



# THE NUCLEAR WEAPON BAN TREATY

A resource guide for WILPF

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR  
**PEACE & FREEDOM**





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- Credit: David Field

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In Cameroon, WILPF members and staff organized a photo action as part of the Women's March to Ban the Bomb.  
- Credit: WILPF Cameroon, 2017



WILPF members take part in activities across Australia in support of the ban treaty.

# 1 | Introduction

In 2017, history was made with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The successful adoption of the agreement by the majority of the world's countries is a significant shift in the global discourse on nuclear weapons and a major challenge to arguments about the necessity of these weapons for security. WILPF staff, sections, and members have been active and vocal supporters of the ban for over a decade, following on consistent antinuclear organising and advocacy since the dawn of the nuclear age.

This resource guide is meant to help us carry on with that work, through working with governments and others in civil society to ensure the Treaty's rapid entry-into-force and effective implementation. We provide an overview of what the Treaty includes, examples of past work, suggestions for future action, and where to find further information.



The Women's March to Ban the Bomb in New York, June 2017.  
- Credit: David Field





## 2 | WHAT IS THE "NUCLEAR BAN"?

The Women's March to Ban the Bomb in New York, June 2017.  
- Credit: David Field

## 2 | What is the “nuclear ban”?

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), sometimes referred to as the nuclear ban treaty, is a landmark international agreement adopted at the United Nations on 7 July 2017. Prior to the Treaty’s adoption, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction not subject to a comprehensive ban, despite their catastrophic, widespread, and persistent humanitarian and environmental consequences. The new agreement fills a significant gap in international law.

### Key provisions:

- The Treaty prohibits the development, testing, production, manufacture, transfer, possession, stockpiling, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on the territory of states parties. It also prohibits states parties from assisting, encouraging, or inducing anyone to engage in any of these activities.
- A country that possesses nuclear weapons may join the Treaty, so long as it agrees to destroy their nuclear weapons and delivery systems in accordance with a legally-binding, verified, time-bound plan. Similarly, a country that hosts another country’s nuclear weapons on its territory may join, so long as it agrees to remove them by a specified deadline. The Treaty itself does not spell out the timelines or specific disarmament measures, as those will be negotiated with the state in question when it joins.
- States parties are obliged to provide assistance to all victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons and to take measures for the

remediation of contaminated environments. The preamble acknowledges the harm suffered as a result of nuclear weapons, including the disproportionate impact on women and girls, and on indigenous peoples around the world.

The TPNW complements the treaties that prohibit biological and chemical weapons, anti-personnel land mines and cluster munitions, and reinforces various other legal instruments on nuclear weapons, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968. It strengthens the global taboo against the use and possession of nuclear weapons—challenging any notion that these are legitimate, acceptable weapons for certain nations. It clearly states that the use of nuclear weapons is contrary to international humanitarian law.

The TPNW was negotiated at the United Nations in New York in March, June, and July 2017, with the participation of more than 135 countries, as well as members of civil society. It opened for signature on 20 September 2017.

This followed a decade-long advocacy initiative from civil society, referred to sometimes as the Humanitarian Initiative because of its emphasis on the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. From 2010, governments, the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, various United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organisations began working together to reframe the debate on nuclear weapons. WILPF, through its involvement in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)—recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize—has been a central part of this initiative from its beginning.





# 3 | GENDER AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

- Credit: WILPF Cameroon

# 3 | Gender and nuclear weapons

Like many other types of weapons, nuclear weapons have gendered impacts. Women face unique devastation from the effects of the use of nuclear weapons, such as the effects of radiation on reproduction and maternal health. In some communities where testing has occurred, the cultural habits and responsibility of women have put them at greater risk of exposure. Studies show that women are more vulnerable to ionising radiation than men and pregnant women exposed to high doses of ionising radiation are at risk of harm to their children, including malformations, disabilities, as well as the risk of stillbirth.

Similar to women that have survived other types of weapons exposure, such as landmines or explosives, women who have survived nuclear weapon tests or use also face unique social challenges related to how they are treated in societies and communities. They are often stigmatised or shut out.

