



BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

NEWSLETTER FOR STRENGTHENING AWARENESS OF NUCLEAR ABOLITION WITH DECEMBER 2011 ARTICLES

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Most Israelis Favour a Nuclear-Free Middle East, Poll Shows

WASHINGTON - A clear majority of Israeli Jews would support a nuclear weapons-free Middle East, even if it meant that Israel too would have to give up its stockpile of nuclear weapons. **Read more on pages 2-3**

India Set to Take Lead on Abolishing Nukes

NEW DELHI - The Government of India appears to be in right earnest about taking the lead in pursuing universal disarmament. The renewed vigour – for reviving the climate and conditions wherein the basic ideas and objectives of nuclear disarmament can be advanced – is evident in a series of engagements being lined up to carry forward former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's Action Plan (RGAP) for a nuclear-weapons-free world order. **Read more on pages 4-6**

Stepping Towards Nuclear-Free Middle East

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UNITED NATIONS - A group of political, diplomatic and military leaders from the Asia-Pacific region - representing an area with the largest number of nuclear weapons states - is launching a campaign to help abolish the world's most destructive weapons, beginning in their own backyard. **Read more on pages 11-12**

Red Cross Movement Wants Nukes Abolished

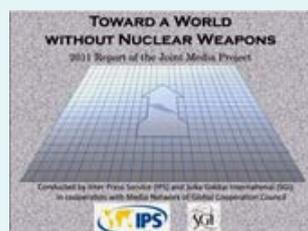
SYDNEY - Even as Australia's ruling Labour revoked early December its long standing party policy banning uranium sales to India and Pakistan was swift to stake its claim too, the disarmament movement received a boost with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adopting a resolution to work towards a legally binding global convention on nuclear abolition. **Read more on pages 13-14**

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<http://www.nuclearabolition.net/documents/Toward a World without Nuclear Weapons.pdf>



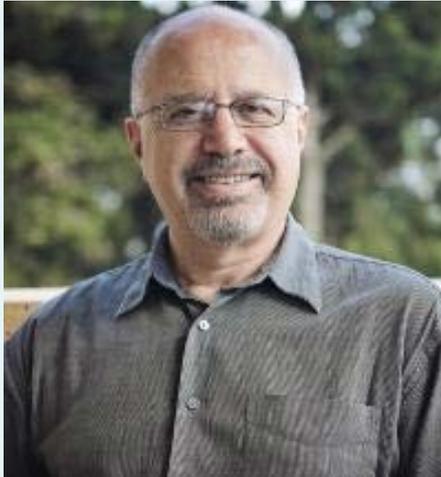
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Most Israelis Favour a Nuclear-Free Middle East, Poll Shows

By Mitchell Plitnick



WASHINGTON (IPS) - A clear majority of Israeli Jews would support a nuclear weapons-free Middle East, even if it meant that Israel too would have to give up its stockpile of nuclear weapons.

This was the most surprising result to come out of a pair of polls conducted separately on Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The polls, conducted in November by Professor Shibley Telhami and presented Thursday [December 1, 2011] at the Brookings Institution, covered a range of topics, from the Arab Spring to perceptions of the United States and hopes for the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

While 90 percent of Israeli Jews believe Iran will develop a nuclear weapon, 63 percent prefer that neither country possess nuclear weaponry, while only 19 percent would prefer they both do, if those are the only two choices.

By a narrow margin of 43 to 41 percent, Israeli Jews support the idea of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Sixty-eight percent of Arab Israelis oppose such an attack, with only four percent saying they support it.

The poll also revealed that most Israeli Jews believe that the Arab Spring will negatively impact their own country, largely because they do not believe it will bring democracy to the Arab world.

When asked how the Arab Spring will affect Israel, 51 percent responded "mostly for the worse", with only 15 percent saying it would change things for the better. Twenty-one percent said it would make no difference.

Yet, when asked "If the Arab Spring does, in fact, lead to more democracy in the Arab world..." 44 percent thought this would be better for Israel, with only 22 percent saying it would be worse and 28 percent saying it would make no difference.

Israeli columnist Nahum Barnea, responding to the presentation of Telhami's polls, noted that, "The Israeli people are made more fearful of the Arab Spring" by government and media warnings that it will increase hostility toward Israel.

The poll of Palestinian citizens of Israel revealed some sharp changes on key issues from only a year ago.

When asked if they would "accept the transfer of some Arab/Palestinian towns currently in Israel to a new Palestinian state", 78 percent responded that they would not accept such a transfer, with only 17 percent saying they would. That is a clear shift from 2010, when 58 percent said they would oppose such a transfer while 36 percent would accept it.

