

# Vital Signs

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International  
Physicians  
for the Prevention  
of Nuclear War

Nobel Peace Laureate

## Abolition of nuclear weapons remains the goal in these troubled times

We are on a very dangerous path of rampant militarism and nuclearism that is greatly increasing the risk of nuclear war.

In the past year alone, five of the nine nuclear-armed states—the US, Russia, Israel, India and Pakistan—have taken up arms or waged all-out war. China and North Korea are deeply involved in Ukraine while they also prepare for regional and global armed conflict. Russia's frequent nuclear saber rattling has prompted the United Kingdom to reaffirm its readiness to use its nuclear weapons to defend the NATO alliance. France has gone further by proposing a "Eurobomb" to replace European dependence on US nuclear forces. All of the nuclear powers are on a wild spending spree, diverting trillions of dollars into an unprecedented global arms race.

The war on Iran has been particularly destabilizing and has caused thousands of deaths and widespread casualties across the region. The economic shock is rippling throughout the world.

The rationale for the war has been a moving target. A primary justification is the claim that Iran was on the brink of possessing a nuclear weapon, despite President Trump's claim last June that Israel's twelve-day war against Iran had "completely and totally



Photo: Hiroshima Association for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

obliterated" the Islamic Republic's nuclear enrichment facilities.

The Obama-era nuclear agreement with Iran—the JCPOA—had effectively halted the Islamic Republic's ability to produce a nuclear warhead. After President Trump ripped up the deal and imposed crippling sanctions during his first term, under pressure from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Iran restarted its program, producing more than 11,000 tons of enriched uranium. Just before launching "Operation Epic Fury," US negotiators rejected Iran's offer for a return of IAEA inspectors to supervise the dilution of its near-bomb-grade fissile material to civilian energy purity.

Taking a page from the Iraq war, the US has doubled down on the

failed policy of bombing and regime change to defeat suspected nuclear proliferators. For its part, Israel seeks to prevent Iran and its neighbors in the region from acquiring nuclear weapons, despite maintaining an advanced covert nuclear arsenal.

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## Nuclear abolition news and updates

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

### Golden Dome or Golden Scam?

Together with Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and Back from the Brink, IPPNW has released a report debunking President Trump's "Golden Dome" missile defense proposal, finding that it would fail to protect the American people while accelerating a dangerous new nuclear arms race.

Even at an optimistic 80% success rate, the system would leave the 132 largest US population centers vulnerable, with 75 million Americans in zones of total destruction. A strike of that scale would trigger global climate disruption and a famine killing an estimated 1.4 billion people worldwide.

The report was launched at a major press event on Capitol Hill, with the support of Senator Edward Markey, Congressman Jim McGovern, and the Up in Arms Coalition.

Beyond its failure to deliver protection, the Golden Dome would fuel the new arms race and could cost as much as \$3.6 trillion at a time when Americans are drowning in healthcare debt, rural hospitals are closing, and millions struggle to afford food, housing, and education.

We call for the cessation of all investments in the Golden Dome and for the United States to open negotiations with all nuclear-armed nations toward a verifiable agreement to dismantle global nuclear arsenals.



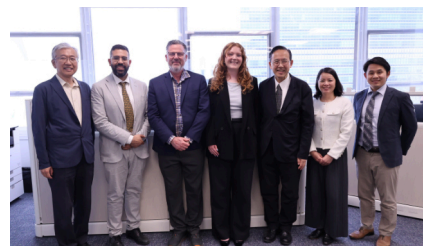
[Full the full Golden Dome report](#)

### Global Classroom prepares next generation of IPPNW leaders

IPPNW has launched an exciting new Global Classroom: a 10-month interactive online program designed to equip medical students, young campaigners, and other participants with a deeper understanding of the dangers of nuclear weapons.

Created in direct response to young people looking for accessible entry points, the program offers a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons and the tools available to pull us back from the brink.

More than 350 participants from 50 countries – including seven of the nine nuclear-armed states – have registered. When asked, only 23% expressed confidence discussing nuclear weapons risks with others, underscoring exactly why this program matters.



