



Network of
Christian Peace
Organisations

Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

Briefing 2017

International negotiations take place in 2017 on a treaty that would ban all nuclear weapons. The Network of Christian Peace Organisations offers this Briefing for use by individuals, organisations and churches in preparation for these negotiations. We believe the abolition of all nuclear weapons is a matter of faith and spirituality that speaks of how we live together in the world, how we see one another and how we understand security.

Currently, there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons stockpiled worldwide. The detonation of a single nuclear weapon anywhere in the world, whether by accident or design, would be a humanitarian catastrophe of unparalleled proportions. A 'small' nuclear war between, say, India and Pakistan, could lead to the deaths of two billion people as a result of the impact on climate and food security. An all-out nuclear war would be the end of human civilisation as we know it and possibly of all life on earth. Asked if she would be prepared to order a nuclear attack our own Prime Minister gave an unhesitating response - yes.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age in 1945, political and religious leaders have claimed that their ultimate objective is "a world free of nuclear weapons". For the first time ever, the countries of the world are assembling in New York for multilateral negotiations to ban *all* nuclear weapons *for all time*. **The UK Government does not even plan to attend.**

"Hiroshima & Nagasaki became the symbol of boundless destructive power ... It remains a permanent warning for humanity to reject war forever and to ban nuclear weapons and every weapon of mass destruction."

Pope Francis, August 2015

"The British prime minister could deliver an order that would kill 3 million people within an hour."

Professor Paul Rogers,
January 2017

Members of the NCPO

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship
Baptist Peace Fellowship
Campaign Against Arms Trade Christian Network
Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Christian International Peace Service
Christian Peacemaker Teams
Church and Peace
Community of Reconciliation
Congregational Peace Fellowship
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Martin Luther King Peace Committee
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Northern Friends Peace Board
Pax Christi
Quaker Peace and Social Witness
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www.ncpo.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/ncpouk/>

What you can do

- Use this briefing to draw attention to these crucial negotiations between now and July.
- Sign the online Petition to urge the Government to participate in the UN conference to negotiate a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/175096>
- Ask your MP/MSP to sign EDM 578
- Take part in the Lobby of Parliament on 1 March. Details here <http://act.cnduk.org/lobby/globalbanlobby>
- Write now to your MP/MSP and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson urging the UK Government to take an active part in the UN meetings in New York in March and July.



BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS BANNED 1972



CHEMICAL WEAPONS BANNED 1993



LAND MINES BANNED 1997



CLUSTER BOMBS BANNED 2008



NUCLEAR WEAPONS BANNED ____ ?



Arguments and questions to engage in discussion about the nuclear ban treaty



UN General Assembly approves historic resolution, 2016. Credit ICAN

Who is supporting the nuclear ban treaty?

Out of the 195 countries at the UN, nine have nuclear weapons. Five NATO countries have US nuclear weapons stationed on their soil, and a further 23 countries are in nuclear alliances with the US. That leaves 158 countries of the world which do not have nuclear weapons or claim to be 'defended' by them. Virtually all of these other countries, including the whole of Latin America, the whole of Africa and the whole of Southeast Asia, are fully behind the treaty to ban all nuclear weapons.

Although NATO countries are facing strong pressure from the US to boycott the negotiations, several of them are also under growing pressure from their own parliaments to support the treaty, including Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway. Among the nuclear weapons states, China, India and Pakistan have all indicated a willingness to participate and North Korea voted in favour of the treaty negotiations.

The ban treaty is strongly supported by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the International Trade Union Confederation, the World Medical Association, the World Council of Churches, the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

ICAN is a global coalition of over 400 partner organisations in 100 countries, including many churches and other religious communities. The ICAN coalition is a successful example of ordinary people from around the world working alongside governments to achieve much needed change at the international level. Similar coalitions were effective in pushing for the various climate talks and for the banning of landmines, cluster munitions and other categories of inhumane weapons.

Being on the right side of history

As people of faith, we do not accept that there can ever be circumstances in which it is permissible to commit mass murder or to deliberately target whole cities full of innocent civilians. While most Christians through the centuries have accepted there can be a 'just war' under certain circumstances, these circumstances cannot be applied to nuclear weapons or nuclear war, since these weapons are incapable of distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, or even between belligerent countries and neutral countries.

The time has come to clearly say 'no' to all nuclear weapons. They must never be used again, and the threat to use them, which is what 'deterrence' is, must be finally and totally rejected. Most people in this country and around the world agree about this, but have been persuaded that the only effective way to get rid of these weapons is by multilateral treaty rather than by unilateral renunciation of them.

We now have the opportunity to ban nuclear weapons through a multilateral treaty. Every church, every faith community, every political party and every human being should be behind such an initiative.

"Nuclear weapons violate the principle of dignity for every human being that is common to each of our faith traditions."

