

VITAL SIGNS

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

Framework for nuclear abolition or blueprint for nuclear war: Which path will we choose?

With the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty a reality and the excitement of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize behind us, what comes next?

Even before heading to Oslo for the Nobel ceremonies (see pp 4-5), ICAN launched a signature and ratification campaign to ensure that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force as soon as possible. As this issue of *Vital Signs* went to press, 57 states had signed the Treaty and five had ratified it. Fifty ratifications are needed, at which time the prohibitions against nuclear weapons and the obligations to work for their elimination will have the weight of international law.

Yet the world has become a far more dangerous place in the past year, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons. Citing the “looming threat of nuclear war,” the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists reset the Doomsday Clock to two minutes before midnight in January—the closest we have been to nuclear catastrophe since 1953.

US-Russia relations continue to deteriorate, with both countries placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons than at any time since the end of the Cold War. North Korea has redoubled its efforts to acquire a nuclear capability and, despite the hopes of a thaw in North-South relations that were raised during the Winter Olympics, we remain only a tweet away from our worst nightmare.

India and Pakistan have accelerated their own nuclear competition, risking mutual suicide in a regional nuclear war that



IPPNW co-president Ira Helfand, IPPNW Sweden secretary-general Josefina Lind, and Reaching Critical Will director Ray Acheson discuss strategies for implementing the Ban Treaty during the ICAN campaigners meeting in Oslo prior to Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. ICAN photo

could result in a global climate catastrophe and a nuclear famine.

All the nuclear-armed states are investing in dangerous and costly programs to overhaul their arsenals with new warhead designs, new delivery systems, and new infrastructure that could manufacture hundreds of nuclear weapons each year for the rest of this century.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration released its Nuclear Posture Review (see pg. 2), which IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff called “a blueprint for nuclear war.” The NPR embraces the \$1.2 trillion “recapitalization” of the US arsenal initiated by President Obama, adds a new “low-yield” submarine-launched missile,

revives plans for a sub-launched nuclear cruise missile, and recklessly flirts with resumption of nuclear testing. Trump has also sent loud signals that the US will withdraw from the international agreement that has successfully halted Iran’s program to develop a nuclear weapons

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NUCLEAR ABOLITION NEWS AND UPDATES

For more information, please contact Chuck Johnson (cjohnson@ippnw.org)

US Nuclear Posture Review ignores consequences, lowers threshold for use of nuclear weapons

The Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review, released in February, marks a continuation of the nuclear weapons programs, priorities, and budgets from the past decade or so. The main additions to an already enormous and expensive arsenal—at a cost of \$1.2 trillion over the next three decades—are a “low-yield” submarine-launched ballistic missile and a sub-launched cruise missile.

What's different—and most dangerous—about the Trump NPR is its unrestrained enthusiasm for US nuclear weapons, which are presented as the gold standard for national security. The role of deterrence, the decades-long rationale for maintaining a nuclear arsenal, has been expanded to address an unprecedented range of threats not only from nuclear weapons, but also from chemical or biological weapons, conventional attacks...even cyber attacks.

The NPR singles out a number of US adversaries—Russia, China, North Korea, Iran—as examples of a need for “tailored, flexible options” that dangerously lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons.

While the document contains not a single reference to the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war that have driven the argument for the Ban Treaty, the Treaty itself is dismissed as “unrealistic and polarizing.”

We have a different, more hopeful, and evidence-based set of beliefs. No state has a right to possess, let alone use, nuclear weapons; no state can place the entire world at risk in pursuit of its own security interests, however legitimate those might be; nuclear weapons are

inherently illegitimate because of the existential threat they pose to humanity and, therefore, belong in no one's hands. 

ONLINE

2018 NPR: tinyurl.com/yc7lu944

[icanw.org/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/](https://www.icanw.org/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/)

French affiliate joins Red Cross in Paris Ban Treaty symposium

This January, the French Red Cross organized its first panel discussion on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at its headquarters in Paris.

