

**PROJECT
PLOUGHSHARES
CALGARY**

Peace News

MAY 2017



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PROJECT PLOUGHSHARES CALGARY

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Six deceptive arguments against a nuclear weapons ban

Should we still strive for a world without nuclear weapons, despite global security concerns? Absolutely, writes Cesar Jaramillo, as he debunks the justifications for not taking current negotiations seriously.

Written by Cesar Jaramillo—March 31st 2017

Cesar Jaramillo is executive director at Project Ploughshares, a division of the Canadian Council of Churches. His areas of expertise include nuclear disarmament, outer space security and conventional weapons control. As an international civil society representative, Cesar has addressed, among others, the UN General Assembly First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), the UN Conference on Disarmament, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), and states parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).



This year's multilateral negotiations toward a legally binding prohibition on nuclear weapons reflect a growing global recognition that a nuclear-weapons ban is an integral part of the normative framework necessary to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. For some observers of nuclear issues, in and out of government, they also constitute a welcome shock to an otherwise lethargic nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime.

UN Resolution L41, which calls for negotiations toward a new ban on nuclear weapons, was [adopted](#) by a wide majority at the General Assembly last December (123 for, 38 against, 16 abstentions). It epitomizes a new political reality in the nuclear disarmament realm: Founded on the [humanitarian](#) imperative for nuclear abolition, it bears witness to a widely held perception that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as currently implemented, does not constitute a credible path to abolition.

Negotiations stemming from L41 began this week at the United Nations in New York and, after the first round ends Friday, will continue June 15 to July 7. All UN member states, along with international organizations and members of civil society, were called on to participate. Yet, several did not.

A majority of nuclear-armed states and their allies — including the United States and most other [NATO](#) members, such as Germany and Canada — have actively opposed this effort and have openly tried to undermine its rationale.

The U.S. envoy to the UN, Nikki Haley, attempted to justify her country's absence this week by [telling reporters](#), “There is nothing I want more for my family than a world with no nuclear weapons. But we have to be realistic... Is there anyone that believes that North Korea would agree to a ban on nuclear weapons?” (As she said this, she confirmed that the U.S. itself did not agree to a nuclear weapons ban. The irony, of course, was not lost.)

And while it is hardly surprising that the very states that rely on nuclear deterrence would oppose a legal prohibition of nuclear weapons, the primary arguments used to oppose the ban cannot withstand close scrutiny. They are either misleading, based on a dead-end logic, or outright wrong.

Let us consider six of the most commonly cited arguments.

1. Negotiations fail to consider the global security environment.

This point has been frequently raised by opponents to condemn negotiations before they even start. In reality, however, neither the way in which the talks will unfold nor possible outcomes are predetermined. These naysayers have been repeatedly urged by a majority of NPT and UN states parties to participate in the talks, which would allow them to raise any and all international security concerns they may have. Instead, they preemptively indict the process and choose instead to boycott the negotiations.

Following its vote late last year against the proposal to convene the negotiations, the U.S. issued an explanation, which was echoed by several states including, remarkably, [Russia](#). In it, the U.S. [spoke](#) of the purported “negative effects of seeking to ban nuclear weapons without consideration of the overarching international security environment.” Similarly, France has also [said](#), “A prohibition of nuclear weapons, in and of itself, will not improve international security.”

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Nobody, however, is advocating for a ban in isolation, and it has never been said that the global security environment would not be considered. Thus, we are led to wonder what else could be meant by “consideration of the overarching international security environment.” Is it that preserving international security *requires* the preservation of nuclear weapons? Or simply that there are difficult security challenges now facing the international community (which no one disputes)?

There is no perfect time to seek nuclear disarmament — or world peace or the end to hunger or equal pay for equal work. We cannot create a need for ideal conditions that will only become an excuse in perpetuity for the lack of progress. Non-nuclear-weapon states have never made the fulfillment of their nonproliferation obligations contingent upon the emergence of ideal international security conditions — and would surely be chastised by the nuclear-armed states if they did.

Achieving nuclear abolition will be a lengthy undertaking that will necessarily coexist with international security crises of varying gravity. To expect otherwise is unbelievably — and perhaps deliberately — naïve.