There was also a strong shift toward compromise on the question of Palestinian refugees' right to return to the lands from which they were exiled. In 2010, 57 percent of Arab Israelis said the right of return "could not be compromised away", while 28 percent said it was "important, but a compromise should be found" and 11 percent said it was "not too important".

In the current poll, the plurality shifted and now 57 percent are in favour of compromise, 34 percent say it cannot be compromised and only five percent say it is not too important.

Telhami was unsure about the reasons for the drastic shift in opinion on this issue. He did say, however that, "Those who had refugees in their families were much more inclined not to compromise than those who did not." ➡

Picture above: Professor Shibley Telhami | Credit: http://sadat.umd.edu/people/shibley_telhami.htm



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The polls also showed a stark contrast between Arab and Jewish citizens in the perceptions of the status of Arabs in Israel. While majorities in both groups (52 percent of Jews, 57 percent of Arabs) believe that, "There is legal equality but institutional and societal discrimination" against the Arab minority, 36 percent of Arabs believe that the relationship between Jews and Arab in Israel "is an apartheid relationship".

While only seven percent of Jews subscribe to that view, 33 percent of Jews believe there is "full equality between Arab and Jewish citizens" in Israel, but a mere three percent of Arabs share that view.

Jewish Israelis hold little hope for a resolution of the conflict in the near future, with only six percent saying it will be resolved in the next five years. Forty-nine percent believe it will never be resolved, while 42 percent say that it eventually will be, but it will take more than five years.

There is a widespread consensus among Israeli Jews that Israel must be recognised as a Jewish state, something the Palestinian Authority has adamantly refused to do. Thirty-nine percent insist such recognition must be a precondition of negotiations or a settlement freeze, while 40 percent are willing to accept that recognition as part of a final peace agreement. Only 17 percent do not support the demand for recognition as a Jewish state.

But when asked if they would accept defining Israel as "the homeland of the Jewish people and all its citizens", 71 percent of Israeli Jews said they would support such a formulation, while only 25 percent oppose it.

By a 66 percent to 31 percent margin, Israeli Jews said they believe their government should be doing more to "promote comprehensive peace with the Arabs based on the 1967 borders with agreed modifications", indicating dissatisfaction with the way the Netanyahu government has handled this issue.

Yet 47 percent of Israeli Jews also believe that if the two-state solution collapses, "the status quo will continue with little change." Thirty-four percent believe it will lead to intense, long- term conflict.

Telhami pointed out that, "In the Arab world, most believe that the collapse of the two-state solution will lead to intense conflict for years to come."

The polls found that Arab citizens of Israel were generally well in line with the rest of the Arab world in their attitudes toward the Arab Spring and in seeing Turkish Prime Minister Tercep Erdogan as the model for new leadership.

The one stark difference between Arabs in Israel and in the Arab countries surveyed in an earlier poll was in the view of the United States' role in the Arab world in recent months. When asked which two outside countries played the most productive roles in the Arab world in recent months, the United States ranked third in the Arab countries, being named by 24 percent of respondents, but ranked first at 45 percent among Arabs in Israel.

As the United States' presidential election draws nearer, Barack Obama might take heart that his positive rating among Israeli Jews is up to 54 percent from 41 percent last year. But faith in his policies remains low, as only 22 percent say their attitude about them is "hopeful" while 39 percent describe their feelings as "discouraged". [IPS - December 1, 2011]

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India Set to Take Lead on Abolishing Nukes

By Shastri Ramachandaran*



NEW DELHI (IDN) - The Government of India appears to be in right earnest about taking the lead in pursuing universal disarmament. The renewed vigour – for reviving the climate and conditions wherein the basic ideas and objectives of nuclear disarmament can be advanced – is evident in a series of engagements being lined up to carry forward former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's Action Plan (RGAP) for a nuclear-weapons-free world order.

The Plan, mooted in 1988 and known as 'RGAP 88', attracted much global attention when it was launched as the logical culmination of the Six Nation-Five Continent Initiative to pre-empt the outbreak of nuclear war at a time when the confrontationalist rhetoric of the two superpowers was at its peak. India's late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could not succeed in making the United Nations General Assembly accept his idea in 1988.

Now, 23 years later, RGAP 88 has acquired new life with the Informal Group on RGAP coming out with its 284-page report in August 2011. Its nomenclature, 'Informal Group', can be misleading as there is nothing informal about it. On the contrary the IG, set up by India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in October 2010, is the Prime Minister's Advisory Group to revitalize the RGAP on Disarmament.

