



In favour of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons

1. Current situation

The explosion of a nuclear weapon in a populated area would immediately kill hundreds of thousands of people. Hundred of thousand others could also be severely injured (blinded, burnt, crushed, with multiple fractures, etc.). In addition, it would cause devastating damage to infrastructure, industry and agriculture, to our lives and to the lives of our children and grandchildren.

The long-term effects of exposure to radiation would lead to increased incidences of leukaemia and solid-tumour cancers in the survivors, and an increased risk of hereditary effects in future generations. Let us recall the Hiroshima and Nagasaki disasters. The effects, of even a single nuclear weapon, were horrific. Its destructive force is unacceptable, even during wartime. Furthermore, it would mainly be the civil population that would suffer the consequences.

If various nuclear weapons were used, the effects could seriously shake up the planet's climate, and would cause wide-spread agricultural devastation. This would condemn millions of people to hunger. Global communications as well as electric and electronic systems could be cut off.

March 2013 in Oslo, an international conference with the participation of academics and scholars of the problems of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear explosions concluded that it would be possible to coordinate and provide an effective humanitarian response to the catastrophe caused by nuclear weapons. A nuclear explosion would destroy hospitals, food and water supplies, transport and communications. In February 2014 a second conference was held in Nayarit (Mexico) concluding with a call to all States to initiate a diplomatic process to achieve a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

There are currently nine nuclear-armed states: the USA, Russia, France, China, the UK, Israel, Pakistan, India, and North Korea. Only the first five have signed the non-nuclear proliferation Treaty. It is estimated that these states account for more than 17,000 nuclear bombs. The US and Russian arsenals represent over 90% of the total. Moreover, there are stored materials that could potentially be used to make many more nuclear bombs.



2. Why a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons?

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has had relative success in its attempt to stop the nuclear arms race and to initiate steps toward nuclear disarmament. After more than forty years of the entry into force, a comprehensive process to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons has still not been initiated. Today there are more nuclear-armed states compared to 1968, however there would certainly be many more without the NPT.

Reasons for achieving the prohibition of nuclear weapons:

Humanitarian argument: Nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons ever invented by man. The explosion of a nuclear bomb would immediately cause the death of a huge amount of people, infrastructure would be damaged and the persistent effects of radiation would cause suffering and death among the survivors.

The use of nuclear weapons would implicate a serious violation of the International Humanitarian Right that prohibits the use of weapons that cannot distinguish between civilians and fighters.

Security argument: Nuclear weapons pose a direct and constant threat to the world's population. Far from maintaining peace, it generates mistrust among one another. The existence of nuclear weapons stirs up nuclear proliferation.

Environmental argument: If just 0.1% of the destructive capacity of the world's nuclear arsenal was used, it would cause agricultural devastation and wide-spread hunger. If one hundred bombs were used in a regional war, as was the case of Hiroshima (current bombs are ten times stronger on average) there would be dozens of millions of immediate deaths and there would be an unprecedented change in the world's climate. A war in which millions of bombs are used would leave the world uninhabitable.

Economic argument: It is estimated that the nine nuclear-armed states allocate 90,000 million dollars a year towards the maintenance and modernisation of their arsenals. These resources should however be allocated towards health care, education, humanitarian aid and other fundamental services, or for the creation of worthy jobs in sectors that are considered as being socially useful for the real economy, in the fight against poverty, inequality and climate change.



3. The UN's initiatives

In 2007, at the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the UN, 130 member states supported a resolution of a proposal to create a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. (NWC).

In December 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that established a new forum to discuss nuclear disarmament. It was named the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to draw up proposals in order to start multilateral negotiations to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. The working group is open to participation of all states.

In the meeting of the UN First Committee (a forum where states express their point of view on disarmament and international security) in New York, in October 2013, 125 states supported a joint statement on the adverse humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons.

4. Views of the states regarding a Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

151 states support it
22 states are sceptical of it
22 states are against it

Source: ICAN, <http://www.icanw.org/why-a-ban/positions/>

5. Spain and the Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction that have not been banned by a convention. The Spanish government was among the first that signed the conventions prohibiting chemical and biological weapons. Therefore, Spain should support the resolutions of the General assembly of the UN and other international forums in favour of a ban on nuclear weapons. In this regards, it would be very fruitful of the non-nuclear weapon states, such as Spain, to work together for a world without nuclear weapons, as they have done with the other weapons of mass destruction.

6. Is it possible to achieve a Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons?

Governments must ensure the security of their citizens. Parliaments have to pass laws to make the latter possible. For this reason, governments and parliaments have the responsibility of starting a process to create a world which is free from nuclear weapons.

Treaties to prohibit other types of weapons, such as chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-personnel mines and cluster bombs have been negotiated and passed. Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction that still haven't been banned.

History shows that legal prohibition of weapons, as well as their use and possession, makes the elimination of weapons easier. Weapons that have been made illegal are increasingly seen as illegitimate. They lose their political use and therefore do not require resources for their production. The prohibition of nuclear weapons will increase the political and economic costs of their maintenance.

If it has been possible to succeed in creating treaties for the prohibition of other types of weapons, it must also be possible to do the same for nuclear weapons.



7. International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN, is a civic movement which is present in more than sixty nations. It demands a treaty which will prohibit nuclear weapons for good. Its work involves mobilising people from all countries to persuade and put pressure on their governments to support the negotiations of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

It recently launched a campaign aimed to the parliamentarians to support a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Let's succeed in prohibiting nuclear weapons

It isn't a utopia, it's a NECESSITY

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