2. A nuclear-weapons ban would be ineffective.

In some forums, the states opposing ban negotiations openly question the impact and effectiveness of a prohibition treaty; in others, they admit that the process could have profound implications for the perpetuation and legitimacy of practices related to nuclear weapons. Remarkably, one of the best articulations of the significance of a legal ban comes from the U.S. and reflects NATO thinking and policy.

In an unclassified NATO [document](#) from October 2016 entitled “United States Non-Paper: ‘Defense Impacts of Potential United Nations General Assembly Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty,’” a legal prohibition of nuclear weapons is presented as anything but insignificant or ineffective. In it, the U.S. openly calls on all allies “to vote against negotiations on a nuclear weapons treaty ban, not to merely abstain.” It further asks allies and partners to refrain from joining the actual negotiations.

The document, which acknowledges that “the effects of a nuclear weapons ban treaty could be wide-ranging” and “could impact non-parties as well as parties,” lists several ways in which the ban could impact NATO’s standing as a nuclear-weapons alliance. For example, a ban treaty could put limits on:

- nuclear-weapons-related planning, training, and transit;
- assisting or inducing allies to use, plan, or train to use nuclear weapons;
- the use of nuclear-capable delivery systems; and
- nuclear-weapons-sharing practices among NATO members

The document succinctly points to the indisputable intersection between the rationale for the ban and NATO resistance to it: “Such treaty elements could—and are designed by ban advocates to—destroy the basis for U.S. nuclear extended deterrence.” Indeed.

3. The process to ban nuclear weapons is divisive and not based on consensus.

Opponents contend that negotiations to ban these weapons will create a schism in the international community, especially in the absence of nuclear-weapon states — whose presence continues to be widely encouraged.

Indeed, these talks *will* be divisive. But they simply shed further light on longstanding divisions, which continue to be exacerbated by the blatant disregard of nuclear-weapon states for their obligations to disarm.

It should be noted that the very countries that blocked consensus in the process surrounding the nuclear-weapons-ban negotiations, including the adoption of Resolution L41, are now criticizing the lack of consensus. Following its vote against the proposed negotiations, NATO member and nuclear-armed France [said](#) in its explanation of its vote (endorsed by the UK and the U.S., both possessors of nuclear arms) that “only a consensus-based approach” could lead to progress in nuclear disarmament.

Perplexingly, states wishing to undermine the negotiations continue to point to their own unwillingness to participate as an inherent flaw in the process.

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4. A legal prohibition of nuclear weapons is no substitute for actual weapons reductions.

True. A legal instrument to ban nuclear weapons, however thorough or stringent its provisions, will not automatically result in fewer nuclear warheads in the hands of any actor. Not a single proponent of the ban argues that this effort will be tantamount to abolition. The ban's limitations are well known. The need for buy-in from nuclear-weapon states is undisputed. But the lack of specific provisions for disarmament is not an indicator of ineffectiveness.

The historic adoption of Resolution L41 and the process surrounding it constitute the strongest diplomatic signal in decades that the peoples of the world reject these horrifying instruments of mass destruction. Critically, these developments could well signal a turning point in the humanitarian, diplomatic and political struggle toward their elimination.

The global momentum and political will to move the ban forward are unprecedented in the post-Cold War era. The lack of interest signalled by nuclear-weapon states and their allies may indicate that the process is starting to become a diplomatic annoyance for them.

Many recent and current international efforts related to nuclear weapons did not and will not reduce the size of nuclear arsenals. Various UN panels of governmental experts, high-level meetings related to the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and NPT-endorsed plans of action, which produced no warhead reductions, have received multilateral support over the years. Why should negotiations on a ban be denied similar backing?

5. The pursuit of a nuclear-weapons ban undermines the NPT.

Opponents to nuclear-weapons-ban negotiations frequently declare that this process effectively undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In fact, the contrary is true. The negotiation of a nuclear-weapons ban constitutes a rare, specific instance of actual implementation of [Article VI](#) of the NPT, which calls on states to “pursue negotiations in good faith” toward nuclear disarmament.

The World Court in 1996 further clarified the Article VI obligation. It [indicated](#) that the NPT requires states not only to engage in good faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament, but also to *bring them to a conclusion*.