Kathleen Lawand, the legal advisor and head of the arms unit at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), joined Patrice Richard and Abraham Behar of IPPNW's French affiliate, and Jean Marie Collin of Initiatives for Nuclear Disarmament. Ms. Lawand recalled the ICRC's constant struggle for the abolition of nuclear weapons since 1945. She explained that the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, and the disproportionate nature of the nuclear threat were her reasons for supporting the Ban Treaty.

Drs. Richard and Behar told participating representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they “lamented the relentlessness of [the French] government against the Treaty and the obsolete attachment to nuclear deterrence.”

The meeting was a prelude to a campaign in favor of the Treaty that the French Red Cross will implement throughout the country, with the support of IPPNW France.

“If deterrence fails, the United States will strive to end any conflict and restore deterrence at the lowest level of damage possible.”

—2018 US Nuclear Posture Review

“[T]he catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons cannot be adequately addressed, transcend national borders, pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security and the health of current and future generations.”

—2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

“We have proposed a day of action in Paris, which will involve all health organizations, in order to explain how the Ban Treaty is a vital step towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, and to lay out the humanitarian and public health consequences of an atomic attack or accident,” Dr. Behar said. 

“These weapons are the ultimate evil”



[Ed. note: Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow, a long-time friend of IPPNW, joined ICAN executive Director Beatrice Fihn in accepting the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of ICAN. The following excerpts are from her portion of the Nobel Lecture delivered on December 10 in Oslo.]

I speak as a member of the family of Hibakusha—those of us who, by some miraculous chance, survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For more than seven

decades, we have worked for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

Today, I want you to feel in this hall the presence of all those who perished in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I want you to feel, above and around us, a great cloud of a quarter million souls. Each person had a name. Each person was loved by someone. Let us ensure that their deaths were not in vain.

Through our agony and the sheer struggle to survive—and to rebuild our lives from the ashes—we Hibakusha became convinced that we must warn the world about these apocalyptic weapons. Time and again, we shared our testimonies.

Nine nations still threaten to incinerate entire cities, to destroy life on earth, to make our beautiful world uninhabitable for future generations. The development of nuclear weapons signifies not a country's elevation to greatness, but its

descent to the darkest depths of depravity. These weapons are not a necessary evil; they are the ultimate evil.

On the seventh of July this year, I was overwhelmed with joy when a great majority of the world's nations voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Having witnessed humanity at its worst, I witnessed, that day, humanity at its best. We hibakusha had been waiting for the ban for seventy-two years. Let this be the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.

All responsible leaders will sign this treaty. And history will judge harshly those who reject it. ...To every president and prime minister of every nation of the world, I beseech you: Join this treaty; forever eradicate the threat of nuclear annihilation. 

 **ONLINE:** Setsuko's full speech www.icanw.org/campaign-news/ican-receives-2017-nobel-peace-prize/

Which path will we choose?

[Continued from pg. 1]

capability. This could provoke a nuclear arms race—or worse—in the Middle East.

The lines have been clearly drawn: The international community has condemned and prohibited nuclear weapons, and is demanding that the nuclear-armed states comply with those prohibitions. The nuclear-armed states have refused to join the Ban Treaty and have recommitted themselves to nuclear weapons and to deterrence—imperiling themselves and everyone else in the process.

The Ban Treaty embodies IPPNW's core medical message—that nuclear war would result in catastrophe, and that the elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to prevent this threat to all humanity. We now have to press the humanitarian case for elimination, which is the Treaty's ultimate objective.

Austrian ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi—one of the Ban Treaty's lead negotiators—has urged IPPNW to present the facts about nuclear war to diplomats and politicians around the world. The first such brief-

ing took place in Oslo, along with colleagues from the Norwegian Medical Association and the Norwegian Red Cross. We plan to replicate these briefings globally, especially in countries that have come under intense pressure not to sign the Ban Treaty.

“The nuclear threshold is getting lower; the risk of a large nuclear war is increasing,” said former co-president Gunnar Westberg. “The prohibition of all nuclear weapons is even more important than we knew a few months ago.” 

ICAN in THE 2017 NOBEL CEREM



The Norwegian royal family and hundreds of invited guests filled Oslo City Hall to witness the award ceremony for the 2018 Nobel Peace Laureate, ICAN. Outside, a ferris wheel at a popular winter market displayed the ICAN logo.



