

## Loyalty Demand from Nuclear Gang Leader Snubbed

With the shamelessness of autocrats the world over, Donald Trump's White House, on October 20, directly confronted countries that had ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, telling them to withdraw their ratifications. Like a drug cartel's kingpin, with all the hired guns and political protection to operate above the law with impunity, Trump's gangster White House seemed to believe it still had some weight to throw around. Not one country bowed to Trump's edict.

According to the Associated Press, which obtained the letter, the Trump administration claimed that Russia, China, Britain, France, as well as all 30 NATO allies and the United States "stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions" of the treaty ban.

The pomposity and obliviousness of the White House letter is hard to exaggerate. It's like imagining president Abe Lincoln urging countries that had abolished slavery to have it reinstated. Ray Acheson, director of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's disarmament program, replied, "It's incredible that a nuclear-armed state is demanding other countries withdraw from a treaty banning nuclear weapons." Incredible, yes; that is impossible to believe.

Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, told the AP that diplomatic sources had confirmed to her that they and other states that had ratified the new treaty ban received the US letter requesting their withdrawal.

Fihn said the letter indicated an "increasing nervousness, and maybe straightforward panic, with some of the nuclear-armed states and particularly the Trump administration," and showed that it "really seems to understand that this is a reality: Nuclear weapons are going to be banned under international law soon."

So, while the White House, the US weapons industry, and the other nuclear weapons states oppose the treaty, some in the administration seem to recognize the political banditry, ethical stigma, and legal hypocrisy of shunning a popular treaty that is coming into force.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump repeated boastful denunciations of international treaties including the Iran Deal and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. In Arizona that year Trump said, "When you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families." In practice, this is an order to commit terrorism and violate the Geneva Conventions in which "no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed." In February 2016, Trump said he'd bring back "a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding" which would violate the UN Convention Against Torture and the US Torture Statute, 18 USC 2340A.

In March 2017, when negotiations for the nuclear weapons treaty ban got started, Trump's Ambassador to the United Nations, Gov. Nikki Haley, dutifully led a 40-state boycott of the proceedings. Speaking at the UN, Haley made two verbal slips that accidentally revealed the Trump gang's private view of "law and order."

Ambassador Haley said, "We would love to have a ban on nuclear treatie', uh, weapons." She then admitted, "One day we will hope that we are standing here saying we no longer need nuclear weapons." The Trump administration's actions have matched its words here, because it didn't even hope for eliminating nuclear weapons. It cheered the production of new ones and got rid of nuclear treaties.

—John LaForge



We join in mourning the death of our friend, mentor, comrade, and relentless advocate for nonviolence, disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons, Sister Ardeth Platte, OP, at right with documents. Sr. Ardeth died Sept. 29, 2020 at age 84. On July 18, 2017, she and Sister Carol Gilbert, OP, center (holding banner) explained the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to Col. Gregor Schlemmer, commander of Germany's air base Büchel, where 20 US hydrogen bombs are stationed. The Colonel amazingly made a personal visit to the group of over 30 protesters who were in the midst of an active blockade of the highway leading to his base. Ardeth presented a copy of the then 11-day-old treaty to Col. Schlemmer. Photo by Marion Küpker.

## US Minuteman III ICBM Test Made in Response to 50th Ratification of Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

The US air force "Global Strike Command" launched a dummy Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile from Vandenberg air force Base in California early on October 29, just five days after the 50th ratification of the treaty ban was delivered. It was the third air force ICBM test since August. The Pentagon says its missile tests are planned months in advance, but the decision to not cancel October's needless demonstration was charged with contempt for civil society. Rick Wayman, CEO of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, in Santa Barbara, said October 28, "In addition to undermining

the treaty through threatening letters, the US government demonstrated its active defiance of the treaty's provisions by testing a nuclear-capable missile." Wayman's mention of "threatening letters" was reference to letters sent from the White House urging treaty ban signers to withdraw their ratifications. "While most of the world's countries are evolving to a view that nuclear weapons are unacceptable under all circumstances, the United States is testing a nuclear missile built to fight the Cold War, one which is designed to cause the indiscriminate slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people," he said. —*JL*

## Treaties and the Path to Disarmament

By Ian Zabarte

While the United States has actively opposed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and will not be held to its requirements for now, the treaty will be enforced in the states that have had it ratified. The arrival of the treaty is the first time nuclear weapons have been explicitly banned under international law.

### Shoshone Nation of Indians and the US

Customary international law is formed when states act in a consistent way based upon a sense of legal obligation. Treaties are intended to preserve the continued existence of the signatory parties. Treaties between Native Americans and the US have the same preservation character. Great Britain did not recognize the United States government until the US was recognized by Native American nations that also had treaties with Great Britain.

In 1863, as the US Civil War raged, the United States sought peace and alliance with the Shoshone Nation of Indians in five treaties. In 1857, prior to the war's beginning, a US "gold ship" was lost with 21 tons of gold bullion, leading to a serious economic depression. Treaties with the Shoshone Nation of Indians had the purpose of allowing gold to be securely shipped overland to finance prosecution of the war for the benefit of the US. Yet, since the dawn of the nuclear age, the US has secretly "developed" the Nevada National Security Site (formerly called the Nevada Test Site) on Shoshone property and has detonated over 900 weapons of mass destruction dispersing radioactive fallout globally. The Shoshone people would never enter into an agreement that would result in the destruction of the people and land.

A provision of the Hague and Geneva Conventions known as the Martens Clause arguably made nuclear weapons illegal as it identifies "dictates of the public

conscience" regarding whether a weapon "not expressly addressed by treaty is nonetheless prohibited or illegal." Later, the Shoshone Nation contributed to the creation of international opinion on nuclear weapons as expressed in the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the UN's International Court of Justice or World Court.

For the Shoshone Nation's part, hundreds of protests took place at the Nevada Test Site and, by 1990, over 30,000 individuals were granted permission by the Western Bands of the Shoshone Nation of Indians to protest against the bombing. The Shoshone view is that our treaty obligations require aid and comfort to all people, including visitors from the Kazakh Nevada Semipalatinsk Movement and the global anti-nuclear movement. Together they pressured both the World Health Organization in 1993 and the UN General Assembly in 1994 to seek an Advisory Opinion on the Illegality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. The court noted in 1996 that there was no international law that explicitly prohibits the possession, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons. However, any use of or threat to use nuclear weapons could only be considered lawful under extreme circumstances of self-defense, if then. Until now, none of the previous international resolutions, treaties, or agreements required or enforced the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Through the growing activism of individuals and non-governmental organizations, peace-loving people of the world assert their right to a world without nuclear weapons and rejoice in the 50th state ratification of the treaty ban which enters into force on January 22, 2021. We must continue our effort to pressure the nuclear weapons states to conform to international law.

—Ian Zabarte is Principle Man of the Western Bands of the Shoshone Nation of Indians.