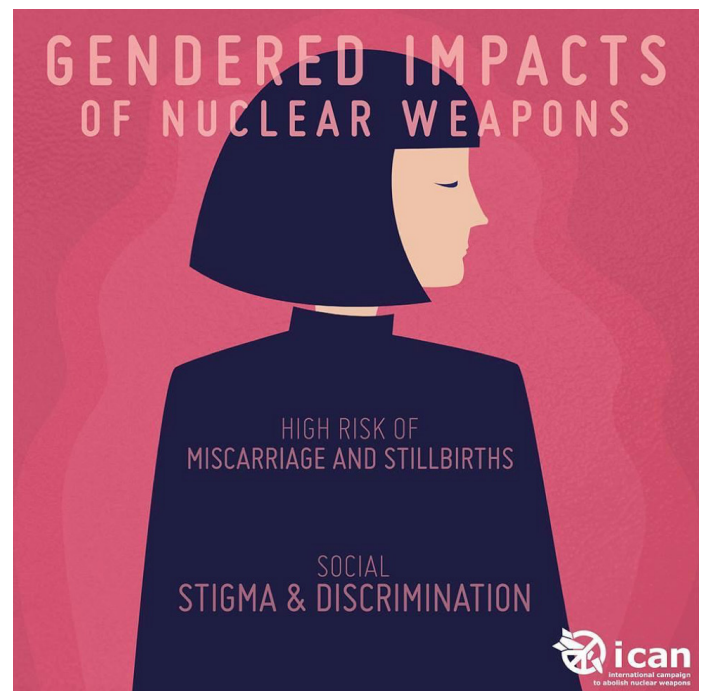
One of the most unique aspects of the TPNW is that it is the only gender-sensitive nuclear weapons agreement in existence. This is because its preamble acknowledges the gendered dimensions of nuclear weapons in two places.

First, it calls attention to the “disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionising radiation.”

Second, it addresses the importance of women’s participation in nuclear disarmament: “Recognising that the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an

essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security, and committed to supporting and strengthening the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament”.

Achieving these references required years of persistent advocacy on the subject, which is one that is often swept aside in disarmament and security fora. WILPF and other organisations worked with like-minded governments to provide evidence—through reports, bilateral advocacy, events, and social media— to raise the profile of these concerns.



International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). 2017.

The recognition of the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons and the importance of women being included in disarmament discussions and negotiations are both crucial to start confronting the gendered discourse around nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. The dominant nuclear



# BAIRNS <sup>to</sup> BOMBS

WILPF in Scotland collaborates often with Scottish CND on anti-nuclear activities under the “Bairns not Bombs” slogan. - Credit: Scottish CND

weapon discourse is full of dichotomies such as hard versus soft security, strong versus weak, active versus passive, and national security versus human security. The masculine-identified sides of these pairs are almost always attributed more value than the other. Those talking about humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and calling for their prohibition are accused of being divisive, polarising, ignorant, and even emotional. Opponents say they support “reasonable,” “realistic,” “practical,” or “pragmatic” steps and that anything else is emotional, irrational, and irresponsible.

In the case of the ban treaty, this approach links caring about humanitarian concerns to being weak, and asserts that “real men” have to “protect” their countries. It implies that the pursuit of disarmament is an unrealistic, irrational, and even effeminate objective. Scholars of gender and disarmament have for decades been highlighting and challenging this discourse (some of which we have listed at the end of this guide); with the TPNW we have an incredible opportunity to confront and disrupt this mainstream narrative and to showcase the effectiveness of collective action for global security.



The Women's March to Ban the Bomb in New York, June 2017.  
- Credit: David Field



# 4 | WILPF'S ROLE IN THE TREATY PROCESS



The Women's March to Ban the Bomb in New York, June 2017.  
- Credit: David Field



## 4 | WILPF's role in the treaty process

WILPF has been a leading voice in the antinuclear community since the start of the atomic age. This section is meant to provide a few examples of what we've contributed to the process—and inspire ideas for the next phase of work.

Through our role as a steering group member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), we have mobilised across the globe through advocacy, developing policy briefs and conducting research, monitoring discussions and negotiations, and speaking out on media and social media.



The WILPF International team in Geneva show their support for the ban! - Credit: WILPF, 2017

WILPF was deeply involved in advocacy with governments in the years leading up to the development of this treaty and during the negotiations. We wrote some of the seminal briefing papers on this Treaty (see the Resources

webpage listed at the end of this guide) and provided expert analysis throughout the proceedings, helping wherever possible to shape the Treaty's language and approach to certain issues. We pushed for a strong, comprehensive treaty to make a difference in the world. Reaching Critical Will, which is WILPF's disarmament programme, has attended and provided monitoring and analysis every ban treaty-related meeting since the start of the Humanitarian Initiative.

Over the years, sections in many countries have organised rallies, protests, parliamentary roundtables and events, peace caravans, meetings with government officials, produced research, and engaged with media activities in support of the ban.

