**What is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?**

In 1945 the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on two cities in Japan.  Since then eight other nations, (Russia, United Kingdom France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) – fearing for their own “national security” – developed nuclear weapons.  Since the 1940s the U.S. has led each step in escalating the nuclear arms race and tested 1000 of the 2000 tests that have occurred.

Ironically, instead of providing “security,” a nuclear war could destroy human civilization. The only way to be truly secure would be to abolish all nuclear weapons.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis extremely frightened the world. The 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was a step toward peace. The world – seeing the horrible danger and the possibility of peace – created and passed the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in order to stop spreading nuclear weapons into more countries. The NPT’s grand bargain arranged that the non-nuclear nations agreed never to get them – and the nations that already had them agreed to promptly stop the nuclear arms race and pursue disarmament under strict and effective international control.

However, over the past half century, all of the nuclear nations have continued escalating instead of disarming.  A few treaties have helped, but George W. Bush, Trump and Putin destroyed many of them. All of the nuclear nations that had signed the NPT have been violating it.

The non-nuclear world is sick and tired of being held hostage by nine nuclear nations, so they challenged those nations in 2010. With help from the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN, **https://**[**www.icanw.org**](http://www.icanw.org)), a growing movement (largely from the global South) organized and led to the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).  In July 2017 it passed the United Nations General Assembly by an overwhelming vote of 122 of the 193 nations.  ICAN won the Noble Peace Prize that fall. After the 50th nation ratified it, the Treaty entered into force on January 22, 2021. This made any and all activities related to nuclear weapons illegal in those nations. By October 2023, 69 nations have ratified the TPNW.

**This Treaty Takes Bold Actions!**

The TPNW was modeled on the 1997 Chemical Weapons Treaty which led to successfully eliminating nearly 100% of the declared weapons stockpiles since then. That treaty’s power came from using very comprehensive language to implement it after ratification. The TPNW adopted that strategy, so the TPNW specifies that the ratifying country must cease developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, researching, supplying, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, hosting, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons.  It prohibits any kind of support whatsoever for nuclear weapons. Now that 69 countries have ratified the TPNW, they are implementing it now. Also, 76 other countries have expressed strong interest in doing this.

ICAN has been the leader in making all of this happen – both while developing the TPNW and in urging countries to ratify it. Even in the countries that have nuclear weapons, many cities have officially urged their national governments to ratify it. Now 739 cities around the world have called for ratification. These include 72 cities in the United States and many in France and the UK, which also own nuclear weapons – along with cities in nations hosting the U.S.’s nuclear weapons (UK, Belgium, Germany and Italy). Also, 211 mayors in the U.S. have called for ratifying the Treaty.

Many Americans are urging Congress to pass H.R. 77 in the 2023-24 session because it supports the TPNW’s purposes.

**Yes, we can do it!**

The world has already banned other kinds of “weapons of mass destruction,” so we can ban nuclear weapons too:

1972: Biological weapons were banned under the Biological Weapons Convention.

1993: Chemical weapons were banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

1997: Land mines were banned under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty.

2008: Cluster munitions were banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Now nuclear weapons must be the next kind of “weapons of mass destruction” for the world to ban.

The Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is working on this. We are a local all-volunteer grassroots organization that has been working in the greater Olympia WA level since May 2017 in a variety of strategically savvy ways.  Contact our chairperson, Glen Anderson at (360) 491-9093 or **glen@parallaxperspectives.org**.  We are one of about 60 local organizations in the statewide coalition Washington Against Nuclear Weapons, (206) 547-2630 or [**www.wanwcoalition.org**](http://www.wanwcoalition.org).

Joanne Dufour and Glen Anderson wrote this article. Each of them has decades of active experience working and organizing to abolish nuclear weapons. Both live in Lacey WA.

766 words