

Nuclear Shorts

Report: Radiation and the Damage it Causes

A new publication from Beyond Nuclear, “Radiation and harm to human health,” is the latest in its series of booklets that together comprise what it calls, “The Case Against Nuclear Power: Facts and Arguments from A-Z.” Available online, BN says: “It’s time to set the record straight on radiation and the damage it causes, particularly to pregnancy, children and women. Contrary to what Trump’s recent executive orders claim, abundant and largely officially ignored, scientific evidence demonstrates that childhood cancers increase around normally operating nuclear facilities, with indications that these cancers begin during pregnancy. Uranium mining to get fuel for reactors, a worldwide environmental justice travesty, is also associated with a number of health impacts. Even already existing background radiation (from the nuclear industry’s uranium fuel chain) is associated with childhood cancers — a fact that nuclear proponents conveniently forget — the industry compounds these health impacts by releasing radiation accidentally, and routinely, from nuclear reactors; releases the U.S. NRC has been happy to legalize. Clearly our current radiation standards *aren’t* protective enough.” — Read it here: https://beyondnuclearinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/radiation-and-harm-to-human-health_27-july.pdf

Lakenheath AFB Blockader: “I’m here to prevent a crime”

Declaring “We campaign to scrap nuclear weapons,” 250 activists joined a peace camp outside the Lakenheath “Royal” Air Force base in Northeast Britain April 14 to 26, organized by Lakenheath Alliance for Peace. Seven resisters were arrested April 26 during a blockade of the main gate. Besides protesting the return of U.S. B61 nuclear bombs to Britain, the camp drew attention to the U.K.’s role in supporting Israel’s genocide in Palestine, as well as how Lakenheath and the global network of 800 U.S. military bases drive climate breakdown, the Alliance reported. Sophie Bolt, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said, “Rather than arresting people for peacefully protesting the return of U.S. nuclear weapons to Britain and the base’s role in supporting Israel’s genocide in Gaza, the police should be investigating clear violations of international law being facilitated by both the British government and U.S. bases in Britain. Nuclear weapons don’t make us safer, they make us a target.” The *Morning Star* online reported, “Last month, CND forced the declassification of [documentation] that U.S. forces are exempt from adhering to British nuclear safety regulations.” Bolt said, “There’s no public consultation. This is all being done behind closed doors. It’s a complete nuclear cover-up.” One placard at the gate read: “I am not here for protest, I am here to prevent a crime.” — Lakenheath Alliance for Peace and CND, April 28; *Morningstar* online, April 27, 2025

Milwaukee’s Common Council Tells Congress: We Want Nuclear Weapons Abolished

On April 2, the Common Council of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, unanimously adopted a nuclear weapons abolition resolution calling on U.S. leaders to: actively pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first; end the sole, unchecked authority of any U.S. president to launch a nuclear attack; take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; and cancel plans to replace the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons. Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier

Johnson signed the measure which was introduced by Council Member Marina Dimitrijevic. The resolution is part of the national Physicians for Social Responsibility’s campaign Back from the Brink, and was pushed by a coalition of 18 state groups led by Peace Action-Wisconsin, Milwaukee Veterans for Peace, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Wisconsin, and the United Nations Association of Greater Milwaukee. Representatives of the groups who spoke to the Council in favor of the resolution were Julie Enslow, Pam Richard, Steve Watrous, Paula Rogge, and Bill Christofferson, one of Nukewatch’s founders in 1979. — Milwaukee Peace Action, April 2, 2025

U.S. Nuclear Weapons Programs Slated for 53% Budget Increase

Department of Energy budget figures have been released with the Trumpian headline, “Unleashing a Golden Era of Energy Dominance and Energy Innovation and Protecting the Nation.” However, 65% of the DOE’s proposed \$46 billion budget is earmarked for its nuclear weapons section known as the National Nuclear Security Administration. In turn, more than 80% of the NNSA’s proposed fiscal year 2026 funding is for nuclear weapons research and production programs, with a 25% funding increase over FY 2025. In addition, the Trump administration is adding another \$4.8 billion from so-called “reconciliation” funding, bringing the NNSA’s “total weapons activities” to just under \$30 billion. Taken together, the nuclear weapons budget is 53% above FY 2025. To help pay for this extravaganza, nuclear nonproliferation and cleanup programs are being cut by 5%, cyber-security and emergency response by 25%, and energy efficiency and renewable energy programs by 74%. — Nuclear Watch New Mexico; and *New York Times*, June 3, 2025



During a blockade at the end of a 12-day peace camp, activists shut down the main gate to RAF Lakenheath in Northeast England, one of the largest air bases in Europe, which may soon see the stationing of U.S. B61-12 hydrogen bombs. Photo: Jim Scott.