The NPT was designed to prevent non-nuclear-weapon states from acquiring nuclear weapons and to compel nuclear-weapon states to eliminate their arsenals. In no direct or implied phrase does the treaty limit complementary efforts, such as negotiations toward a nuclear-weapons prohibition, to implement its provisions and advance nuclear disarmament.

Those with nuclear arsenals have resisted, avoided, or ignored not only their treaty obligations, but the groundswell of support for nuclear abolition from all corners of the planet.

6. Better than a ban is a so-called progressive, pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon states and their allies continue to insist on a step-by-step approach that, 45 years after the NPT came into force and nearly three decades after the end of the Cold War, has not attained the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. In effect, they are opting for the status quo.

No credible multilateral undertaking now exists that will lead to nuclear disarmament in the foreseeable future. Efforts to further the nuclear disarmament agenda have withered when denied support by nuclear-armed states.

This approach is increasingly out of sync with the emerging, compelling, and persuasive narrative voiced by a majority of the world's nations, which says that a legal ban is not only urgently needed, but indeed possible.

A deep-seated skepticism about the state of the nuclear disarmament regime, shared by a growing number of multilateral actors, is not just based on doubts about future progress but on historical evidence and current practice. Developments such as the rapid, costly [modernization](#) of nuclear arsenals and related infrastructure (some estimates put the price tag at more than \$1 trillion), heightened tensions between superpowers, and a dysfunctional multilateral disarmament machinery, underscore the inadequacy of the current approach to nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear-weapons-ban movement must be understood in this context. It developed out of the failure of the NPT to deliver on the promise of complete nuclear disarmament. The “pragmatic” approach advocated by those resisting a legal ban has already been tried — and has been found wanting.

Reprinted from <https://www.opencanada.org/features/six-deceptive-arguments-against-nuclear-weapons-ban/>

Spotlight on Peace Vendors who are making a difference.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is the world's most influential human rights organization, with over 7 million people in more than 150 countries working together to protect and promote human rights. Our work is based not on ideology, religion or politics, but on taking action for anyone, anywhere, whose human rights are being violated. We find out the facts, we expose the truth, we demand change. Committed to justice, equality and freedom, we press governments and other powerful groups to allow people to live in dignity. We have a record of success.

Since 1961, we've worked tirelessly around the world to protect and promote human rights, with the organization being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. In the past five decades, countless people owe their lives and an end to their suffering because of our members and their work.

Amnesty International is a constant witness to grave violations of human rights. For over 55 years we have never looked away. We fight injustice and promote human rights through advocacy, research and campaigning efforts. All our work begins with meticulous research and fact-finding. We have sent thousands of research missions to troubled zones and places the world may have forgotten, where real people are suffering human rights violations. We speak out on behalf of those who are silenced; demand justice for those who have been denied it; and work for what is right.

As we receive no funding from governments to remain impartial, we rely on the generosity of our individual donors and special organizations to ensure every voice is heard. Through letter writing and petition signing the pen becomes most powerful as communities come together who share their vision of a world where everyone lives in dignity.

Amnesty International's iconic logo of a candle wrapped in barbed wire was inspired by the ancient Chinese proverb: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness", reflecting our founder, Peter Benenson's hope that its work would shine a light in the darkest of places where human rights abuses go unpunished.

For more information please contact: Heidi Lambie, Regional Fundraising Officer—Alberta at hlambie@amnesty.ca
Ph: 403-910-5312 ext 110 or 1-800-AMNESTY (1-800-266-3789) for Member Services.

JOY'S JEWELS

This project was born almost by accident. Eight years ago, the garage sale at High River United Church received so many pieces of donated jewellery that we simply could not sell it all. What to do? Rather than give it away, I, an ex-jewellery store owner, took it home. Some needed repair, some cleaning, some needed to be better displayed. And so it started.



Because of my enthusiasm for social justice issues, I determined to donate all income from jewellery sales to peace and justice organizations. In the years that followed, we have raised thousands of dollars through the sale of donated jewellery. Bags and boxes of jewellery now arrive at the church as if by magic and it is always welcome.

