

WILPF Statement on the 63rd anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

6 and 9 August mark the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. Two nuclear weapons, dropped deliberately by the world's military superpower on these cities in Japan, killed 200,000 civilians by the end of 1945 and many more through cancer, mutations, and birth defects in the years that followed; sparked an arms race of insane proportions; and helped shape the hyper-militaristic world order with which we are now collectively plagued.

On 6 and 9 August, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) remembers with horror the destruction and devastation wrought upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And every day of the year, WILPF works to prevent nuclear weapons from ever being used again. Every day, WILPF works at international, national, and local levels to foster the conditions, values, and momentum necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons from our planet.

The development and maintenance of nuclear weapons have an ongoing legacy of destruction, the burden of which has primarily been borne by marginalized people around the world, especially the indigenous. For example, US nuclear weapon tests conducted in the Pacific between 1946–1958 unleashed the destructive power equivalent to 1.5 Hiroshima sized bombs per day during that 12 year period, leaving behind radioactive contamination and the infrastructure for military colonization. In 2008, US military realignment in the Asia-Pacific region seeks to base 60 percent of its Pacific Fleet in and around Guam, in what activists from that “unincorporated US territory” describe as a “storm of US militarization so enormous in scope, so volatile in nature, so irreversible in consequence,” that it endangers the fundamental and inalienable human right to self-determination of the indigenous Chamoru people.

Along with military bases around the globe, the expansion of the military-industrial complex inhibits long-term, sustainable success in nuclear disarmament. Trillions of dollars are invested every year on militaries, equipment, advanced technologies, wars; much of this money is embedded into the military and corporate structures that support the maintenance and renewal of nuclear weapons. War profiteers—particularly Bechtel, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and the University of California—benefit from the ongoing development and maintenance of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

Today, approximately 27,000 nuclear warheads exist, most of them in the arsenals of the permanent five members of the Security Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—the countries supposedly in charge of maintaining international peace and security. The governments of most of these states have plans to modernize their nuclear weapons or delivery systems, in continuing violation of Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which says, “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.” Three states outside of the NPT—India, Israel, and Pakistan—also possess nuclear weapons, and five non-nuclear weapon states—Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey—host approximately 240 US nuclear weapons on their soil under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Strategic Concept, also in violation of the NPT.

WILPF works to expose the threat that the hypocritical policies of these states pose to the world and to generate commitment to an alternative future, a world without nuclear weapons. The only means to this end is the full implementation of the first UN General Assembly resolution, adopted in 1946—the total and universal disarmament of all nuclear weapons. The world needs verifiable, irreversible reductions of nuclear arsenals and the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention. WILPF urges all governments

and citizens to unconditionally reject all arguments put forward for the continued existence of nuclear weapons and encourages everyone to work for the elimination of all nuclear arsenals and for the redirection of nuclear weapon expenditures to meet environmental, social, cultural, health, and educational needs.

WILPF calls on all NPT nuclear weapon states to fully implement their Treaty obligations and to cease modernizing their arsenals as a step toward the good faith pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapon free world. We also call on nuclear weapon states who are not party to the NPT—India, Israel, and Pakistan—to verifiably disarm their nuclear weapons and join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states. We call on these states to support in word and action the ratification and negotiation of relevant treaties, including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a fissile materials treaty, and a nuclear weapons convention.

WILPF welcomes the recent withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from the United Kingdom, which had been stationed there since 1954. We call on all non-nuclear weapon states who currently host nuclear weapons on their territories to demand their immediate removal and to prevent the stationing of these weapons on any foreign soil. WILPF also calls on all states under the US “nuclear umbrella” to reject the “security” offered to them under such bilateral agreements with the United States in favor of fully supporting the movement for nuclear abolition. WILPF calls on the Japanese government in particular to renounce the US nuclear umbrella and to respect Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, which renounces war and the use or threat of force as a means of settling international disputes.

In her philosophical text *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt says, “The means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals.” No number of nuclear weapons in the hands of any number or type of government or people can protect against their use; the use of nuclear weapons cannot occur again without catastrophic consequences for the entire human race. The promise offered by nuclear weapons is not one of security but destruction, militarism, fear, insecurity, and extinction. The only acceptable number is zero.

For more information about WILPF's work on nuclear disarmament, please go to www.reachingcriticalwill.org.