

# Vital Signs

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International  
Physicians  
for the Prevention  
of Nuclear War

Nobel Peace Laureate

## IPPNW's message about nuclear war "universally embraced" at 2MSP

As diplomats assembled at United Nations Headquarters for the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2MSP), an IPPNW volunteer force of more than 50 doctors, medical students, and activists from 14 countries descended on New York to reinforce the urgent need to prevent nuclear war by abolishing nuclear weapons.

Over the course of six days, from November 26-December 1, 2023, IPPNW delegates participated in the general debate, met with government representatives, and raised the voice of health professionals at dozens of civil society and diplomatic events. We had by far the largest delegation of any NGO.

Program director Molly McGinty moderated a day-long ICAN Campaigners Forum on the eve of the 2MSP, attended by some 200 ban treaty activists from around the world. IPPNW was also a lead organizer of a half-day youth conference with Youth for TPNW, the largest youth-led event of the week.

IPPNW Board member Dr. Sally Ndung'u from Kenya delivered powerful testimony on our behalf at a plenary session of treaty delegates. She also moderated a major side event organized by IPPNW on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons with leading international health agencies.

IPPNW's core message — *since there can be no effective medical response to nuclear war, prevention is the only cure* — was evident throughout the



IPPNW-Germany medical students Sarah Kuiter, Stella Ziegler, and Lea Dittmar gather in New York City before the 2MSP. Photo: Darren Ornitz [ICAN]

"This second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW occurs at a moment of extraordinary danger where the world is sleepwalking towards a nuclear catastrophe of unimaginable magnitude. It is time to wake up, before our nightmare becomes reality."

—Dr. Sally Ndung'u  
IPPNW board member

TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT  
NUCLEAR WAR TODAY



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# Nuclear abolition news and updates

For more information, contact Molly McGinty ([mmcginty@ippnw.org](mailto:mmcginty@ippnw.org))

## Twin existential threats to life: nuclear weapons and the climate crisis

Among the many crises in the world, two human-made hazards threaten our very existence: the accelerating climate crisis and the growing threat of nuclear war. These twin existential threats to life are closely linked and mutually reinforcing.

The climate crisis is already having clear adverse effects on health, the environment, and international security. On the other hand, nuclear weapons are a climate crisis waiting to happen. While it was well-established during the Cold War that all-out nuclear war could cause a nuclear winter, a 2022 study by IPPNW shows that a nuclear war between India and Pakistan—nuclear weapon states that are often in conflict—could kill up to every third person on Earth using less than three percent of the world's

nuclear arsenals. Leaving aside the remaining 97% of the nuclear weapons in the US, Russian, and other arsenals, this so-called limited nuclear war would alter the world's climate in such a way as to reduce harvest times for the staple grains on which many populations depend, leading to a global famine in the decades to follow.

Even when nuclear weapons are not used, their maintenance and production diverts upwards of \$82.9 billion per year that could go to necessary investments in renewable energy and climate mitigation efforts. The production of nuclear weapons alone causes immense human and environmental harm.

Moreover, one threat exacerbates the other. Continued global warming is increasingly causing



IPPNW program director Molly McGinty holds a sign declaring "there are no nuclear weapons on a sustainable planet" outside the UN. Photo: Darren Ornitz [ICAN]

mass human migration and competition for scarce resources, which could lead to a spiral of conflict, violence and war, including among nuclear-armed states.

Both issues are a fight for human and planetary survival that require a mobilized global citizenry pressing for urgent action to rapidly shift to a just renewable energy transition and to eliminate nuclear weapons.



Drs. Bimal Khadka and Angelika Claussen outside COP28

More online on the [Peace and Health Blog](#)



## IPPNW attends COP28, the world's largest climate conference

For the first time, IPPNW sent an official international delegation to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP). Four health professionals from Kenya, Nepal, Germany, and Norway attended COP28 in Dubai with one simple message: As physicians and health workers we warn that the climate crisis, militarization, and nuclear weapons pose an acute threat to global health. At a time of global escalating crises, bold action is needed to protect human and environmental health.

