congress in New Delhi. His reputation as the federation's "go-to" person in South Asia is well deserved.



ABOVE: DR. MITRA SPEAKING AT A TARGET X EVENT TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY FOR A BAN ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

BELOW: QUEUES FORM AS IDPD PHYSICIANS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS PROVIDE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND BASIC NECESSITIES AFTER THE DEVASTATING FLOODS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR.



VS: What brought you into the international physicians movement, and why is your work with IDPD so important to you?

AM: Since my student days I have been active with the peace movement in India. I was an active member of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO). When IPPNW was founded, I was convinced that this organization could play a big role. I was one among those who were involved in the formation of the National Association of Indian Doctors for the Prevention of Nuclear War (NAIDPNW) in 1984. The name of this organization was changed to Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) at my suggestion in 1996, since by then we had broadened the scope of our activities.

VS: India is a huge country with a diverse population, major challenges, and major opportunities. What does IDPD see as its role?

AM: The diverse population of India is its strength. It charms you travelling from north to south or east to west, watching and feeling the

changes in outlook, dress, language, food habits and even minute aspects of behavior. But despite this, there is a feeling of oneness as an Indian.

Barring a few bizarre incidents, people have maintained harmony and an urge for peace in the region. This is an outcome of collective anti-imperialist struggle before and after independence. This has to be continuously strengthened in the changing times. Physicians can play a big role in this process. Our organization, therefore, has lot of work ahead.

VS: In fact, you've just launched a new campaign called "Public Health Through Peace and Harmony."

AM: Health indicators in India are far from satisfactory because of very meager budgetary allocation by the government. One of the reasons for

this is that India spends huge amounts on arms. This trend has to be reversed and wasteful expenditure on arms must be diverted towards health and education. But this is not an easy task as it is intimately related to relations with India's neighbors. Perpetual tension between India and Pakistan is the major reason for this. We have to work hard to change the basic concept of security and strength from one dependent on the power of arms to love and brotherhood and good neighborly relations. There are forces on both sides of the border who are against peace in the region.

There is a constant effort to increase religious fundamentalism, obscurantism, and subversion of history so as to break the age-old communal har-

[Continued on pg. 7]

mony. So our campaign will focus on building people-to-people relations among the countries of South Asia and also to strengthen harmony among various groups and communities within India. We have designed a statewide program for this in 2015, which will continue until our next national conference in February 2016.

VS: India was one of only two nuclear-armed States—Pakistan being the other—that attended all three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Why was that?

AM: In fact, India was committed to nuclear disarmament even before independence in 1947. All the major political and social movements denounced the use of nuclear weapons in 1945. After independence, as a leader of the non-aligned movement, India always stood for complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Rajiv Gandhi action plan is an example of this thought process. Civil society has always been quite vocal on this issue. There is ample scope for civil society to influence the government. There is a need to wage constant struggle in coordination with other like-minded people and organizations; march separately but strike together.

VS: IDPD has also taken a strong stand against nuclear energy. What do you propose as a climate-conscious alternative for meeting India's vast energy needs?

AM: India has sun, shining bright, for almost 300 days in a year. Solar energy has big potential in our country. The cost of production of electricity through solar energy is also coming down. Besides this, there are other plentiful renewable energy resources in India. Nuclear energy is neither clean nor cost effective. People are understanding this gradually.

VS: IDPD has organized and collaborated on several disaster relief mis-

sions over the past few years. Please tell us more about that.

AM: Helping people in distress is the basic training of a doctor. All doctors ought to exhibit their consciousness in such circumstances. The IDPD and IPPNW are humanist organizations. Doctors who have such feelings join the disarmament movement, because they cannot see a person in distress. I think IDPD has a duty to continue to take a lead in such situations.

VS: Indian medical students are some of the most committed young people in the federation. You've been an important mentor to many of them. What's your advice to young physicians?

AM: Medicine should be taken as a passion with a holistic approach, which should include equity and justice. When one develops this attitude she or he will always move forward for a society free of nuclear weapons and violence of all kinds, and free of injustice of any kind. Exploitation of man by man has to end.

Medical students and young doctors have ample occasion to learn all this during their training period.