Michael Christ and Molly McGinty (center) join members of Soka Gakkai International on the margins of the NPT RevCon.

Ambassador Xolisa Mabhungo from South Africa, Chair of the upcoming third TPNW Review Conference, said at the Classroom launch that "the need for disarmament and non-proliferation education and critical thinking skills, particularly among young people, has never been greater."

The program actively platforms young leaders. More than 40% of session speakers have been under 35 – and each session closes with a concrete call to action. Our goal is to strengthen and grow a new generation of advocates to join the scores of IPPNW physician members already driving the conversation on abolition around the world.

At the TPNW Review Conference this December, IPPNW will host a side event featuring Global Classroom participants and will release an updated *Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons Campaign Kit*. This work is made possible with the generous support of our partners at Soka Gakkai International (SGI).



[Learn more or tune in](#)



US Senator Ed Markey (right) joined Dr. Ira Helfand at Washington, DC press briefing on 19 May.

## Abolition in these troubled times

*(Continued from page 1)*

Military action also gives states an incentive to acquire nuclear weapons. A sustained commitment to diplomacy, international institutions, and the rule of law is the only way to prevent the spread of nuclear arms and, ultimately, the use of these genocidal weapons.

Unfortunately, the US, Russia, and the other seven nuclear-armed states, rather than taking their disarmament obligations seriously, continue to endanger their own citizens and the world with the constant threat of nuclear war.

In January, President Trump signed an executive order authorizing the development of a “Golden Dome” ballistic missile defense system akin to President Reagan’s failed “Star Wars” boondoggle (see page 2). A month later, the US allowed New START, the last remaining bilateral strategic nuclear arms agreement with Russia, to officially expire.

The 11<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference concluded in May, after four weeks of debate, without any new agreements to reduce the growing nuclear threat. This “cornerstone” of the global disarmament and nonproliferation regime, already weakened by the failure of the two previous review conferences in 2015 and 2022, could collapse entirely if the member states don’t take decisive action (see page 2).

Also troubling is the growing reliance on artificial intelligence in warfighting and weapons systems, including potentially incorporating AI into nuclear command and control. Earlier this year, the US launched an “AI First” strategy to “...integrate the bleeding edge of frontier AI capabilities across every mission area to usher in an unprecedented era of American military AI dominance.” Secretary of



*Magritte Gordaneer, director of the nuclear weapons abolition program at Physicians for Social Responsibility, delivers IPPNW’s statement to the 11th Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on 1 May at the United Nations.*

Defense Hegseth is demanding that AI companies turn over their technology to the Pentagon and remove any guardrails in how it is used.

Clearly, the prospects for nuclear arms control and disarmament are currently bleak. But even during the darkest moments of the Cold War, reason and hope prevailed. Deep distrust between bitter enemies did not prevent the sort of dialogue that produced breakthrough negotiations to pull the world back from the brink. IPPNW and other prominent civil society organizations played key roles in promoting détente and agreements to end nuclear testing, ban whole classes of nuclear weapons, and achieve 80% reductions in global nuclear arsenals. We can do so again.

Our principal focus today, as it has been since we launched ICAN—the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons—in 2007, is an agreement to deliver on the central promise of the NPT and the United Nations itself: the abolition of nuclear weapons.

IPPNW, together with more than 700 ICAN partner organizations from 113 countries, continues to build global support for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is grounded in a sober understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian impacts of nuclear war. Ninety-nine states have signed the treaty and 74 have ratified it.

The first Review Conference of the TPNW will take place later this year at the UN in New York, from November 30–December 4. This is a critical opportunity to continue building political, legal, and moral pressure against the possession of nuclear weapons by *any* nation.

IPPNW will spare no effort to stand as a bulwark against the growing global risks to health and peace.

