



# The Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament

## Citizens United Against an Existential Threat

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In July, 2017, the international community adopted a historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). It had the support of 122 countries but the notorious absence of the 9 nuclear states and their allies, among those the NATO member states, with the exception of the Netherlands that participated in the vote. With the adoption of the TPNW by the United Nations General Assembly, a milestone was reached after decades of advocacy by the civil society.

At last, the humanitarian approach on the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons was represented in the juridical order, thus becoming part of the inter-

national law. Until that moment, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction that had not been prohibited in spite of its catastrophic consequences. The International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) played a key role in such an achievement and months later it would be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In this way, antinuclear activism was provided with a valuable tool to spur on the advocacy work against nuclear weapons. The Treaty entered into force on 22 January 2021 and paved the way towards its ultimate goal, that of living in a world free of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the

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TPNW was also an act of justice and acknowledgment of the pain and the profound legacy that these weapons have left in the lives of people who have suffered their effects over generations, the *hibakusha* and the victims of nuclear testing.

After the approval of the document, Setsuko Thurlow, member of the Hibakusha, movingly stated “I never thought that I would see this moment. I have been waiting for this day for seven decades. I am so happy that it has finally arrived. It is the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons have always been immoral. Now they are also illegal.”

It was difficult to imagine at that time that some years later the threat of nuclear weapons would be looming over us even more threateningly. What seemed to be part of the collective memory of the past has been permeating both the governments and media’s discourse, thus bringing to life the fear of nuclear war. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought the narrative about nuclear weapons to the forefront of the political debate. In the last two years we have witnessed an increase in the rhetoric about their use, aggravated by the shattering of the bilateral agreements between Russia and the United States. It has become notoriously common and sheerly irresponsible on the part of political leaders to use the threat of use of nuclear weapons as a means of coercion. At the same time, far from responding with diplomacy, it seems that the Western powers have opted to be caught up in a militaristic spiral, which, as a whole, could end up putting us on the verge of an irreversible disaster. It is more necessary than ever to delegitimize this model of military security and the systems of violence that it imposes and which they feed back to us.

## **Action When Facing a High Nuclear Risk**

At the current time, the world is facing an unprecedented nuclear threat, a situation of the greatest tension since the Second World War. Nuclear weapons, along with the climate crisis, are two connected realities that influence each other and together constitute an existential risk to life and to the planet, as has been acknowledged by an array of research. This is verified, for example, by the Domsday Clock, an initiative of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. In their risks analysis, for the second consecutive year, they have set the clock at only 90 seconds from midnight, that is, the closest to a global catastrophe it has ever been.

Nowadays nine countries (United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea) own a total of 12,512 nuclear weapons, 90% of which belong to Russia and the United States. It is believed that 3,844 warheads are spread out in missiles or airplanes, and some 2000 are held in a state of maximum alert, ready for the button to be pressed. The world has more than enough capacity to destroy itself several times over. The smallest of these bombs is ten times more powerful than the one that was dropped over Hiroshima. The detonation of only one of these tactical nuclear weapons would have devastating effects. A small-scale nuclear war would put the future of our planet at risk. As Melissa Parke, executive director of ICAN, stated, “every species would be harmed in a nuclear war, only one species can stop it.”

Nevertheless, far from disarmament, nuclear powers, with the consent of their allies, are caught up in a race to modern-

ize and amplify their arsenals. In 2022 alone, the nine nuclear states spent \$82.9 billion on their arsenals, \$157,664 per minute, a figure that increased for three consecutive years. More than half of the total expenditure falls on the United States, followed by China and Russia. On the other hand, in a violation of ratified non-proliferation treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), some European countries are considering hosting nuclear weapons on their territory again, as is the case of the United Kingdom, with arms from the United States, or that of Belarus with Russian nuclear weapons. The fallout of this goes even further with the opening of the debate in Germany and other European countries about whether the European Union should have its “own Bomb”. In light of this situation, the Stockholm International Institute for Peace Research has warned us that “we are entering one of the most dangerous periods in the history of humankind.”

### **Responding to Darkness: Civil Action in Alliance in Favor of the TPNW**

There is no room for a paralyzing pessimism. The existence of a treaty that prohibits nuclear weapons and which in such a short time has garnered solid support (93 countries have signed it and 70 have ratified it) is a beacon of light. The foundations upon which to build a new order are there; so are those who defend it. The action of an organized civil society achieved what was unthinkable: the adoption of the TPNW, including overcoming the efforts of the nuclear powers in order to bring about the failure of the

negotiations. Those of us who advocated for the Treaty were considered “deluded” and “unrealistic”.

But the Treaty exists and it is in force. Nuclear weapons are legally prohibited by international law, and we, as civil society, can and should question our political representatives where they stand. As stated by Carlos Umaña, co-president of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), with the Treaty there is no room for half measures. Are nuclear weapons acceptable or not? That is the question posed by the existence of the Treaty. The response is whether or to sign it or not.

Spain continues to turn its back on the treaty. For that reason, last year a group of social entities and organizations decided to unite our efforts, experience and different approaches to work together to get the Spanish government to sign the Treaty. Following the lead of a hopeful initial experience, the campaign named “10 reasons to sign the Treaty”, sponsored by the Spanish Association for Peace Research (AIPAZ), the Delàs Center of Peace Studies, and the Spanish section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, to which dozens of entities were quickly added, we decided to take a step forward and formally constituted ourselves as the Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament.

The Alliance was officially launched in May 2023. It is currently formed by 60 organizations from different areas, and it is directed by a steering committee composed of AIPAZ, Mayors for Peace, Antimilitaristic Alternative MOC, AP-DHA, Delàs Center, the General Commission of Peace and Justice, Disarm Madrid, Ecologists in Action, the Peace Culture Foundation, Fundipau, Green-

peace, Women in Black, Pressenza, Soka Gakkai Spain and WILPF Spain.

We are a collective, plural and open movement. We work as a network on political advocacy, communication and awareness raising actions in order to let the Spanish society know about the problem posed by the existence of nuclear weapons, and to involve them in the search for solutions. Because the risks of nuclear weapons affect everyone. We are trying to contribute to the construction of a critical and active citizenship, which takes part in the petition to the Spanish Government to sign the Treaty as a first step that cannot be delayed any longer to face the global challenges which nuclear weapons pose to us.

We, as Alliance, are aware of the urgent necessity to delegitimize in the

public discourses, once and for all, the support for a security strategy based on nuclear deterrence. Deterrence is not the solution, but rather the problem. Arming ourselves with nukes will not avoid a war, but it will rather place all of humanity and our planet in danger. If that war has not yet been produced, it is a matter of luck and, as the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, has warned, “luck is not a strategy”. The day that it fails, there will be no turning back. Living in a world free of such a threat concerns all of us.

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