## TPNW heeds IPPNW's message

(Continued from page 1)

meeting, was universally embraced by delegates, and was reflected in the 2MSP's outcome document. "Evidence-based policymaking on the effects of nuclear weapons, the process out of which the Treaty was created, must be central to all decisions and actions regarding the elimination of nuclear weapons." The outcome document also embraced IPPNW's call for new studies by the World Health Organization and other major UN agencies on the consequences of nuclear war. The last such studies were produced in the late 1980s.

A new 15-member TPNW Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), established during the First Meeting of States Parties, presented its initial findings. IPPNW regional vice president Dr. Jans Fromow of Mexico, who joined IPPNW as a medical student in 1987, is a founding member of the SAG.

"We brought science into a discussion of the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear catastrophe...and this gave the debate a different dimension and

made it very vivid," said Mexican ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente, who served as 2MSP president.

Another important outcome of the meeting was an agreement by TPNW States Parties to confront the chief impediment to nuclear abolition: the myth of nuclear deterrence.

The meeting resolved to "challenge the security paradigm based on nuclear deterrence by highlighting and promoting new scientific evidence about the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons and juxtaposing this with the risks and assumptions that are inherent in nuclear deterrence."

"We are beyond grateful for the community of donors who made our participation possible," said IPPNW executive director Michael Christ. "Your support of IPPNW's evidence-based advocacy is central to realizing a world without nuclear weapons."

The third Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW will convene at UN Headquarters in New York from March 3-7, 2025.



Drs. Sally Ndung'u and Carlos Umana joined the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN, Ambassador Maritza Chan, at an IPPNW side event to the 2MSP. A coalition of the world's largest medical and public health organizations – the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Council of Nurses, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, the World Federation of Public Health Associations, and the World Medical Association – shared their perspectives on the danger of nuclear weapons and nuclear war.



[Event video](#)

**"The continued existence of nuclear weapons and lack of meaningful progress on disarmament undermine the security of all States, aggravate international tensions, heighten the risk of nuclear catastrophe and pose an existential threat to humanity as a whole. The only guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination and the legally binding assurance that they will never be developed again."**

—2MSP Declaration



[Read the full Declaration](#)



The voices of people and communities harmed by nuclear weapons were prominent once again at a TPNW meeting. Photo: Darren Ornitz [ICAN]

## Ban Treaty's scientific advisors call for comprehensive nuclear winter study

Dr. Jans Fromow, IPPNW regional vice president from Mexico, represented the federation at the Second Meeting of States Parties (2MSP) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at the UN in November. Dr. Fromow is a member of the 15-person Scientific Advisory Group to the treaty, which presented its first report on the status and developments regarding nuclear weapons, nuclear weapon risks, and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Among the report's recommendations was a call for the General Assembly to mandate "a global scientific study on the climatic, environmental, physical and social effects in the weeks to decades following nuclear war." The advisory group noted that "there has been no such United Nations-mandated study in more than 30 years."



Dr. Jans Fromow on the floor of the UN during the 2MSP



[Full report of the TPNW Scientific Advisory Group](#)



## IPPNW affiliates in action



Medical students in Nigeria issued "a wakeup call to disarmament and climate justice."

## Medical students bike for nuclear abolition and climate justice in Nigeria

IPPNW-Nigeria medical student leaders ended 2023 with a successful bike tour, celebrating Africa's leadership in disarmament and urging world leaders to heed our call to eliminate nuclear weapons before they eliminate us. In 2024, IPPNW's medical student movement will continue to work in collaboration with one another and with our international partners to promote evidence-based policymaking in our effort to protect our common future.

## IPPNW-Greece makes nuclear weapons/health policy connection

Dr. Maria Arvanitis Sotiropoulou, president of IPPNW-Greece, was a featured speaker at the 19th Conference of the International Association of Health Policy in Europe in September. Dr. Sotiropoulou addressed the current danger of nuclear war and the need to abolish nuclear weapons as part of a round table discussion on planetary health. "It is our medical duty according to the Hippocratic Oath to prevent a new war—potentially nuclear disaster—in Europe," she said. In February, Dr. Sotiropoulou joined with the International Peace Bureau and the International Observatory of Organizations and Globalization (PADOP) in Athens to present a European peace plan for the Middle East and the Mediterranean.