Headed by former Union Minister and Member of Parliament Mani Shankar Aiyar, a career foreign service officer-turned-politician who was close to Rajiv Gandhi, the Group includes distinguished diplomats, strategic affairs and nuclear experts and academics.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had set up the Informal Group in the wake of US President Barack Obama's speech in April 2009, in which he spoke about "America's commitment to seek peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons". President Obama, who deserves credit for being the first head of a nuclear-weapon state to commit himself to a nuclear-weapon-free world, had warned of the dangers of proliferation. He spelled out that the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists was "the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War."

The report, which recommends action on how best the idea of universal disarmament can be carried forward, is premised on the realisation that possession of nuclear weapons has not resulted in a (greater) sense of security to India. The case for moving towards a nuclear weapon-free world is more compelling today than during the Cold War because more states have nuclear weapons and more could be tempted to join. Therefore, the report has called for a massive campaign within the country to spread awareness of the dangers of nuclear conflict and a terrorist nuclear attack.

Drawing attention to the fact that India faced the biggest and most tangible threats, whether by way of a nuclear attack or nuclear terrorism, the report argued that "the best security for India lies in universal nuclear disarmament". The members of the Advisory Group acknowledged explicitly that they drew confidence from the US support to nuclear abolition, which was not forthcoming in 1988.

The report, which was presented to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister S M Krishna recommends, as the first step for revival of RGAP 88, the appointment of a Special Coordinator with the mandate to work out a consensus for constituting a committee on nuclear disarmament. ➡

*The author, an independent political and international affairs commentator based in New Delhi, is a former Editor of Sunday Mail, has worked with leading newspapers in India and abroad, including China, Denmark and Sweden. He was Senior Editor & Writer with China Daily and Global Times in Beijing.

Picture above : India's Mani Shankar Aiyar with Global Security Institute's Jonathan Granoff Credit: Global Security Institute



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The report contains a seven-point roadmap with 14 recommendations, which includes India reiterating its commitment to "eliminating its own arsenal as part of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable global process"; promoting consensus on reducing salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, No-First Use and binding negative security assurances; "keep the fires burning" in the Conference on Disarmament to press for discussions aimed at mobilising countries for total elimination of nuclear weapons; and, thereafter, moving to a Convention banning the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

These are towards clearing the decks for "negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would discuss a world without nuclear weapons in a specified time-frame."

The report recommends that India – as a State with Nuclear Weapons (SNW) which is resolved to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent – should initiate bilateral dialogues on disarmament with all the countries possessing nuclear weapons. To sharpen the advocacy of disarmament, the report calls for the government's active participation in civil society initiatives, strengthening the Disarmament Division in the Ministry of External Affairs and raising the country's profile in the UNGA.

The Group wants the Government of India to take the lead in global efforts for elimination of nuclear weapons, bringing to the issue the moral force of 60 years of campaigning for the cause and its growing clout in the global arena. The report argues that the time is ripe for India to revive its traditional championing of disarmament. Besides, the prevailing global climate is viewed to be opportune because processes for reduction of nuclear arsenals are gaining.

It may be mentioned that the Advisory Group's report takes the RGAP 88 forward by including elements of a Working Paper which India had submitted to the UNGA in 2006.

There is no dearth of national and international reports, proposals, committees and groups on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Yet if this Advisory Group's report and recommendations deserve attention it is because of new dimensions to the issue and exceptional features of the report.

To take the second aspect first, the unique feature of the report is not the underlying philosophy, intent, language, approach or even the rhetoric. But that it grasps the nettle in terms of the specific, practical steps needed for actualising the goal of nuclear abolition. The sequenced moves, spelled out in a step-by-step way, towards the goal of nuclear elimination offer a measurable yardstick of progress – or lack of it. This provides the advantage of setting specific stages for the campaign, which can serve as signposts.

The new dimensions that the report focuses upon are the altered and favourable international climate for a disarmament campaign, the US support for nuclear abolition, the Indian government's forthright commitment to take the lead and a prescription of engagements for pursuing the cause within the country and through bilateral, regional and international exercises beginning January 2012. This prescription forms part of the sequenced stages.

The fact that the Chairman of the Group, Mani Shankar Aiyar has begun acting on the proposed roadmap within the country and at the international level testifies to the earnestness of the efforts underway.

India at Conference in New York

At the international level, UN Day (October 24) this year provided an apt platform to draw attention to the report. At a conference organised in New York by the Global Security Institute, the East West Institute and the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation, speakers, including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Aiyar, made a strong pitch for eliminating nuclear weapons.

The conference is a landmark not for the perorations but as a stage for revival of the campaign to build a new awareness for nuclear abolition. The high-level conference also turned the spotlight on the Secretary General's Five Point Proposal, a comprehensive agenda for eliminating nuclear weapons, first presented three years ago. ➡



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"We know that the world of tomorrow is shaped by the decisions we make today. A world free of nuclear weapons is a concrete possibility," Ban Ki-moon said, according to news reports of the event. In his keynote address, Ban emphasised the need for increased transparency and accountability, as well as the urgent need to strengthen the rule of law in nuclear disarmament obligations, and reiterated his 2008 call for work on a nuclear weapons convention.

