

VITAL SIGNS

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

HUMANITARIAN DISARMAMENT AT HEART OF IPPNW'S WORK FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS



Disarmament and the prevention of war are now widely perceived as humanitarian goals, by governments and non-governmental organizations alike. In recent years, “humanitarian disarmament” campaigns have taken on some of the world’s worst weapons, including landmines, cluster munitions, drones, and, of course, nuclear weapons.

While the term is relatively new, “humanitarian disarmament” has been at the heart of IPPNW’s work for more than 30 years. The medical evidence that nuclear war would be a humanitarian catastrophe to which physicians could organize no meaningful response, left only one responsible option for political leaders: banning and eliminating nuclear weapons.

An evidence-based awareness of the impact of war and all forms of armed violence on public health—meticulously documented in hospitals and emergency rooms and conveyed through the stories of the victims and their ravaged communi-


ties—has catalyzed successful campaigns to prohibit the most inhumane weapons and to impose strict new limits on trafficking in others.

“You cannot have development without health, and you cannot have health in the midst of armed violence,” said Dr. Omolade Oladejo of IPPNW’s Nigerian affiliate at a recent UN meeting about small arms. When the historic, humanitarian-based Arms Trade Treaty was adopted after years of tireless campaigning, the head of IPPNW’s delegation, Dr. Bob Mtonga, called it a beacon of hope for the “millions killed, maimed or traumatized by gun violence.”

The humanitarian perspective—IPPNW’s perspective—has now become the voice of the majority when it comes to nuclear weapons. The facts about nuclear weapons and the devastation they cause—millions of casualties, extensive and prolonged radioactive contamination, nuclear famine, nuclear winter—have become the foundation of

a Humanitarian Pledge to “stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons” that, at this writing, has been joined by 117 countries.

As IPPNW Co-President Ira Helfand told a special session of the UN General Assembly in September (photo left), “I’m not a diplomat, I’m a doctor. And I often have to speak very bluntly with my patients when they are engaging in dangerous, self-destructive behavior... We need to create a new international norm that stigmatizes [nuclear] weapons and the nations that possess them... Let us act to ban and eliminate these weapons so that our children might live.”

This has been IPPNW’s humanitarian message from the beginning, and today it is resonating at the highest levels of decision making about nuclear disarmament and the prevention of all forms of armed violence. We can rightly claim some of the credit for that. 

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NUCLEAR ABOLITION NEWS AND UPDATES

For more information about nuclear abolition, please contact John Loretz (jloretz@ippnw.org), or go online: ippnw.org/ican.html

Iran statement calls out the nuclear-armed “outlaws”

The international agreement on Iran’s nuclear programs, negotiated over a 20-month period by diplomats from Iran, the US, and five other countries, is important for two reasons.

There are no nuclear weapons in Iran today, and compliance with the agreement will make it far less likely that Iran can acquire nuclear weapons in the future. This outcome benefits everyone, including the Iranian people, who can now expect some relief from crippling economic sanctions imposed over the past several years.


The agreement is also an important victory for diplomacy over military confrontation, and could help restore peace and stability in the region.

In a statement welcoming the agreement with Iran, however, IPPNW focused attention on the 15,000 nuclear weapons in the hands of nine states: the United States, Russia, China, the UK, France, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.

“Most of these countries,” we pointed out, “have the ability to kill hundreds of millions of people in a matter of

moments and to induce a global climate disaster that would bring a nuclear famine to as many as two billion. The US and Russian arsenals—relics of the Cold War—are still large enough to destroy life on Earth several times over.

“The existing nuclear-armed states have failed to fulfill their disarmament obligations under the NPT, have declared their intention to retain nuclear weapons into some indefinite future, and are spending trillions of dollars on modernization programs that assume a role for nuclear weapons for the rest of this century.

“What is good for Iran—and for the other 185 nuclear-weapon-free NPT member states—is good for the nine nuclear-armed states and for the world as a whole. A treaty banning nuclear weapons, negotiated and adopted by non-nuclear states, would send an unmistakable signal to the [nuclear-armed states] that continuing to possess nuclear weapons is the act of an international outlaw, and that eliminating those arsenals is an obligation that can no longer be deferred.” 

ONLINE: Read the full statement peaceandhealthblog.com/2015/07/14/iran-deal



Partners in Peace are instrumental in funding many aspects of IPPNW’s work.

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To join, please use the form on the reverse side of the enclosed donation slip.


Thanks to sustainers, IPPNW is able to campaign for the global abolition of nuclear weapons.