IPPNW-Greece president Maria Sotiropoulou (second from left) explains a proposal for a European peace plan for the Middle East and the Mediterranean at the Society of Greek Writers in Athens on February 14.

## IPPNW affiliates join in opposition to AUKUS

Together with Medact (UK) and Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA), MAPW (Australia) has highlighted the risks posed to health by Australia's acquisition of nuclear submarines, and the broader consequences of the new trilateral agreement between the governments of the UK, US, and Australia, known as AUKUS. Nuclear submarines are only the tip of the AUKUS iceberg: long-range, nuclear-capable missiles stationed in Australia are also part of the deal, along with increased presence of US military forces. Tensions between Australia and China have escalated dramatically with the announcement of the new military pact. In an op-ed published by The Canberra Times in January, MAPW president Sue Wareham condemned increased militarization in Australia. The government, she wrote, should instead "[give] priority attention to our existential threats—nuclear weapons and climate change."



MAPW members attend rally to protest the new trilateral military agreement among Australia, the UK, and the US, known as AUKUS.



IDPD, Bharat Jan Gyan Vigyan Jatha, and the Social Thinkers Forum held a rally and march on December 28, 2023 to call for world peace and harmony in the year ahead.

## Indian doctors call for world peace and harmony in 2024

IPPNW board member and former co-president Dr. Arun Mitra gave the keynote address at a conference in January organized by Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD). The conference called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. While demanding the release of Israeli hostages by Hamas, the conference condemned "disproportionate aggression" on Gaza and the humanitarian crisis that has been inflicted upon Palestinians. IDPD also demanded an immediate end to the war in Ukraine.

## IPPNW donor spotlight: Gislin Dagnelie

Dr. Gislin Dagnelie first became aware of IPPNW when he was still living in his homeland: the Netherlands. His father was a pulmonologist who served on the Dutch IPPNW board of directors and traveled to inter-national conferences, including to Leningrad, where he joined with Russian doctors also working for peace.

As a young man, Gislin was a conscientious objector. He began supporting IPPNW financially soon after it was founded in 1980. When he moved to the United States to become a professor of ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, he continued to support IPPNW, then deepened his commitment as a monthly donor in 2007.

Dr. Dagnelie's research lies on the borderline between technology and medicine. He utilizes his training as a medical physicist and vision researcher to help blind people see with the use of electronic eye and brain implants. He also measures and quantifies his patients' visual capabilities, assisting with tracking their improvement.

"IPPNW is unique," he said, "because it views the risk of



*Dr. Gislin Dagnelie, professor of ophthalmology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the associate director of the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center at the Wilmer Eye Institute.*

nuclear war as a health risk. The educational work it has been doing for decades is very important."

Thank you Dr. Dagnelie, for your dedication to helping create a more peaceful world for all of us.

*If you want to deepen your commitment to IPPNW and help ensure its financial stability by giving monthly, you can contact Cynthia Hurst, Director of Development, [churst@ippnw.org](mailto:churst@ippnw.org).*

## WHO should update Cold-War-era study on nuclear war health effects

IPPNW's Geneva office is advocating that the World Health Organization (WHO) update its 1987 report: *Effects of Nuclear War on Health and Health Services*. Chuck Johnson, IPPNW policy director, is consulting with WHO program staff who are interested in renewing the study but need modest outside funding to do it.

"WHO must again play a lead role in warning of the catastrophic health effects of nuclear war," Johnson said, "informing world leaders and the public, and marshaling medical professionals. This long-overdue update will reaffirm that WHO still officially considers nuclear war 'the greatest immediate threat to health and human survival.'"

IPPNW is coordinating with our international health partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross, to help us build support and funding for the report update. We will host "Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons," a special World Health Assembly (WHA) side event this May in Geneva.



Chuck Johnson at WHO headquarters in Geneva. "A renewed WHO study will further encourage leading medical authorities to speak out about this existential threat to human life."