In Scotland, for example, WILPF and others in civil society have delivered a certificate of "Citizen Treaty Support" to the Parliament and have encouraged parliamentarians to join the ICAN Parliamentary Pledge. When the Treaty was adopted, the news was spread by "town criers"—people dressed in traditional 17th century costumes, creating opportunities for street discussions, photo opportunities, and media.

In 2017, WILPF was the official host of the Women's March to Ban the Bomb, a global public mobilisation event that took place on 17 June as treaty negotiations resumed at the United Nations. We worked closely with women representing peace, disarmament, women's rights, indigenous, environmental, and human rights communities to coordinate this epic



Infographics by Carlos Vigil, 2017.

event. The primary march and rally took place in New York City, complemented by around 150 diverse solidarity actions from WILPF sections and members in Afghanistan, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Scotland, Spain, Thailand, the UK and the US—truly a day to be proud of!

*“The road to this victory at the UN headquarters was long and it’s the result of 70 years of activism and goal-oriented organisation. The ban treaty is also bigger than itself. Nuclear weapons symbolise a patriarchal power structure based on threat and violence. With the ban treaty we have managed to challenge the global patriarchal world order that we see today.”*

– Gabriella Irsten, WILPF Sweden

*“The sufferings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have continued through generations. It is time for the governments to listen to the voices of women calling for elimination of nuclear weapons.”*

– Kozue Akibayashi,  
WILPF International President

*“The beauty of our event lies in the fact that though we were few in numbers, our voice was heard loud. It is our hopes that through this*

*campaign, world leaders will be embolden to negotiate for the strongest Treaty in scope and commit to implement all obligations under the treaty.”*

– WILPF Ghana

*“Our 100-year old membership organisation is a vociferous supporter of nuclear abolition. Right back to 1949 we passed a resolution asking the UN to ‘secure the prohibition’ of atomic weapons and ‘the destruction of all existing stock’. WILPF has mobilised across the globe—we are in all continents and nearly 40 countries. We have been advocates, including with governments, we have developed policy briefs and conducted research, and we have spoken out on media and social media.”*

– Sheila Triggs, WILPF-UK



Kozue Akibayashi, WILPF International President, addresses crowds at the Women's March to Ban the Bomb.  
– Credit: WILPF, 2017



# 5 | TAKE ACTION!



WILPF in Ghana mobilises in support of the ban treaty.  
- Credit: WILPF Ghana



# 5 | Take action!

Now that the TPNW has been adopted and opened for signature, it is imperative that states sign and ratify it as quickly as possible. Fifty ratifications are required for it to enter into force and become binding as international law.

WILPF can continue to play an active role in this important and exciting new phase, particularly at the national level where interacting with legislators and government officials in capital will be necessary, including to foster knowledge and relationships that will aid in the Treaty's effective implementation.



Members of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) view the official copy of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. - Credit: UN Office of Legal Affairs

**Before getting started, think about the context in which you are working.** Some countries adopted the Treaty in July 2017, which signals their general support for it, but have yet to sign or ratify it. Others have signed it, and now are completing the domestic process of ratification, which usually requires approval from legislative bodies like congresses or parliaments. Some countries—those that possess nuclear weapons or include them in their security doctrines (such as the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as well as Australia, Japan, and

South Korea)—boycotted the negotiations and continue to vocally oppose the Treaty.

ICAN maintains a webpage with the list of countries that have signed or ratified and information on national positions here: <http://www.icanw.org/status-of-the-treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons>. Before getting started on any action, think about what works best in your national context given national positions and status.

## Suggested activities:

**Engage legislators.** They are going to be instrumental in ensuring domestic support for signature or ratification, but many may not have heard of the ban treaty before. The more you can do to educate them about it, and how it relates to existing domestic law, the easier that process will be. This can also be a way to affect the policy positions of the government in power.

- Organise a roundtable or other educational event in your parliament, congress, or senate.
- Write letters to individual legislators who may lead the relevant committees that will ultimately present ratification.
- Develop resources that compare existing law to the obligations of the Treaty. For example, many countries that are part of nuclear weapon free zone treaties are probably already in compliance with the TPNW, which will make it easier to join.
- Ask them to sign the ICAN Parliamentary Pledge.



**Public education.** Support for eliminating nuclear weapons starts at the community level, particularly as many people do not realise how real the threat of a nuclear war is and the significance of the ban. WILPF is uniquely placed to consistently remind the public about the impact of nuclear violence on women, and about women's leadership in calling for disarmament.

- Organise seminars, lectures, or other educational events at schools, places of worship, community centres, or online through a Twitter Q&A with experts. Consider organising on the anniversary of the Women's March to Ban the Bomb!
- Share the WILPF or ICAN infographics and visual resources on your website or social media platforms.
- Publish op-eds or news articles about the ban. If there is a breaking news story related to nuclear weapons, use that as a media opportunity to respond with our own messages.