Ukraine conflict increases nuclear war risk

IPPNW co-presidents Ira Helfand and Vladimir Garkavenko wrote to the US and Russian presidents in August, expressing the Federation’s concern that the continuing conflict in Ukraine could lead to the use of nuclear weapons.

“This conflict cannot be solved by military means,” the IPPNW leaders

wrote to presidents Obama and Putin. “It requires diplomacy, trust and confidence-building measures.

“It is important for both countries to make clear that this conflict cannot justify the use of nuclear weapons... We implore you to immediately desist from any threats or behavior that involve nuclear weapons.” 

THE BAN TREATY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

IPPNW and ICAN are campaigning for a new treaty that would ban nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds as a major step toward their elimination. Here are a few basic facts about the ban treaty, what it would do, why we need it, and how we can get it.

Why should nuclear weapons be banned?

IPPNW's medical and environmental evidence about the consequences of nuclear war was central to the three international conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW). The Humanitarian Pledge issued after the Vienna HINW conference reiterated IPPNW's fundamental message: that the "unacceptable consequences [of nuclear weapons] can only be avoided when all nuclear weapons have been eliminated." The Pledge to "fill the legal gap" and to "stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons" has now been joined by 117 countries.

Aren't nuclear weapons already illegal?

There is currently no comprehensive explicit prohibition against the use or possession of nuclear weapons. The Non-Proliferation Treaty requires the five nuclear-armed member states to engage in nuclear disarmament negotiations, but imposes no deadlines. The International Court of Justice, in 1996, said that all states have an obligation to convene and complete nuclear disarmament negotiations, but did not explicitly prohibit nuclear weapons. Other weapons are prohibited by treaty, including chemical and biological weapons, antipersonnel landmines, and cluster munitions, but nuclear weapons are not. This is the "legal gap" identified in the Humanitarian Pledge.

ONLINE: ICAN's paper on the principles of the ban treaty

icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/principles-2.pdf

ONLINE: Which nations want to stigmatize, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons?

icanw.org/pledge

How can we get a ban treaty?

Since the nuclear-armed states have refused to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention, the nuclear-weapons-free states can take leadership by producing a new treaty that declares nuclear weapons illegal. The negotiations should be open to all states, but should be blockable by none. In other words, even if the nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states decide to participate in the negotiations, they must not be given veto power over the ban treaty itself, or be allowed to weaken its terms.

What would be banned?

Opinions vary on the substance of the ban treaty, which will have to be worked out among the negotiators. ICAN has called for a treaty that prohibits the development, production, testing, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat of use, or use of nuclear weapons, and that provides an obligation for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a framework to achieve it.

Will banning nuclear weapons eliminate them?

Not immediately. An explicit legal prohibition, however, will put the nuclear-armed states on notice that they must eliminate their nuclear weapons or become international outlaws. ICAN has also recommended that the ban treaty include provisions for divestment from nuclear weapons-related activities and other measures that will increase the legal and political pressure on the nuclear-armed states to comply with the ban.

 To get even more involved, contact Maria Valenti (mvalenti@ippnw.org).


Ensuring a humanitarian Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)



IPPNW has played a major role in working for a humanitarian-based ATT. During this past year we participated in the ATT ratification and implementation planning process at meetings around the world including in Nairobi, Geneva, Trinidad, Berlin, Mexico City, Vienna, and Wilton Park, UK, all leading to the ATT 1st Conference of States Parties in Cancun, Mexico. 

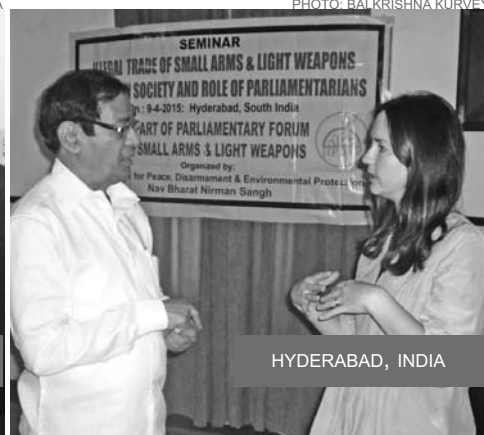
Work toward a world free of cluster munitions


IPPNW Zambia and Russia serve on the governing board of the Cluster Munitions Coalition that played a key role in bringing about the historic Convention on Cluster Munitions. Over 70% of cluster munitions from stockpiles having been destroyed, and clearance of contaminated lands continues. These achievements have been tempered with alarm over

new use of the weapon in Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen during the past year. More than 100 campaigners gathered in Dubrovnik, Croatia recently for the First Review Conference. IPPNW's Dr. Bob Mtonga was there and coordinated African NGOs to ensure meeting goals were met by States. 