Co-president Tilman Ruff and ICAN executive director Setsuko Thurlow accept the Nobel Peace Prize medallion (left). Setsuko Thurlow's words of support enable us to go forward in the fight against nuclear weapons.”



ONLINE:

Nobel Peace Prize presentation speech—tinyurl.com/y8cprhm8

ICAN Nobel Lecture—[icanw.org/campaign-news/ican-receives-2017-nobel-peace-prize/](https://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/ican-receives-2017-nobel-peace-prize/)

IPPNW activists from over 100 countries joined hundreds of ICAN campaigners in Oslo to celebrate the 2017 Nobel Laureate activities capped by the award ceremony on December 10.



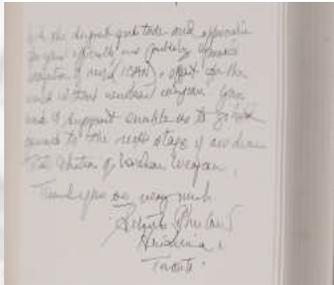
Berit Reiss-Andersen, the chair of the Nobel Committee, told a gathering at Oslo City Hall and a large crowd at the Peace Center that ICAN has shown that the process of abolishing nuclear weapons could kill millions of people, alter the climate and threaten the planet, and destabilise the world in ways before seen by humanity.”

That message was repeated at a press conference packed with ICAN campaigners and other groups organized by the Norwegian government in Norway, a press conference in Oslo, views, and a rally preceding the ceremony through the heart of Oslo city center.

What ICAN has achieved is a historic milestone. Beatrice Fihn, who, with H. D. Thurlow accepted the Prize on behalf of ICAN, is only the first step toward the goal that the ending of nuclear weapons will have on us what that ending will be.”

Ira Helfand (inset, right) spoke at a briefing for diplomats and the media on the medical consequences of nuclear war. Other participants included (from left) Terje Skavdal, Norwegian Peoples Aid; Bernt Apeland, Norwegian Red Cross; and Susi Snyder, PAX. Tilman Ruff, ICAN’s founding co-chair, answers media questions at the press conference in Oslo on December 10, along with (from left) Olav Njølstad, Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Setsuko Thurlow, and Beatrice Fihn.

OSLO PEACE PRIZE MONIES



Executive director Beatrice Fihn with Nobel Peace Prize commemorative book (right), "Your... to the next steps of our dream, total abolition"

Every continent joined hundreds in Oslo, as the city celebrated with three days of Nobel Peace Prize award 2010.

Chair of the Norwegian Parliament invited a thousand guests at the Nobel ceremony, which drew a massive crowd at the Nobel Peace Center. "given new momentum to nuclear weapons....A nuclear world," she warned, "dramatic environment for much of our societies in a way never

repeated over and over again—at a meeting, a diplomatic briefing, the Norwegian Red Cross and IPPNW and countless media interviewing a torchlight procession at the city center.

Executive director Beatrice Fihn said, "The story of Hiroshima survivor Setsuko and her ultimate goal. 'The story has no ending, and it is up to us to end it.'"



John Gunnar Maeland, president of IPPNW's Norwegian affiliate (above, center), prepares to join the torchlight procession with other NLMA members. Norwegian campaigners (right) have challenged their government to join the Ban Treaty.



Thousands of Oslo residents and ICAN campaigners marched up Karl Johans Gate to the Grand Hotel in a torchlight procession that was a highlight of the Nobel Peace Prize events. IPPNW participants in the procession included (above, from left) Laura Fromow Guerra, Neil Arya, Ruby Chirino, Ruth Mitchell, Brendon Christ, Michael Christ, John Loretz, and Jans Fromow Guerra.

UN Programme of Action on Small Arms— how much progress since 2001?

IPPNW was among the organizations that helped pass the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN PoA) 17 years ago. At that time we were optimistic that the landmark agreement would make real inroads toward its goal to “reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons...and to enhance the respect for life and the dignity of the human person through the promotion of a culture of peace.”