"No country is more threatened than India is by the growing nuclear arsenals in our neighbourhood and the prospect of terrorists accessing nuclear materials or even weapons. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is, therefore, difficult to envisage," Aiyar said at the conference. Elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to ensure that they are not used for "mass genocide" by terrorists and "mass suicide" by states, he said, adding that "there is no third way."

According to a PTI report, Aiyar pointed out that while unilateral nuclear disarmament would not be easy, India "could rid itself of these weapons" within the framework of an international convention for the universal elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. "India must continue to pursue its vision of a non-nuclear world since a Nuclear-Weapons-Free-World would be good for the planet, good for the region and good for India's national security."

A week earlier, at the Inter-Parliamentary Union meet, the report's call for a full-scale revival of the nuclear abolition campaign evoked a lot of interest, said Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar who serves as Advisor to the Informal Group.

Update

Bringing IDN up to date on developments following the presentation of the report to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar said that India's National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, had been most encouraging in his support to the initiatives proposed in the Report.

The Group's Chairman, Mani Shankar Aiyar, is now working to schedule a meeting with senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs in the presence of the Foreign Minister. This is in preparation for a national-level conference that the Advisory Group, together with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), plans to convene in January 2012. This national conference is expected to bring together the community of strategic affairs specialists, experts on nuclear and disarmament issues and think tanks.

Thereafter, the Advisory Group, according to Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar, proposes to hold conferences in the neighbourhood and develop a level of regional cohesion before bringing around the Permanent Five (P-5) of the UN Security Council for developing an international platform.

All this may be cause for optimism. However, the obstacles on the path cannot be discounted, and the report itself takes realistic note of the challenges ahead. The challenges include resistance from powerful sections of the US establishment which do not share Obama's position, the distinct lack of enthusiasm among some of the P-5 such as the US and Russia and differences even among those who agree on the larger objective but are divided on the steps to be taken.

[IDN-InDepthNews – December 2, 2011]

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Stepping Towards Nuclear-Free Middle East

By Jillian Kestler-D'Amours

JERUSALEM (IPS) - Representatives from over 65 organisations and countries convened in Amman, Jordan in the week Nov 29-Dec 1 in an effort to lay the groundwork for the United Nations' goal of creating a Middle East without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.



"More than 11 specialised tracks were discussed throughout the meeting, (including) most importantly, the role of UN instruments in declaring the Middle East as a nuclear weapons free zone, the security implications of a (weapons of mass destruction free zone), prospects of establishing a nuclear fuel cycle, (and) nuclear security in the Middle East," explained Ayman Khalil, director of the Arab Institute for Security Studies (AC SIS), one of the conference organisers.

Called 'Laying the Grounds for 2012: Opportunities for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Security', the three-day conference highlighted challenges that persist in the lead-up to the UN's 2012 conference on creating a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

The May 2010 review meeting of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – which takes place every five years – called for this UN-sponsored conference. In October, it was announced that Finland would host the conference, and that Finland under secretary of state for foreign and security policy, Jaakko Laajava, would facilitate it.

"The meeting (in Amman) provided a forum for coordination and exchanging views amongst national, regional and international parties (and) highlighted challenges, requirements and prerequisites for active participation and engagement by all states of the region in the 2012 process," Khalil told IPS.

In 1995, the final statement of the NPT Review and Extension Conference called upon all states in the Middle East to build a region free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, and urged other states to promote nuclear non-proliferation.

"All States of the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, (must) accede to the (NPT) as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards," the final statement read.

Signed into force in 1970, the NPT aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons technology, and further the goal of nuclear disarmament around the world. In all 190 parties are currently signatories to the Treaty, including the five official nuclear-weapons states: China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

It is widely believed that Israel, which hasn't signed the NPT, is also in possession of nuclear weapons. According to Khalil, this unwillingness to sign the NPT is the biggest obstacle to creating a nuclear-free Middle East.

"Despite the willingness of all states in the region to create a (nuclear weapons free zone) in the Middle East, the establishment of such a zone remains unachievable. The biggest obstacle, of course, is the non- commitment of some states to the Non-Proliferation Treaty," Khalil said.

"There exist a number of other challenges that make this objective quite challenging, namely the existence of an Arab-Israeli conflict, and the possession and development of nuclear programmes in the region," Khalil said.