- Organise a women-led public action or stunt in a strategic location.

**Connect with other ICAN partners.** There are over 400 ICAN partner organisations around the world, offering a diversity of expertise and knowledge. Why not partner up with them and organise together?

**Connect with us!** If you organise an activity or publish in media, let us know. We'd be happy to include this information on our websites or in monthly news bulletins from WILPF and Reaching Critical Will. If you need more information about the ban, or want us to speak to your Section or Branch about the ban, just ask!

### Key arguments, facts, talking points

Opponents of the ban treaty are quick to point out perceived weaknesses, and reject it as unrealistic. All of the countries that oppose it are countries that possess nuclear arms, or include US nuclear weapons in their security doctrines. Below are a series of talking points to use when confronted with skepticism about the ban:

- When it comes to nuclear weapons, there are no safe hands. As long as any country has these weapons, others will want them, and the world is in a precarious state.
- There's a growing risk of use of nuclear weapons, intentional or accidental. We have been at the brink of nuclear war many times; we have escaped it by luck. If we keep nuclear weapons forever, it is certain that they will be used again. Any such use would cause catastrophic humanitarian consequences and indiscriminately harm civilians.



WILPF members and staff participate in the negotiations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the United Nations in New York.  
- Credit: WILPF 2017

- Nuclear weapons are not a legitimate defense. Relying on nuclear weapons for deterrence means you are prepared to use them on civilians, with catastrophic humanitarian consequences as result.



- Credit: Bolivian Women's Efforts

- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons fills an important legal gap and complements existing instruments, including the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- Any use of weapons would violate international humanitarian law because they would indiscriminately kill civilians and cause long-term environmental harm.
- Women are disproportionately impacted by nuclear violence and have been leaders in calling for nuclear abolition since the start of the atomic age.
- It would take less than 0.1% of the explosive yield of the current global nuclear arsenal to bring about devastating agricultural collapse and widespread famine. The smoke and dust from fewer than 100 Hiroshima-sized nuclear

explosions would cause an abrupt drop in global temperatures and rainfall.

- History shows that the prohibition of certain types of weapons facilitates progress towards their elimination. Weapons that have been outlawed by international treaties are increasingly seen as illegitimate, losing their political status and, along with it, the resources for their production. We are already seeing pension funds and banks divest from nuclear weapon producing companies since the TPNW has been adopted.
- Nuclear weapons programmes divert public funds from health care, education, disaster relief and other vital services. The nine nuclear-armed states spend many tens of billions of dollars each year maintaining and modernising their nuclear arsenals.



Ninety-two year old Cynthia James of the ACT Branch in WILPF Australia pulled out her anti-nuclear placard (many decades old) once again, at the rally in Canberra protesting at Australian government decision to boycott the UN debate on the nuclear ban treaty.  
- Credit WILPF Australia, 2016



# Further information

Reaching Critical Will resource page on banning nuclear weapons: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/research-projects/9146-banning-nuclear-weapons>

Text of the TPNW (available in the six UN languages): <http://www.icanw.org/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/>

UN Office of Disarmament Affairs kit on how to sign and ratify the TPNW: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Treaty-on-the-Prohibition-of-Nuclear-Weapons-information-kit-on-signature-and-ratification.pdf>

About gender and disarmament: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/research-projects/10637-gender-and-disarmament>

ICAN resources page: <http://www.icanw.org/resources/>

## Social media

- Look for @RCW\_, @WILPF, @nuclearban on Twitter
- ICAN is on Instagram at @goodbyenukes
- Reaching Critical Will and WILPF have active Facebook pages, often posting information about new activities and reading materials.
- Remember, always use the hashtag #nuclearban across any social media platform!

## News bulletins

Reaching Critical Will's monthly E-News is a great way to stay up to date on what WILPF is doing about the ban. Visit <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/news/subscribe>

## Academic writing

Carol Cohn, "'Maternal thinking' and the Concept of 'vulnerability' in Security Paradigms, Policies, and Practices," *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 10, no. 1 (February 2014).

Carol Cohn, *Women and Wars* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, 2000.

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Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds, *Gendering War Talk*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993.

J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations (UN).

Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

Our approach is always non-violent, and we use existing international legal and political frameworks to achieve fundamental change in the way states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security.

Our strength lies in our ability to link the international and local levels. We are very proud to be one of the first organisations to gain consultative status (category B) with the United Nations, and the only women's anti-war organisation so recognised.



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