***“The NPT’s disarmament pillar is failing because a small number of states have decided that their national policies matter more than their legal obligations and more than the security of humanity at large. The majority of this treaty’s membership has never accepted that conclusion....The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has built in five years what the NPT’s disarmament pillar has not produced in over half a century.”***

*ICAN statement to the NPT Review Conference*

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## Celebrating five years of the TPNW

This January, the IPPNW community celebrated the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), making nuclear weapons illegal under international law. This milestone reflects decades of advocacy and collective action that made the nuclear ban a reality. In this moment of multiple global crises, IPPNW leaders from around the world reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a nuclear weapons free future with our campaign "5 years, 5 reasons." From Hiroshima to Nairobi to Germany, campaigners shared just a few of the countless reasons why IPPNW supports the nuclear weapons ban.



International Student Rep Namkhai Bayasgalan, from Mongolia, campaigning in support of the TPNW.

## Medical students connect for peace in Denmark

Anna Khouri, IPPNW's International Student Representative, and Pauline Gatmaytan, student volunteer at the Geneva Liaison Office, attended the 75th International Federation of Medical Students' Association (IFMSA) General Assembly in Copenhagen in March. They brought IPPNW's message to one of the largest gatherings of medical students worldwide, where some 900 medical students from more than 120 countries came together for an incredible week of dialogue, learning, and connection. Building on our longstanding partnership with IFMSA, Anna and Pauline hosted a workshop on Medical Peace Work and represented IPPNW at the Student Activity Fair, where they connected with students from around the world.



Anna Khouri (inset) explains the importance of medical peace work at the IFMSA General Assembly in March.



## IPPNW World Roundup



Dr. Paul Saoke from Kenya discussed Africa's nuclear energy dilemma at the webinar.

Africa's Nuclear Dilemma: Trapped by Design

- Africa holds major uranium reserves but limited control
- Sovereignty crisis driven by foreign influence
- Colonial legacy still shapes nuclear governance
- Emergence of 'captive sovereignty' and comprador dynamics
- Key Insight: Structural imbalance in global nuclear system

## Debunking nuclear power myths

IPPNW's Climate Working Group hosted a webinar in April exploring the risks associated with nuclear power and challenging the myth that it offers a simple, safe, carbon-free solution to the climate crisis. Taking place in the context of the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the 11th Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, this discussion reflected on past lessons while looking ahead to a nuclear-free future. Expert speakers included Linda Pentz Gunter (Beyond Nuclear), Dr. Paul Saoke (IPPNW Kenya), Tim Judson (Nuclear Information and Resource Service), and Vladimir Slyviak (Ecodefense).

## Dangers of new arms race raised in Munich

IPPNW participated for the first time at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), represented by Co-President Dr. Inga Blum. Dr. Blum reflects: "At the end of January, scientists set the symbolic 'Doomsday Clock' to 85 seconds before midnight—a dramatic sign that the risk of nuclear catastrophe is higher than ever before. Shortly thereafter, New START, the last treaty between Russia and the US to limit strategic nuclear weapons, expired. There are fears that this will trigger a further arms race. However, the Munich Security Report 2026, published a few days before the conference began, only touches on the subject of nuclear weapons in passing." At a time when the rules-based international order is faltering, it is essential that new perspectives and bold calls for nuclear disarmament are heard at the MSC and in all decision-making spaces.



*Co-President Inga Blum broke new ground when she spoke for IPPNW at the Munich Security Conference in February.*



**[Subscribe to IPPNW's Peace and Health Blog to read more about these events and to stay on top of other IPPNW news](#)**

## Nuclear deterrence and the Eurobomb

With European security concerns magnified by Russia's war against Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in Gaza, and the US war against Iran—all involving various levels of nuclear threat—some European leaders are now talking openly about acquiring nuclear weapons independently from the US and NATO. IPPNW and ICAN hosted a webinar examining the options being put forward, how individual countries are positioning themselves, and how the anti-nuclear movement is navigating this rapidly shifting and troubling landscape.