At the next UN POA PrepCom in March, and at the 3rd Review Conference in June, Dr. Cathey Falvo of PSR New York will represent IPPNW on a panel co-organized with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW) on “Connecting the Dots: Supporting the 2030 Agenda, the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.”

Small Arms Make Big Circles

IPPNW Austria mounted the exhibit “Small Arms Make Big Circles” at the Vienna Peace Museum. The health consequences of the arms trade, the use of child soldiers, Austria’s role in the arms trade, and the medical and economic consequences of gun violence were depicted on ten posters developed by Austrian affiliate members and medical students. The exhibit has been brought to UN meetings, medical schools and hospitals, and community events.

“Service to humanity” heartbeat of IPPNW Nigeria Radio Project

IPPNW Nigeria, with support from IPPNW Finland, recently conducted a 10-part series “Bringing Peace to the People”



Drs. Emeka Okolo, David Onazi at the radio station during broadcast of “Bringing Peace to the People.”

on Nigeria Info 95.1 FM radio in Abuja, Nigeria.

“The IPPNW Radio Project has at its heartbeat ‘service to humanity,’ creating awareness of the threat armed violence poses to health and providing information about public health approaches to preventing it,” said Dr. David Onazi, one of the architects of the project.

Dr. Emeka Okolo joined Dr. Onazi at the studio during two live programs on improving the health infrastructure for survivors of armed violence and the concept of “peace through health.” Eight recorded programs covered topics such as youth violence, One Bullet Stories, arms control treaties, and women’s role in peacekeeping. Community surveys were conducted before and after the broadcasts to determine listener increases in knowledge about how violence affects health.



**ONLINE: Radio program
 broadcasts**
tinyurl.com/y8blvcjh

Linking SDGs and violence prevention

“There is a storm brewing,” said Dr. Arturo Cervantes, a WHO Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) member

from Mexico, at the World Health Organization’s 8th Milestones Meeting on Violence Prevention and VPA meetings in Ottawa, Canada. “People are fed up with gun violence.”

“The truth is not always welcomed by politicians,” he said, before emphasizing that we need an ecological approach to health that includes preventing armed violence.

WHO Director of the Department of Violence and Injury Prevention Dr. Etienne Krug opened the Milestones meeting by saying we know much more now about what works for violence prevention. “The development community has no excuse for not investing in violence prevention now,” he said. The conference theme of linking the Sustainable Development Goals to WHO’s violence prevention agenda was

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IPPNW’s Maria Valenti with Alex Galvez of Guatemala’s Transition Foundation

“RECHARGED, RE-INSPIRED, AND DETERMINED” An interview with student representatives Kelvin Kibet and Franca Brueggen

Kelvin Kibet from IPPNW Kenya and Franca Brueggen from IPPNW Germany are IPPNW’s International Student Representatives (ISRs) for 2018-2020. We asked them about their plans to build the IPPNW student movement and priorities during their tenure.

VS: You have developed a very ambitious strategic plan for student activity over the next two years. Can you tell us what your top priorities are?

KK & FB: We want to attract new members and keep our current members motivated to fight those monstrous nukes. We are aware that for us to succeed we must keep students engaged and ensure that they have meaningful projects.

VS: Kelvin, you have said that climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro as part of the IPPNW team to protest nuclear weapons and uranium mining in Africa and to promote peace was your most memorable IPPNW moment so far. What do you hope your next memorable moment will be?

KK: I look forward to when we convene once again to celebrate the Nuclear Ban Treaty coming into force. IPPNW has an inspired membership ready to do whatever it takes to achieve this. I know that after representing students at ICAN’s Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo (another memorable moment!), I felt recharged, re-inspired, and more determined to continue in the work of those before me. I think we should do a bike tour or mountain climbing to celebrate the Ban Treaty when the time comes.

VS: Franca, you joined IPPNW Germany as a medical student, but you had an experience that moved you to become very involved and active with IPPNW – please tell us about that.

