

BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS NOW



ABOUT ICAN

The **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** is a global coalition of non-government organizations working for a nuclear-weapon-free world. We are urging all nations to start negotiations now on a treaty banning nuclear weapons completely.



“If Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr were alive today, they would be part of ICAN.”

MARTIN SHEEN, actor and activist

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Why a nuclear weapons ban

A treaty banning nuclear weapons is a global humanitarian imperative of the highest order. It is achievable and increasingly urgent.

Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited by an international convention, even though they have the greatest destructive capacity of all weapons. A global ban on nuclear weapons is long overdue and can be achieved in the near future with enough public pressure and political leadership. A ban would not only make it illegal for nations to use or possess nuclear weapons; it would also help pave the way to their complete elimination. Nations committed to reaching the goal of abolition should begin negotiating a ban now.

CATASTROPHIC HARM

Many thousands of nuclear weapons remain in the world, despite the end of the cold war. The detonation of just one nuclear bomb over a large city could kill more than a million people. The use of tens or hundreds could disrupt the global climate, causing widespread agricultural collapse and famine. No matter the scale of the attack, an adequate humanitarian response would not be possible. Given the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons, banning and eradicating them is the only responsible course of action.

FULLFILLING OBLIGATIONS

International law obliges all nations to pursue in good faith and conclude negotiations for nuclear disarmament. However, the nuclear-armed nations have so far failed to present a clear road map to a nuclear-weapon-free world. All are investing heavily in the modernization of their nuclear forces, with the apparent intention of retaining them for many decades to come. Continued failure on disarmament is not an option. So long as nuclear weapons exist, there is a real danger they will be used again – by accident or intent. A ban is urgently needed.

NUCLEAR NATIONS

Nations with nuclear weapons of their own

Britain, China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, United States

Nations that host US nuclear weapons

Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey

Other nations in nuclear alliances

Albania, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain

How a ban treaty would work

A treaty banning nuclear weapons is the next vital step towards nuclear abolition. It should be pursued now, with or without the support of nuclear-armed nations.

Negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons should be undertaken by committed nations even without the participation of those armed with nuclear weapons. The alternative is to continue allowing the nuclear-armed nations to control the process and perpetuate two-tier systems and treaty regimes that have no power to compel disarmament.

A GLOBAL PROHIBITION

A nuclear weapons ban would globalize what nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties have done regionally – for Latin America and the Caribbean, the South

Pacific, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Africa. It would allow nations in any part of the world to formalize their rejection of nuclear weapons and help create a clear international legal norm against the possession of nuclear weapons. Similarly, a ban would build on, and reinforce, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – which, although having helped prevent the use and limit the spread of nuclear weapons, are insufficient to achieve disarmament. A nuclear weapons ban is the missing piece for a broad legal rejection of all weapons of mass destruction.

ACHIEVING ELIMINATION

The prohibition of weapons typically precedes and stimulates their elimination, not the other way around. For example, the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons has been an essential step in ongoing efforts towards their elimination. Like the biological and chemical weapons conventions, a nuclear weapons ban would allow nations with stockpiles of these weapons to join so long as they agree to eliminate them within a specified time frame. Once such nations have joined, agreements could be developed over time to ensure that stockpiles are

destroyed in a verifiable and irreversible manner. The ban treaty itself need not necessarily envisage every complex step towards elimination by all nations. Instead it would put in place the basic framework for reaching that goal. Underpinning the growing call for a ban is a firm belief that changing the “rules” regarding nuclear weapons would have a significant impact beyond those states that may formally adopt such an instrument at the outset. The ban treaty, once in force, would powerfully challenge any notion that possessing nuclear weapons is legitimate for particular states.

WEAPONS ALREADY BANNED

There are already international conventions prohibiting biological weapons, chemical weapons, land mines and cluster munitions, but no comparable treaty – as yet – for nuclear weapons. The international community must address this legal anomaly. As with the negotiating

processes that resulted in treaties banning land mines and cluster munitions, likeminded governments should work in close partnership with civil society to bring about a nuclear weapons ban regardless of resistance from states possessing the weapons.



X BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Banned under the Biological Weapons Convention

1972



X CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention

1993



X LAND MINES

Banned under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty

1997



X CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions

2008



NUCLEAR WEAPONS

NOT YET BANNED BY TREATY

GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR A BAN



MORE THAN 150 GOVERNMENTS

At the UN, three in four nations – including all of Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa – have supported the goal of prohibiting nuclear weapons. They must now translate this support for the goal of a ban into action to start negotiations on a treaty.



RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – the largest humanitarian organization in the world, with close to 100 million volunteers and staff – has called for a binding agreement to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons.



UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has highlighted the lack of an international treaty outlawing nuclear weapons, and has consistently spoken in favour of prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons. He has also lent his support to ICAN.



FOUR IN FIVE PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

On average, four in five people polled since 2008 in 26 nations have said “yes” to a nuclear weapons ban, including most people in each nuclear-armed state. Since 2010, 20 million petition signatures have been sent to the UN calling for a ban.



“My advice, my appeal to all, is this: Be a first mover. Don’t look to others or to your neighbours to start disarmament and arms control measures. If you take the lead, others will follow.”