**[Watch the webinar](#)**



*Josefin Lind, General Secretary of SLMK (IPPNW Sweden) spoke in April about her country's shifting policy on nuclear weapons and deterrence at an NPT side event organized by the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security.*

## NPT Review Conference fails, but global majority rejects nuclear weapons

The 11th Review Conference (RevCon) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) concluded in May without an agreed outcome document for the third consecutive time. Disagreement over language on Iran's compliance with its Treaty obligations appeared to be part of the reason, although the nuclear-weapon states entered these negotiations determined to deflect their obligations and block any meaningful progress.

For our part, IPPNW sent a 20-person delegation with a clear set of recommendations to promote a safer, healthier future for all. We kicked off the week at *Tectonic Geopolitical Changes*, a pre-NPT civil society forum co-hosted by IPPNW and more than a dozen other civil society organizations. Josefin Lind from Swedish Physicians Against Nuclear Weapons spoke on a panel

challenging nuclear deterrence, highlighting the "Swedish Slippery Slope", a case study on how quickly policy can unravel when long-standing norms go unenforced.

IPPNW delegates presented at several official side events. Maja Fjellvær Thompson, from IPPNW Norway, presented at the launch of ICAN's *Cornerstone Report*, spotlighting Norway's backsliding nuclear weapons policies and what the affiliate is doing to push back. Josefin and Communications Coordinator Anduin DeVos presented at a side event on hope and the humanitarian lens of disarmament, co-sponsored by Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Program Director Molly McGinty spoke at a BASIC side event on medical student and youth perspectives on the NPT,

urging participants to engage young people "as experts in their own right today. The generation that will inherit the consequences of today's decisions must have a genuine voice in shaping them."

That intergenerational commitment sits at the heart of our work. IPPNW medical students met with the Nagasaki and Hiroshima Peace Messengers and discussed what it means to carry the legacy of the Hibakusha and to sustain the movement for a nuclear-weapons-free world. Medical student Sofia Vitale reflected that her experience at the NPT deepened her "belief that young people, medical professionals, educators, and advocates all have a role in building a safer and more compassionate world."

 [Read more about IPPNW at the NPT RevCon](#)

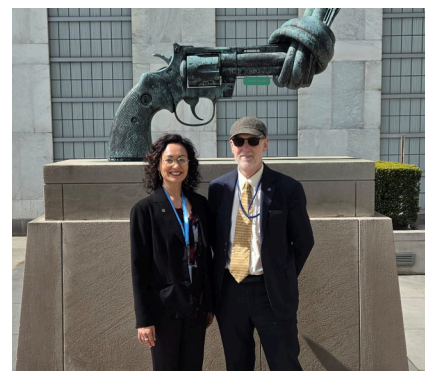
## New IPPNW team members enhance our outreach, advocacy and communications

We are thrilled to welcome two outstanding new staff members whose energy and expertise are already making a difference in IPPNW and around the world.

Jienna Foster joined as Director of our Geneva Liaison Office (GLO), where she leads the team in resource mobilization, advocacy, and strategic engagement with multilateral institutions. With more than 20 years of experience across health, climate, and humanitarian sectors, she brings deep expertise in strategic communications, fundraising, and partnership-building. Chuck Johnson, who worked tirelessly as the founding director of the Geneva office since 2018, will continue as GLO Policy Director as a volunteer.

Anduin DeVos joined the Central Office team in Boston this past September as Communications Coordinator, doing vital work to support our website, social media, and affiliate outreach. A nuclear disarmament and environmental activist since graduating from University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 2023, they previously served as Campaign Director at NuclearBan.US and the Treaty Alignment Campaign, and currently serve as Outreach Coordinator for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

Please join us in welcoming Jienna and Anduin, and consider making a donation to help us continue building the team and capacity this moment demands.