Statement initiated by 26 UK faith leaders, signed by over 100 more. 2015

? Questions for discussion/action

- Does your church/faith tradition support multilateral negotiations to rid the world of nuclear weapons? Ask your faith leadership to speak out in support of the negotiations and urge the British government to participate fully in the negotiations.
- Why do you think the UK should be present at multilateral disarmament talks and put its own nuclear weapons up for negotiation as promised in 1968? How can we encourage the UK to be 'on the right side of history', supporting rather than blocking the will of the vast majority of other countries which are trying to negotiate the total elimination of all nuclear weapons?

... "All other weapons of mass destruction, namely chemical and biological weapons, have been banned. Nuclear weapons – which have far worse consequences than those weapons – must now be specifically prohibited and eliminated as a matter of urgency."

International Red Cross/Red Crescent, December 2014

What are the limitations of such a treaty?

A treaty to ban all nuclear weapons will not, in itself, get rid of the weapons. However, it is worth remembering that when the treaty to ban landmines was first being proposed, the UK government opposed that as well. Eventually it became a major proponent for banning landmines. Landmines are no longer being used on the battlefield.

International treaties have huge moral, as well as legal significance, even for the countries which do not sign them. Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction which are not already banned by international treaty. It is important that governments like our own, which still insist on retaining their nuclear weapons, understand the moral outrage that these weapons elicit from the rest of the world, as well as from their own citizens.

There are also financial and technical costs for countries which insist on retaining nuclear weapons once they have been banned by international treaty. Banks will be prohibited from financing nuclear weapons programmes, and companies which make even the smallest parts that might go into a nuclear weapons system will also be prohibited from doing so. All countries which sign up to the treaty, even if they do not have nuclear weapons of their own, will be legally bound by its restrictions on the financing, manufacture and supply chain for these weapons.

In a recently leaked memo from the US mission to NATO to its NATO allies, it was stated that a nuclear ban treaty 'could have a direct impact on the US ability to meet its NATO and Asia/Pacific extended deterrence commitments.' It listed among the difficulties they would face, the transit of nuclear-related material through territorial airspace or seas of signatory countries, impossibility of US ships conducting port calls, the undermining of the 'deterrence' concept in the minds of adversaries and the general public and other potential problems.

Why the UK must participate

The British government promised in 1968 to negotiate 'in good faith' the complete elimination of its nuclear weapons. It gave an 'unequivocal undertaking' in 2010 that it was still committed to fulfilling this promise. And yet the UK continually votes against nuclear disarmament initiatives at the UN and has so far refused to put its own nuclear weapons up for negotiation. In 2016, the UK, together with the US and other NATO countries, shamefully voted against the UN resolution to begin multilateral negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

As people of faith we believe we need to be as good as our word. When we make promises to other countries we should stick by them. We cannot be saying one thing and doing the opposite. The UK has moral, as well as legal, obligations that commit it to work for a world without nuclear weapons. It should not only be present at the coming negotiations, it should be playing a full and constructive part to ensure they are a success.



Credit : ICAN UK

? Questions for discussion/action

- Discuss how you /your group would set out the arguments to support a ban. How could you present these to your local community? Could you organise a faith group to meet with your MP to outline these arguments?
- Does your church/community bank or invest with one of the institutions that supports nuclear weapon production? Find out more at the Don't Bank on the Bomb website overleaf.

Time-line of events and opportunities

1 March

Ash Wednesday. Peace witness against nuclear weapons in Glasgow, Liverpool, London.
www.paxchristi.org.uk

1 March

Join the Lobby of Parliament organised by CND and many others.

7 March

Support the Christian CND Embassies Walk. (to Nuclear Weapon States' Embassies).
www.christiancnd.org.uk/

Between March & July

Maintain pressure on MPs /MSPs and Church Leaders to ensure full backing and participation by the UK Government in the UN meetings to negotiate a Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

Urge your church / community to become a 'nuclear weapon free' space - making a public statement to local press in support of the Nuclear Ban Treaty and urging your church/ community to endorse the UK multi-faith statement on nuclear weapons. (see below)

Ensure that your Church/community has special prayers in support of the March and July negotiation meetings.



Women's March, Washington, 2017

Resources and websites to help you

Nuclear Ban Treaty Negotiations 2017: background from ICAN:

www.icanw.org/campaign-news/negotiations/

Don't Bank on the Bomb: an excellent resource and campaigning tool giving details of the financing of nuclear weapons producers.

www.dontbankonthebomb.com/



Churches say NO to Nuclear Weapons: download of quotations for display/use in exhibitions or newsletters

<http://wp.christiancnd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Church-statements-poster.pdf>

Petitions

UK Multi-faith Statement on Nuclear Weapons: you can sign online here www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk

For more copies of this Briefing contact:

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