In recent months, various governments placed sanctions on Iran after reports surfaced that the country was building up its nuclear weapons arsenal and capabilities, a charge that Iranian officials have consistently denied. ➔

Picture: View of the conference | Credit: www.norway.jo



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The situation has raised fears of a confrontation between Jerusalem and Tehran that could ignite the entire region. Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged the world "to stop Iran's race to arm itself with a nuclear weapon before it is too late."

According to Khalil, however, "putting both Iran and Israel in the same basket may be a complicating factor," since Iran is a signatory to the NPT and has so far committed to IAEA inspections, while Israel is a non-signatory to the NPT and has so far maintained an ambiguous policy.

"Israeli non-conventional capabilities were addressed in the meeting (in Amman). Israel being the only state who has not signed the NPT and currently is acquiring nuclear weapons to achieve deterrence against modest conventional capabilities of its neighbors qualifies to the description of 'undisciplined child'," Khalil said. "Obviously if the 2012 process is to succeed, both Iran and Israel have to be active participants in the proposed meeting." [IPS - December 7, 2011]



Credit: Wikimedia Commons



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Saudi Warning Could Escalate Nuclear Arms Race

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The world's nuclear powers - both declared and undeclared - have come primarily from Asia: China, India, Pakistan and possibly North Korea.

The Middle East was dominated by a single nuclear power - Israel, which has refused to publicly declare its status.

But that domination has been threatened by Iran, which the Western powers say is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons, an assertion denied by the Iranians.

The nuclear threats from Israel and Iran have now triggered a potential competitor in Saudi Arabia, an oil-blessed Middle Eastern country which has enough riches to buy itself into nuclear capability.

Speaking at a security forum in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on December 5, 2011, Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi ambassador to the United States, warned that nuclear threats from Israel and Iran may force Saudi Arabia to follow suit.

"It is our duty toward our nation and people to consider all possible options, including the possession of these weapons," he was quoted as saying.

Prince Turki's comments have taken added significance in the context of a long-outstanding international conference on a nuclear weapons- free zone in the Middle East, scheduled to take place in Finland next year.

The world's five declared nuclear weapons states, under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), are the five veto- wielding permanent members of the U.N. Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Jayantha Dhanapala, president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, told IPS, "At a time when the dominant view in the world is that we should progress towards a nuclear weapons-free world, threats to leave the NPT and become a nuclear-armed state because others have done so are not only retrogressive, but they are also atavistic and a violation of the principles of international humanitarian law and the tenets of all religions."

"We know that nuclear deterrence is a false doctrine and that the possession of nuclear weapons has not earned any nation more security than others," he pointed out.

The inaugural statement of the Asian Pacific Leaders Network for Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation (APLN) issued in Tokyo last month (November 2011) said, "So long as anyone has nuclear weapons there are others who will want them; so long as any nuclear weapons remain anywhere, they are bound one day to be used by design, mistake or miscalculation by state or non-state actors; and any such use will be catastrophic."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Five Point Plan and the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention is the only viable way forward to rid the world of the most inhumane weapon ever invented, said Dhanapala, a former U.N. under secretary-general for disarmament affairs. ➡



Picture: Nuclear threats from Israel and Iran have triggered a potential competitor in Saudi Arabia | Credit: U.S. Airforce



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Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal, told IPS it is not surprising to read Prince Turki's comments about the possibility that Saudi Arabia might seek to develop a nuclear weapons potential in the context of a regional arms race in the Middle East.

As long as Israel retained a monopoly on a nuclear weapons potential in the region, and declared that "it would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East", an uneasy calm was maintained in the realm of non-conventional weapons and strategy in the region, he said.

"However, if Iran will also gain a similar nuclear weapons potential, even if it follows Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity, a non-conventional arms race in the region is inevitable, creating a severe regional instability, with potentially catastrophic consequences that would reverberate far beyond the Middle East," said Schenker, the Middle East Security Group coordinator for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East.

This situation only serves to emphasise the importance of the forthcoming 2012 conference on a nuclear and mass destruction weapons free zone in the Middle East to be hosted by Finland, he added.

"Hopefully, if planned with wisdom and foresight, it will set in motion a process that will lead both to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, and an Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab comprehensive peace," Schenker declared.

Jonathan Granoff, president of the Global Security Institute, told IPS that proliferation tensions in the Middle East are symptoms of an inadequate focus on what must rapidly become the global common purpose of all nations - a universal, legally enforceable, non-discriminatory ban on nuclear weapons.

"The aspirations of Iran to be respected while not cooperating in strengthening the verification aspects of the non-proliferation regime, the new threats posed by Saudi Arabia, and the hazard of Israel's actual arsenal are not the cause of our unacceptably unstable nuclear dilemma," he said.