While we have favourite projects, something always goes to Doctors Without Borders, UNHCR, Farm Radio International, Landmine Clearance International, Kairos, Canadian Food Grains Bank, Suzuki Foundation, Finca, Interpares and more. Some money makes it way to the particular needs of the day. Last year, Joy's Jewels donated \$1700.00 to help rebuild a Christian church after the earthquake in Nepal. This year, \$1000.00 was sent to the United Church in Fort Mac to help cover added expenses there and \$700.00 has gone to the local Catholic Refugee Committee. We have just begun supplying jewellery to a new boutique which supports a programme for women attempting to overcome addictions.

While most of the money we raise comes from sales at High River United Church, we also take bookings for events in southern Alberta. In many cases, the money raised is left with the sponsors to help fund their work. We were proud to donate \$500.00 to Project Ploughshares Calgary after their Peace Fair in November. If you would like to sell Joy's Jewels at your next event, please contact Joy at duncanjj@telus.net. If you would like to start your own jewellery project but need advice on how to proceed, we'd be happy to talk.

What started for me as a random impulse to work once again with something I love, Joy's Jewels has become my hobby, the main focus of my days. I send special thanks to all those - known and unknown - who trust me with their unwanted jewellery and donations of jewellery are always welcome.

SAVE THESE DATES

Project Ploughshares Calgary invites you to join us for these Events:

May 1st to May 18th - **Spring Meat Sale** (order forms due May 18th)

(Order forms attached as separate attachment to the email together with this newsletter).

June 8th—Pick up your meat orders (see order form for details)

June 14th Ploughshares **Annual General Meeting**

7-9 pm at Parkdale United Church

Come to hear where the non-profit registration is at and tell us what activities you would like to see us offer our members.

Other Events Around Town:

May 9th Marda Loop Justice Film Festival Presents:

SEED: THE UNTOLD STORY

7 pm at River Park Church

3818-14a Street SW

Admission free

Conversation Leader Roy Beck of Sedgwick, Alberta's Broadview Farms, is a horticulturalist who believes in preserving the past for a better future.

May 17th Independent Jewish Voices is hosting a webinar with Richard Falk

7pmET, 5pm local time

If you'd like to attend this free special event:

<https://madmimi.com/p/05baf9/>

June 9th BDS presents:

Tour and presentation by Teresa Wolfwood,

For more information please contact:

bdsactioncalgary@gmail.com



SYNOPSIS: Few things on Earth are as miraculous and vital as seeds, worshiped and treasured since the dawn of humankind. SEED: The Untold Story follows passionate seed keepers protecting our 12,000 year-old food legacy. In the last century, 94% of our seed varieties have disappeared. As biotech chemical companies control the majority of our seeds, farmers, scientists, lawyers, and indigenous seed keepers fight a David and Goliath battle to defend the future of our food. In a harrowing and heartening story, these reluctant heroes rekindle a lost connection to our most treasured resource and revive a culture connected to seeds. SEED features Vandana Shiva, Dr. Jane Goodall, Andrew Kimbrell, Winona Laduke and Raj Patel.

Richard Falk will offer his insights on pursuing a path towards peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. He is the co-author of the 2017 ground-breaking [UN report Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid](#).

- UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2008-2014
- * Latest book is *Palestine's Horizon: Towards a Just Peace*
- * Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Law and Professor Emeritus, Princeton University

Sponsored by Independent Jewish Voices Canada



Project Ploughshares Calgary

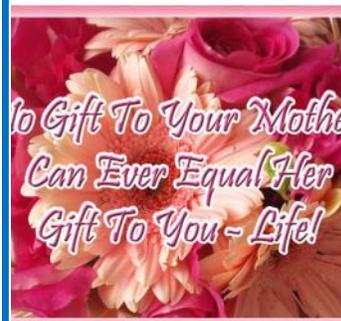
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Special thanks to all who submitted articles & Tracey Braun for editing this issue of the newsletter.



Welcome to SPRING

Hope you have had a peaceful Winter
The Office is now open
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday from 10 am—3 pm and
Wednesday from 2 pm—7 pm.

We are very grateful to all our supporters and donors for their continued support of the important peace work that we do here at Project Ploughshares Calgary.

During the month of April we received \$3,245.00 in donations
Thank You! This is our society's lifeline and your support is needed more than ever now.

We invite you to join us for:

PLOUGHSHARES' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 14th 2017

From 7-8:30 pm

At Parkdale United Church

2919-8 Avenue NW

We Hope to See You There!!