Dialogues with Decision Makers



We have collaborated with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, based in Stockholm, to bring together doctors and parliamentarians to discuss how we can join our public health approach with public policy measures to prevent small arms violence. We came together several times in the past year— in India, Peru, and in NY at the UN Meeting on Small Arms. 

Leading NGO voice for health at the United Nations



Using social media to educate, collaborate, and expand reach

peaceandhealthblog.com

twitter.com/mariaipnw

facebook.com/aimingforprevention

aiming-for-prevention@googlegroups.com



Publish research on armed violence

Working with Small Arms Survey, Geneva, to publish results from a research project on armed violence conducted by IPPNW doctors in Liberia.



Results, thanks to our activists and supporters:

- *Public health* integrated into arms control discussions and policies.
- *Armed violence* accepted as a public health issue.
- IPPNW recognized as a health leader in armed violence prevention.

A “HEALTHY END” TO THE NUCLEAR ERA

INTERVIEW WITH DR. TILMAN RUFF, MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOR PREVENTION OF WAR

Tilman Ruff, an expert on immunization who consults with the WHO and the Australian Red Cross, is Co-President of IPPNW and former president of the Australian affiliate, MAPW. He serves as an IPPNW representative on the international steering committee of ICAN, and writes and speaks frequently about the need to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. We asked Dr. Ruff how the prospects for nuclear abolition look from Down Under.



VS: Australia is a non-nuclear weapon state that isn't known for instigating armed conflict. So how did it happen that you and other IPPNW doctors from Australia are in the forefront of the movement to abolish nuclear weapons?

TR: Nuclear weapons are a global threat. Wherever we live, it is now indisputably clear that if nuclear war occurs even on the other side of the world from where we live, every inhabitant of our planet is vulnerable to the impacts, from radioactive fallout to acute climate disruption and global famine. As the World Health Organization recognized in 1983, nuclear weapons constitute the greatest immediate threat to health and welfare. Therefore, we all need to take the nuclear threat to ourselves, to our descendants, and to all other life forms very personally. We have a duty to serve as custodians for life on Earth, not to jeopardize it. As physicians, we have the privileges of scientific and medical understanding and we live well-resourced and comfortable lives full of opportunity. These bring ethical responsibilities and responsibilities to act.

While Australia does not itself possess nuclear weapons, it claims the protection of US nuclear weapons, and is deeply and centrally

enmeshed in a global web of surveillance, intelligence, command and control facilities that would play a key role in any use of US nuclear weapons in the eastern hemisphere, perhaps anywhere. This means that Australia is willing to threaten and be complicit in the use of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, this reliance on “extended nuclear deterrence” also means that Australia is actively opposing and seeking to undermine progress towards a treaty to comprehensively ban nuclear weapons. Like other nuclear weapons-dependent states, Australia's double standards are thus very much part of the problem of nuclear danger. Australia's current position is essentially to support disarmament once it happens, but not a moment sooner. How can you be serious about abolishing weapons you claim—misguidedly—are central to your security? We're working hard to get Australia on the right side of history.

VS: You participated in all three conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. How did IPPNW contribute to the success of those meetings?

TR: IPPNW physicians played a vital role in all three of these landmark conferences, which were the first

ever intergovernmental conferences focused on the actual impacts of nuclear weapons and the essential evidence that needs to drive policy around them. Ira Helfand, Masao Tomonaga, Andy Haines and IPPNW science advisor Alan Robock made seminal contributions on the medical effects of nuclear weapons, radiation health affects, and the implications for the global climate and food supplies of nuclear war. As all three conferences were fact-based discussions, authoritatively laying out the updated evidence around nuclear weapon effects, IPPNW's singular expertise and focus as a global medical federation was a crucial underpinning.

VS: Why does the evidence about the medical and humanitarian effects of nuclear war make such a compelling case for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons?

TR: The evidence about the health effects of nuclear weapons is clear and stark. The humanitarian conferences reinforced the conclusion that these effects are unequivocal and indisputable. More than 80% of the world's governments, key UN agencies and international organizations, the Red Cross/Crescent movement, the large majority of experts and civil

[Continued on pg. 7]

society organizations accept the evidence as it was presented. First, that any use of nuclear weapons would be an unmitigated catastrophe. Second, that no meaningful capacity to respond to the effects of even a single nuclear weapon detonated on a city is available or feasible, either locally or globally. Third, that the risk of nuclear weapons being used—whether by intention or otherwise—has been underestimated and is real, increasing, and persistent as long as the weapons exist. And fourth, that for these worst-by-far of all weapons there exists a legal gap—a lack of the binding legal agreements needed to prohibit and eliminate them.