"As long as Russia and the United States trade in the currency of nuclear threats, the Middle East nuclear weapons challenge will hang over our heads," said Granoff, a senior advisor to the American Bar Association's Committee on Arms Control and Nuclear Security.

"Nuclear weapons must wake us all up to the realisation that new levels of common purpose and cooperation based on the rule of law is necessary for a secure future for all and everyone," said Granoff.

Shannon Kile, who heads the Nuclear Project at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IPS Prince Turki al-Faisal's comment that Saudi Arabia could consider pursuing a nuclear weapon option in the future should be seen, first and foremost, as an expression of the growing concern in Riyadh over the unresolved questions about alleged Iranian nuclear activities with military dimensions.

"It also reflects the mounting sense of frustration in many Arab capitals about the unwillingness of Israel, which is widely believed to have a nuclear weapon arsenal, to engage in discussions about creating a weapons of mass destruction-free (WMD) zone in the Middle East," he said.

Although Prince Turki was by no means saying that Saudi Arabia intends to pursue a nuclear weapons programme, said Kile, his comment underscores the urgency of resolving the outstanding questions about the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear programme and finding a formula to make tangible progress at the 2012 conference on the Middle East WMD-free zone.

"Otherwise, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states may feel compelled to reconsider their own formative security policy choices to join the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states," Kile warned. [IPS - December 9, 2011]



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Asian Leaders Campaign Against Nukes in Own Backyard

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A group of political, diplomatic and military leaders from the Asia-Pacific region - representing an area with the largest number of nuclear weapons states - is launching a campaign to help abolish the world's most destructive weapons, beginning in their own backyard.

The convenor of the group, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, said Monday, "The quest to eliminate nuclear weapons cannot begin to succeed without the determined engagement of policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region.

The largest number of declared and undeclared nuclear powers is in Asia: China, India, Pakistan and possibly North Korea.

"While nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented, they can and must be outlawed, as chemical and biological weapons have been," said a statement released by the newly inaugurated Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN).

"We believe that we have a particular responsibility to work for change in the Asia Pacific region," said a joint statement from the group, which includes five former prime ministers and 10 former foreign and defence ministers.

The signatories include James Bolger, former prime minister of New Zealand; Malcolm Fraser, ex-prime minister of Australia; Yasuo Fukuda, former prime minister of Japan; and Geoffrey Palmer, ex-prime minister of New Zealand.

Focusing primarily on Asia, the statement says as the world's economic, political and security centres of gravity shift inexorably here, "our stake in a secure world order - and obligation to contribute with ideas, policy proposals and vision to that end - have grown commensurately".

What happens in the Asian region impacts every dimension of the global nuclear agenda.

"We have shown the way forward with nuclear weapons-free zones in the Treaties of Raratonga and Bangkok, but also have in South Asia and the Korean Peninsula - two of the world's most acute areas of nuclear tension."

John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS that Evans's initiative in forming ALPN comes at a crucial time.

He said there are indeed very serious challenges to be overcome in this key region, among them the Pakistan-India nuclear arms race and North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. "The region's growing reliance on nuclear power is another," he added.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States are now discussing ROK's desire, opposed by the U.S., to acquire its own capability to produce fuel for nuclear reactors, he pointed out.

Building such a capability would exacerbate the problems of denuclearising North Korea, he added. ➡



Image: Asian leaders are launching a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons, starting with their own countries.
Credit: U.S. Air Force photo/2nd Lt. Raymond Geoffroy



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ALPN's proposal for international or multinational control of nuclear fuel production may offer a partial solution. But ALPN shies away from the more fundamental solution of transitioning away from nuclear power, said Burroughs.

The APLN statement also said that existing nuclear arsenals amount to some 23,000 weapons, with a combined destructive capacity of 150,000 Hiroshima bombs, noting, "That nuclear peace has held since 1946 owes more to good luck than good stewardship."

In a today's world of multiple nuclear-armed states, significant regional tensions, command and control systems of varying sophistication, potentially destabilising new cyber technology and continuing development of more modern (including smaller and potentially more useable weapons), it cannot be assumed that such luck will continue, the statement warned.

Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director for Peace Affairs at the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International, told IPS it is clear that Asia has a critical role to play in achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

"I support the views expressed in the APLN statement on this point," he added. Shared efforts to reduce the perception of threat and build trust are crucial. To this end, he said, it is vital to open and maintain avenues of communication at all levels - diplomatic, academic, cultural and otherwise.

"Only patient, persistent efforts in this field can break down the walls of fear and mistrust that drive governments to seek and maintain nuclear weapons," said Terasaki, whose organisation has been leading an intense campaign for a nuclear weapons-free world.