New GLO Director Jienna Foster (l) with retiring policy director Chuck Johnson (above); Communications Coordinator Anduin DeVos (below)



# Ruth Mitchell: “There’s always a new way to help”

*Dr. Ruth Mitchell is a neurosurgeon and cancer researcher based in Sydney, Australia. She is the board chair of IPPNW, an active member of the Medical Association for Prevention of War, and a board member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons in Australia. In April, Ruth participated in a two-week medical mission to Gaza with the Palestinian Australian New Zealand Medical Association. While in Gaza, Ruth met with hundreds of patients with complex medical needs.*



*Ruth Mitchell performing surgery in Gaza, and with Dr. Jamal Salha, neurosurgeon trainee, outside bombed surgical services building at Al Shifa Hospital*

**VS:** What prompted you to join the medical mission in Gaza? And why now?

**RM:** So roughly 20 years ago, a hospital in Afghanistan was hit by seemingly intentional targeting and there were people operating on someone at the time when that occurred....My journey to Gaza probably started with that image, where I realized how deep my solidarity was with people in healthcare settings in conflict areas and realizing how much my heart, my mind and my spirit are with people under fire.

**VS:** What was the state of the hospitals that you were working in? How have the Palestinian medical staff adapted to the reality that they’ve found themselves in over the years?

**RM:** I worked in two hospitals—al-Aqsa and Al Shifa—while I was there, but the things I saw in both of them that they had in common were very hard working people who were exhausted and fatigued by what’s happened to them and their families and their communities, but who still keep going....There isn’t a single working MRI scanner in the whole

*“I think the hope always comes from connection and community.”*

of the Gaza Strip....Despite all of that, what I could see and what just impressed me so much was the resiliency and the perseverance of these beautiful Palestinian doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, from the cleaner to the nurses to the surgeons, everyone just pulling together and doing the best they can with what they’ve got. And rising to the challenge of meeting the clinical needs of the community despite the enormous hardship that the communities face, but that they also have faced.

I think it’s very clear that the ongoing siege of Gaza, the bombing of Gaza, the attempts to shrink down the territory in which people live inside of Gaza—all have to stop. And it is incumbent on the international community to hold Israel to account for what they’re doing. And we have to be bold and clear in calling for an end to violence

against civilians, against health-care facilities, against hospitals, and against ambulance convoys....We have to be clear that our humanity comes first and be comfortable having difficult conversations.

**VS:** Did you see signs of hope for the future in Gaza? How do you hold on to hope after everything that you’ve witnessed?

**RM:** I think the hope always comes from connection and community...We should be encouraged by the fact that there’s always a new way to help. I’d want to encourage people to consider what they can do, because I didn’t really think I could do a medical mission. And now I know that I have, and I can, and I’m really grateful that I did, and I hope I can do it again...Almost all of us have politicians to talk to and we should be doing it regularly to remind them that they can’t do these things in our name.

 [Read the full interview](#)

## Global peace and health event to honor leading moral advocate for TPNW

The 9<sup>th</sup> Global Health and Peace Awards organized by IPPNW and Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility will take place on the evening of Saturday, 24 October, hosted by the Ikeda Center in Cambridge, MA.

The event is an annual tradition, born of our partnership with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra and its Healing Art of Music program. It is an opportunity to celebrate individuals who have made exceptional contributions to safeguarding humanity from the existential threats of nuclear war and climate change.

This year we will honor Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New

Mexico for his powerful leadership of the effort to abolish nuclear weapons as a moral, spiritual, and humanitarian imperative. Archbishop Wester's archdiocese includes two of the three sprawling US nuclear weapons research facilities and the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons. He is a leading advocate for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign and ratify.

All proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships support IPPNW's and GBPSR's urgent work. To purchase tickets or learn about sponsorship opportunities, visit [gbpsr.org](http://gbpsr.org).



Archbishop John C. Wester



## Our most important work lies ahead

*Our world is closer to nuclear disaster than it has ever been.*

*IPPNW is sparing no effort to sound a global medical warning:*

*Urgent action is needed to eliminate nuclear weapons before they eliminate us.*

*Every penny of your donation goes toward eradicating the greatest immediate threat the world has ever known.*

*Please make your gift today by mailing in your donation or by donating online at*

[www.ippnw.org/donate](http://www.ippnw.org/donate)

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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