VS: ICAN—which was launched by IPPNW’s Australian affiliate in 2007—is campaigning for a new treaty that would ban nuclear weapons and take a major step toward elimination. What will it take to get a ban treaty, how quickly can we get one as a result of this new HINW movement, and why do you think it would be a game changer?

TR: I think this is the most exciting and promising time in the last 25 years since the end of the Cold War. We have had three landmark conferences, the third of which, in Vienna, produced the Humanitarian Pledge. More than 115 states have signed onto the Pledge so far, committing those governments to cooperate to fill the legal gap regarding nuclear weapons. The nuclear-armed states have failed to demonstrate any seri-

ous intent to fulfill their binding legal obligation to disarm; rather, they continue to squander the resources of current and future generations in massive investments clearly intended to modernize and maintain nuclear weapons for the long haul.

To achieve a ban treaty, we need a core group of determined and courageous leading states who will grasp the nettle, supported and encouraged by global civil society. It will take countries free of nuclear weapons realizing that they can take decisive steps to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, even if the nuclear-armed states choose not to participate constructively. Initially, a very small group of committed states took the lead, despite the opposition of the most powerful states—also the major users and producers of the weapons—in developing the treaties banning landmines and cluster munitions.

The states without nuclear weapons clearly cannot eliminate them. But they can establish an unequivocal moral and political norm and legal embodiment that nuclear weapons must be eliminated before they are again used.

VS: The humanitarian perspective on armed violence has been the key to achieving a number of important treaties in recent years. You mentioned the Mine Ban and Cluster Munitions Ban treaties, and the Arms Trade Treaty also comes to mind

immediately. Why has it taken so long to ban nuclear weapons, and do you think we’ve turned the corner?

TR: Yes, it is an important lesson that progress on banning most other types of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons has been possible when it has been widely understood that the effects of the weapons—which are inherent to their use—are unacceptable. The humanitarian imperative for their elimination has then trumped arguments about their political and military utility.

In the relentless logic of striving for bigger and better weapons, and the need to match if not exceed the capability of potential foes, nuclear weapons are the most macho of all, tied up with all kinds of misguided patriarchal, patriotic, nationalistic, and political agendas of dominance and power.

Unprecedented investments in the development of nuclear weapons have resulted in vast government and military bureaucracies, research laboratories, and large corporations spanning the globe with enormous inertia and vested interests. Those responsible for these toxic and misguided dynamics are oblivious to the physical and biological realities that nuclear war would produce—not only *mutually assured destruction*, but also *self-assured destruction* and *globally assured destruction*.

If and when the governments committing to the Humanitarian Pledge deliver on their promise, I believe we will have turned a decisive corner. We are now on the cusp. There has never been a more important time for clear, loud medical voices presenting and explaining the evidence to those who need to hear, and working in broad coordinated coalitions, such as ICAN, to bring the nuclear era to a healthy end. **VS**



A FEW OF THE LEADERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN AFFILIATE AT A COUNCIL MEETING.

November 13-14, 2015
London, England

Health Through Peace 2015 - Confronting war, militarization, and global security

Teach-in and Forum on peace and conflict issues.

November 13-15, 2015
Barcelona, Spain

2015 World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates

The Summit includes discussions on the challenges of global civilization, nuclear disarmament and actions supporting democracy and world peace.

November 15-16, 2015
London, England

IPPNW Board of Directors Meeting

November 16-19, 2015
Johannesburg, South Africa

Symposium: Nuclearisation of Africa

The impact of uranium mining on health and the environment / legal and social aspects / renewable energy. The conference will be co-organized by PSR/IPPNW Switzerland, uranium-network.org, and the Federation for a Sustainable Environment.

November 21-23, 2015
Hiroshima, Japan

World Nuclear Victims Forum

Online: tinyurl.com/wnv-forum



PHOTO: UJIZI.DE

“People are only being told about the benefits of uranium mining, not its effects.”

~Diana Liona, Lawyer, Legal and Human Rights Center and Secretary of the National Coalition on Uranium Mining, Tanzania (also one of the climbers)

“No one knows Africa’s challenges more than we do.”

~Dr. Mathabo Hlahane, Chair of the K-Project Organizing Committee and International Councilor for IPPNW South Africa

From Marangu Park to the ice caps of Uhuru Peak, **K-Project for Peace** brought more than a dozen IPPNW activists from Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, India, Estonia, and Germany to co-host a health conference, and then hike to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, where they unfurled banners calling for a world without nuclear weapons and the cessation of uranium mining in Africa.

ONLINE: youtu.be/sSUppqJD_4GE



PHOTO: UJIZI.DE

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.

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