He also said that multilayered efforts to build trust ultimately hold the key to achieving denuclearisation in South and Northeast Asia. Besides Asia, the Middle East has been dominated by a single nuclear power: Israel, which has refused to publicly declare its status.

But that domination has been threatened by Iran, which Western powers say is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons, an assertion denied by the Iranians.

The world's five declared nuclear weapons states, under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), are the five veto-wielding permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Burroughs told IPS the formation of ALPN also is a welcome boost to the global nuclear disarmament enterprise, which has faltered since New START, the modest U.S.-Russian nuclear arms reduction agreement of 2010.

ALPN says that the use of indiscriminately inhumane nuclear weapons is an affront to every fundamental principle of international humanitarian law.

"While the ALPN stops short of advocating commencement of negotiations on a global ban on nuclear weapons, it does call for developing the elements of the Nuclear Weapons Convention supported by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon," said Burroughs.

Terasaki told IPS that in Northeast Asia, local governments, such as of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as peace, faith-based and citizens' organisations are all engaged in activities based on their particular strengths and concerns.

The shared strength of all these actors is that they have the potential to look beyond national horizons and to represent the concerns of ordinary citizens, with varying degrees of independence from official stances and national policies, he said.

In Northeast Asia, cross-border communication and collaboration among such movements are growing, with the potential to help unlock long-standing diplomatic stalemates.

"I have to believe that similar or even greater potential exists among the civil societies movements of South Asia," he declared. [IPS - December 12, 2011]



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Red Cross Movement Wants Nukes Abolished

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY (IDN) - Even as Australia's ruling Labour revoked early December its long standing party policy banning uranium sales to India and Pakistan was swift to stake its claim too, the disarmament movement received a boost with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adopting a resolution to work towards a legally binding global convention on nuclear abolition.



The Australian Red Cross (ARC) had worked with the Japanese and Norwegian Red Cross to draft the resolution early 2011, which was passed in Geneva on November 26. The decision to support the initiative was taken by the Council of Delegates of the Movement comprising representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the 187 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and the International Federation.

"We were overwhelmed by our colleagues in a range of countries from Iran, Jordan and Lebanon to Mozambique, Malaysia and Samoa amongst others, who co-sponsored and supported the Red Cross Movement's resolution to urge governments to never use these horrible weapons again. It shows that the resolution has traction and there is a global sense that the Red Cross Movement needs to speak out on this vital issue of nuclear abolition," ARC's Head of International Law and Principles, Dr Helen Durham, told IDN.

The historic resolution appeals to all states to "pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination, negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement."

A record number of states had called for work to begin on a Nuclear Weapons Convention at the May 2010 review conference of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in New York. The resolution is of critical importance as it challenges the legitimacy of nuclear weapons ever being used as a weapon of war because of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences, in particular on civilian populations, and the threat to the environment and world food production.

Humanitarian imperatives

"There are real legal and humanitarian imperatives for the world to work in a more focused way on nuclear disarmament. The proliferation of these weapons in an increasing number of countries and the threat of other groups gaining capacity to use nuclear weapons should be a wake-up call to the world. The Red Cross will be carrying the message to governments and the wider community," said Dr Durham.

On August 6 (Hiroshima Day) 2011, the ARC had launched the 'Target Nuclear Weapons' campaign calling for the use of nuclear weapons to be made illegal. It asked 'Baby Boomers' to reconnect with the cause that defined a generation in the 1960s and 1970s, and called for a whole new generation to get involved. The campaign has reached over 565,000 people and counting through Facebook posts and tweets.

Today there are at least 20,000 nuclear weapons worldwide, around 3,000 of them on launch-ready alert. The potential power of these would roughly equate to 150,000 Hiroshima bombs.

"If we can achieve treaties to control the use of landmines and cluster munitions then we cannot turn our backs on the need to get agreement on a global convention to outlaw this evil weapon forever," said Australian Red Cross CEO, Robert Tickner. The ARC is working towards deriving bi-partisan support in Australia for a convention to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. ➡

Picture: The Australian Red Cross campaign reached more than 565,000 people through social media. | Australian Red Cross



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Since 1945, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have consistently voiced deep concerns about these weapons of mass destruction and the need for the prohibition of their use. Its role in developing the International Humanitarian Law led to the creation of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, the universal rules of war, in 1977. As many as 194 nations of the world, including Australia, have ratified the four Geneva Conventions.

While Australia doesn't have any nuclear weapons, it does have arrangements in place in relation to defence with the US in which the supposed protection afforded by US nuclear weapons is seen as key to Australia's national security. It also has almost 40 per cent of the world's known uranium reserves and supplies 19 per cent of the world market. Canberra has forecast uranium exports to rise from around 10,000 tonnes a year to 14,000 tonnes in 2014, worth around A\$1.7 billion. Australia currently exports uranium to China, Japan, Taiwan and the United States.