BAN KI-MOON, UN Secretary-General, 2013

ICAN forum: Actor Martin Sheen on stage with activist John Dear in Oslo. *Credit: Alexander Harang*

DEVASTATING EFFECTS

In recent years, governments, civil society and international organizations have refocused their attention on the original cause of public opposition to nuclear weapons – namely, their devastating effects on people and the environment. In March 2013 the Norwegian government hosted the first ever intergovernmental conference to address the threat of nuclear weapons from a purely humanitarian perspective. Participants included 128 governments, the Red Cross movement, several UN agencies and civil society under the banner of ICAN. Most nations argued that the only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to ban and eliminate them. At the conclusion of the conference, Mexico announced that it would host a follow-up conference in 2014.



Achieving a nuclear weapons ban

There is a clear and compelling humanitarian case for prohibiting nuclear weapons. Achieving that goal requires public mobilization and political leadership.

Since 2010 the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has featured prominently in discussions among governments and civil society organizations on ways to advance nuclear disarmament. This emerging discourse on the harm that nuclear weapons cause to people, societies and the environment underscores the urgency of concerted action for the complete prohibition and elimination of such weapons. Their devastating effects on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and through testing, have been well documented, and provide a clear rationale for negotiating a ban.

PUBLIC MOBILIZATION

The success of a ban depends on the active engagement of civil society. Since 2007 the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, a diverse coalition of groups in 70 nations, has sought to raise public awareness about nuclear dangers and empower people to work for a ban. We have held conferences, workshops, exhibitions, film screenings and protests around the world, and have raised our call for a ban at the UN, in parliaments, in schools and online. Our simple demand has been widely and enthusiastically embraced.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Nuclear-free nations have long complained of the lack of progress being made towards nuclear disarmament. Many have expressed grave concern at the continuing build-up and modernization of nuclear forces. Though frustrated, they are not without influence. After all, they make up the overwhelming majority of states. Working effectively together, they could put in place a powerful legal ban on nuclear weapons, which would not only stigmatize the weapons, but also build the pressure for disarmament. It is time to change the game.

ACTION FOR A BAN

Governments should:

- Highlight the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons
- Call for negotiations without delay on a treaty banning nuclear weapons
- Join forces with like-minded governments to make a ban treaty a reality

Civil society should:

- Raise public awareness about the harm caused by nuclear weapons
- Form strong coalitions of organizations with the specific demand of a ban on nuclear weapons

Frequently asked questions

1. Could a ban be negotiated without nuclear-armed nations?

Yes. Although the nine nuclear-armed nations should be strongly encouraged to join negotiations for a ban, their participation would not be essential. They should not be allowed to prevent or hold up negotiations. Nuclear-free nations could initiate a negotiating process and even adopt the final treaty text without having all or indeed any of the nuclear-armed nations on board. Agreements relating to the verified dismantlement of nuclear warheads could be developed with the nuclear-armed nations at a later stage once they are ready to engage. But it is important to get the ball rolling now and put in place a clear legal ban. Once negotiations are under way, any nation – whether nuclear-free or not – would be welcome to join the negotiating process so long as it accepted the goal of concluding a ban treaty by an agreed date.

2. Could nations in nuclear alliances help negotiate a ban?

Yes. Several NATO members have already called for intensified efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons, and all have agreed to the ultimate goal of elimination. Abandoning NATO or a bilateral nuclear defence pact would not be a precondition for joining a ban treaty. However, nuclear-dependent nations would need to work towards achieving a nuclear-free defence posture after joining.

3. Would a ban treaty help curb the spread of nuclear weapons?

Yes. Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are two sides of the same coin. Efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons will be successful only once potential proliferators can see that real progress is being made towards elimination. Existing legal double standards fuel proliferation. A ban would set the same rules for all.

4. How would a ban relate to the Non-Proliferation Treaty?

A ban treaty would complement and reinforce, rather than replace, the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which would remain in force for as long as its parties determine. Article VI of the NPT obliges nations to pursue negotiations in good faith for nuclear disarmament. Adopting a nuclear weapons ban would be a step towards implementing this fundamental provision of the treaty. A ban would also build on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

5. What are the practical benefits of stigmatizing nuclear weapons?

A ban on nuclear weapons would strengthen the global taboo against the use and possession of weapons of mass destruction. It would put pressure on nuclear-armed nations to suspend their nuclear weapons modernization programmes and to

work towards complete abolition. It would challenge allies of nuclear-armed nations to end their support for the indefinite retention of nuclear forces. And it would provide a strong basis for arguing that financial institutions everywhere should divest from companies involved in nuclear weapons production. In short, it would challenge all those who help sustain our nuclear-armed world.

6. What are the security benefits of negotiating a ban?

A ban on nuclear weapons would enhance everyone's security – not least of all the security of people in nations currently armed with nuclear weapons, who are more likely to be the targets of a nuclear attack. People in nuclear-free nations are also at risk, as the effects of nuclear weapons transcend national boundaries. Even a "limited" regional nuclear war would have implications for the entire globe.

Street action: Campaigners thank nations for attending the Oslo conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in March 2013.



What does your government say about a ban on nuclear weapons?
See our comprehensive online guide to national positions at www.icanw.org

BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS **NOW**

“With your support, we can take ICAN its full distance – all the way to zero nuclear weapons.”

DESMOND TUTU, social rights activist

“I can imagine a world without nuclear weapons, and I support ICAN.”

THE DALAI LAMA, Tibetan spiritual leader

“We *can* do it together! With your help, our voice will be made still stronger.”

YOKO ONO, peace activist and artist

“I salute ICAN for working with such commitment and creativity.”

BAN KI-MOON, UN Secretary-General

www.icanw.org