39th Chernobyl Anniversary: Radiation Warnings Still Apply

The Belarusian Department for Nuclear and Radiation Safety said at a press conference on Earth Day that 39 years after the April 26, 1986, Chernobyl disaster, “60% of cesium-137 and 62% of strontium-90 have decayed.” Yekaterina Shmeleva, the Deputy Head of the Department, reported that the “area of radioactive contamination” includes about 12% of the country’s territory — some 9,600 square miles — an area bigger than either Vermont (9,249 sq mi), New Hampshire (8,969), Massachusetts (7,838) or New Jersey (7,419). Shmeleva reported that the 1,859 settlements in the “zones of radioactive contamination” have a population of about 930,000, including 181,000 children. Belta reported that Shmeleva “urged [the public] to carefully choose the places for summer foraging and to do radiation control of mushrooms and berries.” Left unsaid was that it takes thirty years for cesium-137 to decay by half, and that it will not decay completely for another 261 years — until the year 2286. In their 2006 study “The Other Chernobyl Report,” Ian Fairlie and David Sumner note that, “particularly large areas of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia were contaminated with high levels of radioactivity.” — Belarusian Telegraph Agency (Belta), April 22, 2025

Medical Journals Call for “Ending nuclear weapons, before they end us”

On May 13 *The British Medical Journal* and 133 other health and medical periodicals published a joint editorial confronting the leaders of nuclear weapons states, warning them that detonating a mere fraction of their nuclear arsenals could cause global famine and a mass extinction. The appeal further decried the fact that the group’s similar joint editorial in 2023 had been ignored. Some excerpts from the more recent appeal follow (with British spelling intact).

Two relatively small (by today’s standards) nuclear weapons unleashed a cataclysm of radioactive incineration on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the end of 1945, about 213,000 people were dead. Tens of thousands more have died from late effects of the bombings. ...

In the words of [Nobel Prize] Committee Chair Jørgen Watne Frydnes, “It is naive to believe our civilisation can survive a world order in which global security depends on nuclear weapons. The world is not meant to be a prison in which we await collective annihilation.”

[There is] compelling evidence of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war, its severe global climatic and famine consequences, and the impossibility of any effective humanitarian response.

Even a fraction of the current arsenal could decimate the biosphere in a severe mass extinction event. The global climate disruption caused by the smoke pouring from cities ignited by just 2% of the current arsenal could result in over two billion people starving.

Our joint editorial in 2023 ... urged three immediate steps by nuclear armed states and their allies: adopt a “no first use” policy, take their nuclear weapons off hair trigger alert, and pledge unequivocally that they will not use nuclear weapons in any current conflicts they are involved in. It is an alarming failure of leadership that no progress has been made on these needed measures

— The complete text is here: BMJ, 389 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.r881>

UN to Renew Study of Nuclear Weapons Effects

By a vote of 136 to 3, the United Nations General Assembly, in December 2024, called for a new study to update established facts regarding the catastrophic large-scale, long-term human, environmental, ecological, economic, and societal impacts of nuclear weapons attacks. Then on May 26, the UN’s World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting in Geneva adopted a resolution directing the World Health Organization (WHO) to establish an independent scientific panel on the effects of nuclear war to examine “the physical effects and societal consequences of a nuclear war on a local, regional and planetary scale.”

The WHA resolution passed 86-14, with 28 abstentions. Britain’s UN delegate, reportedly speaking on behalf of 16 European member states, urged rejection of the resolution, saying, “No update to existing WHO studies could materially alter [the] established understanding of the devastation of nuclear war.”

In March 2020, the International Committee of the Red Cross convened an expert meeting on the impacts and risks of exploding nuclear weapons. (See: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/humanitarian-impacts-and-risks-use-nuclear-weapons>.) And earlier, three major intergovernmental conferences, convened in Oslo in March 2013, in Nayarit, Mexico in February 2014, and in Vienna in December 2014, produced comprehensive documentation of the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons detonations. (Key documents are here: <https://peaceandhealthblog.com/hinw/>) These findings were also snubbed by the world’s nuclear powers.

— Health Policy Watch, “WHO Mandated to Update of 30-Year-Old Review on Health Impacts of Nuclear War,” May 26, 2025; Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, “UN Approves Global Study of Nuclear War,” Jan. 23, 2025