

# THE NEED FOR DISARMAMENT: CANADA, NATO AND THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS



The risk of nuclear war is the highest that it has been since World War II and the height of the Cold War. On August 6 and 9, 1945, the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that killed over 100,000 civilians, destroyed the cities and caused widespread radioactive contamination. It was Canada that supplied the fissile material for these bombs.

Nuclear weapons are the worst weapons of mass destruction and pose an existential threat to humanity. Despite calls from the Japanese survivors of the bombings, the Hibakusha, and disarmament activists around the world, there remains 12,500 nuclear weapons possessed by nine countries: U.S., Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel. One thousand of these weapons are on launch-ready high alert. According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons' (ICAN) 2023 report, *Surge*, these states spent over \$91 billion last year on their nuclear weapons.

## THE GRAVE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND DETERRENCE

The Doomsday Clock has been set to 90 seconds to midnight, because the nuclear threat is the highest it has ever been. The growing risk of nuclear escalation results from the tragic war in Ukraine, the irresponsible rhetoric about using nuclear weapons, and the costly modernization of arsenals by the nuclear states.

Nuclear weapons possessing states irresponsibly rely on the doctrine of deterrence. Yet deterrence is a dangerous idea because it requires these states to maintain and modernize their nuclear weapons and that in turn heightens the risk of use. A nuclear exchange could happen by accident or intention. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) relies on this risky doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS USE WOULD CAUSE WIDESPREAD DEVASTATION

There needs to be greater recognition of the horrific devastation nuclear weapons would cause. The effects of even a small nuclear war would have dire consequences for humanity—exacerbating climate change and causing widespread radiation fallout with massive, adverse health consequences as explained by ICAN in its report *No Place to Hide: Nuclear Weapons and the Collapse of Health Care Systems*.

## THE HOPE: THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (TPNW)

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is the first treaty to make nuclear weapons illegal. The TPNW entered into force on January 22, 2021. It prohibits countries from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territory. Currently, there are 70 states that have ratified this important treaty including Austria, Costa Rica, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria and South Africa.

## THE PROBLEM: CANADA'S NATO MEMBERSHIP IMPEDES DISARMAMENT

Shamefully, Canada has not signed and ratified the TPNW, because of our membership in NATO, a U.S.-led military alliance that relies on nuclear deterrence and nuclear sharing. Under NATO's nuclear sharing policy, five European countries host American nuclear weapons: Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Turkey. Canada is also part of NATO's nuclear planning group. Every year, NATO members including Canada participate in a perilous nuclear weapons exercise called Steadfast Noon. NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons impedes progress on disarmament.

"In 2023, the nuclear-armed states wasted \$91,393,404,739 on their arsenals instead of investing in sustainable development."

– ICAN, 2024

### CANADA BUYS FLEET OF FIGHTER JETS DESIGNED TO CARRY NUCLEAR BOMBS

In January 2023, the Canadian government announced it would spend \$19 billion to buy 88 fossil fuel-powered F-35 joint strike fighters. They are dual-capable warplanes and designed to carry conventional bombs and the B61-12 tactical thermonuclear bombs. They are also stealth fighter jets that are used for first strike attack. This procurement violates Canada's commitment to the NPT. Find out more at [nofighterjets.ca](http://nofighterjets.ca)

### CITIES DON'T WANT TO BE TARGETS

Canadian cities do not want to be targets of a nuclear weapons attack and have joined the ICAN Cities Appeal and the Mayors for Peace campaign including Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Around the world, major cities such as Washington D.C., Paris, Berlin and Geneva have also signed on. Find out more at [cities.icanw.org](http://cities.icanw.org)

"The existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity must motivate us to work towards their total elimination."

– UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, *Agenda for Peace*, 2023

### YOUTH WANT A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In April 2023, youth from around the world including Canada came together in Japan to attend the ICAN Hiroshima Youth G7 Summit and called on world leaders to abolish nuclear weapons and commit to a peaceful, sustainable future. Read their Youth Statement from the Summit: [https://www.icanw.org/youth\\_statement\\_from\\_the\\_hiroshima\\_g7\\_youth\\_summit](https://www.icanw.org/youth_statement_from_the_hiroshima_g7_youth_summit)

## TAKE ACTION FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND PEACE:

Contact the Prime Minister to join the TPNW, stop the war in Ukraine, cancel the fighter jets and instead invest in urgent social and environmental needs:

[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

Contact your Member of Parliament (MP) too. Find their contact info here:

[www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en](http://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en)

Sign the petition for nuclear disarmament and subscribe to the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute e-newsletter:

[www.foreignpolicy.ca](http://www.foreignpolicy.ca)

Join a local peace group and get involved in the Canadian anti-war and disarmament movement:

[peaceandjusticenetwork.ca](http://peaceandjusticenetwork.ca)

Find great upcoming events and resources for peace & disarmament at World Beyond War:

[worldbeyondwar.org](http://worldbeyondwar.org)

## SOURCES

*Canada and the TPNW, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons:*

[www.icanw.org/canada](http://www.icanw.org/canada)

*A time of unprecedented danger: It is 90 seconds to midnight.*

**Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.**

(January 2024):

[thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/](http://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/)

*Surge: 2023 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending*

**ICAN (June 2024):** [www.icanw.org/surge\\_2023\\_global\\_nuclear\\_weapons\\_spending](http://www.icanw.org/surge_2023_global_nuclear_weapons_spending)

**WILPF's Reaching Critical Will Disarmament Program:**

[www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

**AUGUST  
2024**

#Nuclearban  
#BanTheBomb  
#CanadaJoinTheTPNW



[wilpfcanada.ca](http://wilpfcanada.ca)



CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE

[www.vowpeace.org](http://www.vowpeace.org)