## IPPNW calls for immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza

Based on the health professions' "ethical obligation to provide care to all on the basis of their shared humanity," IPPNW calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. The long-term physical, mental, and social health consequences of this war will be severe and long-lasting. They will include severe mental health and developmental disorders from bereavement, ongoing trauma and insecurity, fear, loss and deprivation and an uncertain future. IPPNW strongly supports the consistent calls of the United Nations General Assembly and Secretary-General and humanitarian organizations for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, for the immediate and unconditional release of all civilians held hostage by Hamas, many of whom need urgent medical attention, and for the protection of civilians and the infrastructure they rely on.

More online on the [Peace and Health blog](#)



# Healthy outrage is the antidote

## An interview with Tova Fuller

*California psychiatrist Tova Fuller is a member of the board of the San Francisco Bay chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility. She has been an IPPNW activist since her medical student days in the early 2000s, and served as an IPPNW delegate to the 2009 Nobel Peace Laureates Summit. We spoke with her about the interconnections between her peace work and her medical practice.*

### **VS: What initially brought you to PSR in 2004?**

TF: At the time, I was outraged about the Iraq War and the US invasion despite no proof of weapons of mass destruction. As a first year medical student, I felt the only group on campus that seemed to resonate and care about global security was Physicians for Social Responsibility. What followed was a rapid education about the military-industrial complex and the realization that nuclear weapons are at the apex.

### **VS: You frequently emphasize the importance of mentorship and uplifting the voices of the emerging generation. Why is this a priority for you?**

TF: My conversations with Jonathan Parfrey, who was the executive director of PSR-Los Angeles, brought me to PSR and IPPNW. I felt that my concerns were valid and shared. I'd never learned about nuclear weapons, the myth of deterrence, and the cost of our nuclear arsenals in school in preparation to become a doctor. The learning curve is steep, and something is to be

said about modeling the activism and providing connections for net-working when the time comes to get involved.

### **VS: What advice do you have for today's medical students in the US and around the world?**

TF: You have a right to be outraged and to come from a place of compassionate outrage. Do not be satisfied by policy wonks who try to explain away our need for nuclear arsenals large enough to destroy the world many times over. These twin emotions—compassion and anger—will drive you, make you heard, and sustain you.

### **VS: How does advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons relate to your work as a psychiatrist?**

TF: PTSD did not exist as a diagnosis in 1945, the year the US dropped atomic bombs on Japan. We have since learned a lot about war and trauma, especially intergenerational trauma. We focus mainly on mortality and



*Tova (right) with IPPNW Board Chair Dr. Ruth Mitchell during IPPNW's 23rd World Congress in Mombasa, Kenya. Ruth and Tova have remained friends and colleagues since they first met as leaders of IPPNW's medical student movement.*

physical morbidity when it comes to nuclear weapons, war, and climate change but there is a great emotional toll that also matters. Quality of life matters. I talk about learned helplessness with nuclear weapons—this paralysis that makes people stop and feel like efforts towards abolition will never be fruitful. Healthy outrage is the antidote.

### **VS: What can we expect from you and PSR San Francisco in the year ahead?**

TF: Locally, we have an annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day event at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories that used to be frequented by the late Dan Ellsberg. We already have a few Back from the Brink resolutions passed in our area, with more to come. As the chair of our local Nuclear Weapons Abolition Committee, I'm working with two new interns who are looking to connect students around the area.



Online: [Back From the Brink](#)



*Asking a question of former Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev at the Nobel Peace Laureates Summit in 2009 (left); and receiving the 2011 Lown Alexander Sidel Award for Medical Advocacy from the late Dr. Victor W. Sidel (right).*



## Save the Date:

Join IPPNW's 24th World Congress in Nagasaki in October 2025, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan. Stay tuned for details: [ippnw.org](http://ippnw.org).



Paper crane display in Nagasaki Peace Park.  
Photo: John Loretz

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In November 2023, more than 500 campaigners from 100 civil society organizations registered to attend the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Photo: Darren Ornitz [ICAN]

IPPNW is a non-partisan federation of national medical organizations in 56 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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