Therefore, my advice to them is to co-relate the problems of individuals with those of society as a whole within the existing politico-economic order—and then try to solve them. **VS**

ONLINE: idpd.org

Thank you to all of our Partners in Peace who make this work possible!



The **Partners in Peace Sustainers Circle**, IPPNW's growing network of dedicated monthly donors, forms the core of our annual fundraising efforts.

Here's how it works: a recurring monthly gift in the amount you choose is automatically charged to your credit or checking account, allowing IPPNW to rely on a steady stream of funding to continue our global fight for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

For as little as \$5 a month you will receive IPPNW's biannual newsletter, Vital Signs, along with other IPPNW publications and action alerts.

To join, please use the form on the reverse side of the enclosed donation slip, call 1.617.440.1733 x304, or email IPPNW Development Associate, Garrett FitzGerald: gfitzgerald@ippnw.org. **VS**



LEFT: DRS. VAPPU AND ILKKA TAIPALE SPEAKING AT THE TEHRAN PEACE MUSEUM. RIGHT: MEDICAL STUDENTS GETTING INSPIRED, AND BEING INSPIRING, AT THE NOBEL LAUREATES SUMMIT IN ROME.

April 14-16, 2015 || Quebec, Canada

World Uranium Symposium

A range of issues will be covered: from health and environmental effects, radioactive waste management, nuclear energy policy, and issues related to ethics, governance, and human rights.

Online: uranium2015.org

May 2015 || New York, New York, USA

Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Online: un.org/en/conf/npt/2015

June 1-5, 2015 || New York, New York, USA

Second Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE2)

Under the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

June 6-9, 2015 || São Paulo, Brazil

2015 Rotary International Convention

IPPNW Co-President, Dr. Ira Helfand, will be addressing the conference attendees on the humanitarian and health impacts of nuclear weapons, and the urgency for a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

June 28-29, 2015 (pre-climb conference)
June 30 to July 4, 2015 || Moshi, Tanzania

K-Project - Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro for Peace

International peace advocates will have a conference in Moshi, Tanzania, and then ascend Mt. Kilimanjaro, as a sign for peace and to raise awareness on the effects of uranium mining and nuclear weapons.

Online: ippnwafrica.org

August 2-30, 2015 || Palestine and Israel

Refugee Camp Project (ReCap)

Recap is a project by IPPNW and IFMSA Palestine for medical students who have completed at least two years of study. Students will have a daily internship in the clinics at the refugee camps of Aida and Dheisheh, conduct teamwork games with the children at the refugee camp, and attend seminars at UN centers.

Registration: ippnw.eu/en/prevention-of-war/recap/how-to-apply

August 24-27 || Mexico City, Mexico

Arms Trade Treaty First Conference of States Parties

IPPNW resource: ippnw.org/pdf/health-guide-to-att.pdf

September 22-23, 2015 || Geneva, Switzerland

7th Milestones Meeting in the Global Campaign for Violence Prevention; WHO Violence Prevention Alliance annual meeting

November 14-15, 2015 || Atlanta, Georgia, USA

IPPNW Board of Directors Meeting

November 16-19, 2015 || Atlanta, Georgia, USA

2015 World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates

The Summit includes discussions on the challenges of global civilization, and actions supporting democracy and world peace. The sessions cover nuclear disarmament, civil rights, human rights, global health, women's empowerment, youth, education, water/sustainability, poverty, economic prosperity, and global peace.

November 21-23, 2015 || Hiroshima, Japan

World Nuclear Victims Forum

Online: tinyurl.com/wnv-forum

IPPNW is a non - partisan federation of national medical organizations in 64 countries dedicated to safeguarding health by working to ban nuclear weapons and to address the impact of militarism and war on human health.

All gifts to IPPNW are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. IPPNW is a non - profit organization registered under Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code. Tax ID# 04-2702110



Vital Signs is published twice a year by IPPNW. 66-70 Union Square, #204, Somerville, MA 02143 USA Tel:+1.617.443.1733 Email: director@ippnw.org

Editor and Designer: Aki Morizono IPPNW Staff: Michael Christ, John Loretz, Maria Valenti, Aki Morizono, Garrett FitzGerald, Anne Kieran, and George Cani.

