

**On Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversary, IPPNW calls on NATO states and Russia to end the policy of nuclear deterrence, engage with the Humanitarian Initiative, and prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons**

Since the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, we have understood the catastrophic humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons. Today, thousands of nuclear warheads are still stationed around the world, 50 of them in Turkey at the NATO airbase at Incirlik. These weapons are part of the US nuclear arsenal, but are stationed in Turkey under NATO's nuclear sharing agreement.

The recent military coup attempt in Turkey has once again raised the question of how secure US nuclear weapons based at Incirlik or elsewhere in Europe really are. An even larger question is how nuclear weapons can be perceived to provide security at all when they are, in fact, the greatest threat to humankind.

IPPNW has long argued that nuclear weapons are the greatest and most urgent threat to the security of everyone on Earth. The US nuclear weapons in Turkey and at other bases in Europe are an immediate threat to the civilian populations in the countries where they are stored and to their neighbors.

The 50 B-61 bombs at the Incirlik airbase—situated only 110 km from the Syrian-Turkish border—make an already dangerous and tragic situation even more dangerous in the state of emergency declared after the coup attempt. Those weapons should be removed from Turkey immediately.

People living in the other European countries where 130 B-61 bombs are stored<sup>1</sup> are also feeling less secure, as Russia and the NATO states are going back to Cold War posturing over the conflict in Ukraine. The greatest security threat to the European people—and to all of us—is that the United States/NATO and Russia are conducting maneuvers in which nuclear systems are involved, threatening each other with the potential use of nuclear weapons. This constitutes a severe threat to world peace.

The newly elected British Prime Minister, Theresa May, recently declared, without hesitation, that she would order a nuclear strike that would kill hundreds of thousands of people if she thought it were “necessary.” This is not only irresponsible, it more evidence that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was correct when he said “there are no right hands for the wrong weapons.” Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German foreign minister, has said that nuclear weapons are “absolutely senseless” and are “an inviting target for terrorists.” He and the Secretary-General are both right.

Doctors will be unable to help once nuclear weapons are used. Therefore, IPPNW doctors—and especially those of us living and working in Europe—call on the leaders of all European countries, including Turkey, to join the large majority of non-nuclear-weapon states at the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) later this month in recommending that the General Assembly mandate negotiations on a new legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons—a ban treaty that will lead to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also urge an end to the politics of nuclear deterrence, including extended deterrence. So-called nuclear sharing in NATO countries—particularly Belgium, Germany, Italy, the

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<sup>1</sup> According to H.M. Kristensen—Belgium: 20 bombs, Germany 20 bombs, Italy : 70 bombs, the Netherlands 20 bombs <http://thebulletin.org/upgrades-us-nuclear-bases-europe-acknowledge-security-risk8740>

Netherlands, and Turkey, where US nuclear weapons are stored—exacerbates the dangers to the people in those countries and increases the risk that nuclear weapons will be used. NATO should end this policy.

Nuclear weapons cannot provide security. Our future depends on a new treaty banning nuclear weapons and providing the legal, political, and moral foundation for their elimination by the nine nuclear-armed states that continue to endanger the world with a humanitarian catastrophe from which there can be no recovery.