FB: I became seriously involved in IPPNW after taking part in a weekend “nuclear academy” held in 2016 by ICAN and IPPNW Germany. We



learned everything about nuclear weapons and their humanitarian effects. The weekend ended with a visit to the German Parliament, where we had the chance to speak to politicians and gain experience in lobbying. As a young person you have so much energy and motivation to make the world a better place, but you are missing knowledge and good arguments. Once you have the tools the motivation only grows!

VS: Social media is an important communications tool for young people. How can students help IPPNW improve its social media presence?

KK: Social media is now one of the most powerful tools any organization can have. It transfers information to many almost instantly. However, for it to work well, we need more engagement on the IPPNW Students Facebook page and our other social media sites.

VS: You have started a pilot program called “United Universities” (UU), modelled after the sister city concept. Can you tell us how your pilot programs are going?

FB: We started with three pilot programs that are working well: Japan-Poland, Croatia-Kenya and Germany-Iran. We

are also strengthening the connection between Kenya and Germany through the Medical Peace Work (MPW) exchange program. Participants will conduct small projects related to MPW topics during their stay in the host country. One of the first topics will be urban settlements in Nairobi and Berlin—what problems do people face and are they similar in the different cities? The UU will help students feel supported by IPPNW student chapters worldwide and emphasize the strength of the international IPPNW family. **VS**

(An extended version of this interview is on the IPPNW Peace and Health Blog.)

 **ONLINE:** facebook.com/ippnwstudents/medicalpeacework.org/

Your donations help support the work of IPPNW students worldwide. Please give as generously as you can to help strengthen their movement and help IPPNW achieve its goals to abolish nuclear weapons and prevent armed violence.

ippnw.org/donate.html

Victor Sidel, 1931-2018

Victor W. Sidel, MD, a founder and president of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), a former co-president of IPPNW, and one of the world's foremost experts on the medical consequences of nuclear war, died on January 30, 2018. Dr. Sidel was Chair of the Department of Social Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx from 1969-1985. He then became Distinguished University Professor of Social Medicine at Montefiore and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. In 1985 he was elected



President of the American Public Health Association. He was the author of numerous books and articles about the human consequences of war, international health, and the impact of poverty and deprivation on health and well being, including *War and Public Health* and *Terrorism and Public Health*, both co-edited with long-time collaborator Barry Levy.

 ONLINE:

ippnw.org/pdf/2007-medicine-nuclear-war-sidel.pdf

Make an ongoing commitment to peace and disarmament

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 ONLINE:

ippnw.org/donate.html

AIMING FOR PREVENTION

[Continued from pg. 6]

addressed in presentations and workshops on topics such as how to prevent online cyber bullying, campus safety, and trauma, violence and substance abuse. Strengthening the health sector's capacity to address violence against women, girls and children was also a key focus.

IPPNW is an active member of the VPA, a 68-member network of WHO Member States, international agencies and civil society organizations which support the goals of the WHO World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH).

Medical Peace Work

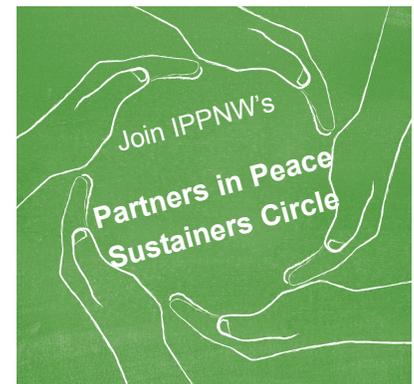
The Medical Peace Work (MPW) online course with twelve case studies has been a successful tool to recruit and educate medical students and young doctors in Africa. MPW is based on the following concept: "As medical professionals we care for

the life, health and well being of our patients. Violence, weapons and war cause enormous suffering and misery, and endanger what is important for us. It is therefore our professional responsibility to work towards the prevention of violence and the promotion of peace, human rights and human security."

More than 100 medical students from IPPNW affiliates in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, and Nigeria have participated in courses and follow-up workshops organized by IPPNW leaders from Kenya, Germany, and Norway to help build skills in advocacy, communication, fundraising, and other areas to enable students to transfer the lessons learned online into their professional lives.

IPPNW Zambia will be working with International Student Representative

Kelvin Kibet to help build the Zambia student chapter by organizing more students to take the course and participate in workshops. 



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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