As Dr Tilman Ruff, Chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia, told IDN, "ICAN focuses on issues that are related to weapons and proliferation and there are clearly substantial connections to nuclear power as the starting fuel and basic processes are the same. Any country that can enrich uranium to reactor grade to use for nuclear power generation also has everything it would need to enrich the uranium little bit further to weapons grade, and that is why there is so much concern about Iran's nuclear programme. And any country that has a nuclear reactor could extract plutonium from used reactor fuel and use that to build a nuclear weapon."

"From ICAN's perspective our principal role in relation to nuclear power generation is to draw attention to the fact that the starting material is the same and the effects of radiation are completely indiscriminate and identical whether it is radiation from a nuclear reactor or a nuclear bomb and to highlight that it is simply not possible to continue business as usual on the nuclear power side. It will not be possible to abolish nuclear weapons while there are no constraints on countries enriching uranium or extracting plutonium from spent reactor fuel." Dr Ruff added.

Advocates for a nuclear-free world argue that there are problems with all uranium exports, even if there are safeguards agreements in place with the countries receiving uranium, as there is always a risk that it will be used in weapons. Even if it isn't used in weapons, it will be freeing up domestic reserves of uranium for that purpose. New analysis by Washington-based independent research organisation, Worldwatch Institute, indicates that countries are turning to other energy sources as a result of high costs of nuclear electricity production, low demand, lower natural gas prices and concerns about health and safety since Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster.

Despite reaching record levels of 375.5 gigawatts (GW) in 2010, global installed nuclear capacity – the potential power generation from all existing plants – declined to 366.5 (GW) in 2011, according to the Institute's latest Vital Signs Online (VSO) report. In what was a passionate and at times heated debate on Prime Minister Julia Gillard's motion to allow uranium exports to India, nine delegates spoke against the motion, receiving standing ovation, while seven delegates spoke in favour amidst jeers from those opposed to uranium mining and exports.

Until now the ALP (Australian Labour Party) policy had allowed uranium exports only to countries that have signed the NPT. The Prime Minister's motion was endorsed by delegates with a thin margin of just 21 votes (206 voted in favour and 185 against), revealing deep dissensions even amongst ministers in the Gillard Government on the issue. Speaking at the 46th ALP national conference in Sydney on December 4, Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Anthony Albanese said, "Until we have resolved the issues of nuclear proliferation and nuclear waste, we should not change our platform to further expand our commitment to the nuclear fuel cycle."

Although construction on 16 new reactors began in 2010, the highest number in over two decades, that number fell to just two in 2011, with India and Pakistan each starting construction on a plant. In addition to this dramatically slowed rate of construction, the first 10 months of 2011 saw the closing of 13 nuclear reactors, reducing the total number of reactors in operation around the world from 441 at the beginning of the year to 433, according to the VSO report.

Together, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and South Korea have contributed around 5 GW of new installed capacity since the beginning of 2010. During this same period, nearly 11.5 GW of installed capacity has been shut down in France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. [IDN-InDepthNews – December 10, 2011]



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Translations | Adaptations

Most Israelis Favour a Nuclear-Free Middle East, Poll Shows

DUTCH

<http://www.ipsnews.be/artikel/meeste-israelis-willen-kernwapenvrij-midden-oosten>

GERMAN

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=564:mehrheit-der-israelis&catid=5:german&Itemid=6

JAPANESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=566:most-israelis&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=567:pdf&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

SWEDISH

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=572:klar-majoritet-i-israel-vill-ha-ett-kaernvapenfritt-mellanoestern&catid=11:norwegian-swedish&Itemid=12

TURKISH

<http://ipsinternational.org/tr/news.asp?idnews=133>

India Set to Take Lead on Abolishing Nukes

CHINESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=576:india-set-to-take-lead&catid=14:chinese-hindi-urdu-persian&Itemid=15

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=577:pdf&catid=14:chinese-hindi-urdu-persian&Itemid=15

GERMAN

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=582:indien-atomwaffenfreie-welt&catid=5:german&Itemid=6

HINDI

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JAPANESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=578:india-set-to-take-lead&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=579:pdf&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

URDU

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=569:india-set-to-take-lead&catid=14:chinese-hindi-urdu-persian&Itemid=15

Stepping Towards Nuclear-Free Middle East

ARABIC

<http://www.ipsinternational.org/arabic/nota.asp?idnews=2355>

JAPANESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=574:stepping-towards&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

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Saudi Warning Could Escalate Nuclear Arms Race

ARABIC

<http://www.ipsinternational.org/arabic/nota.asp?idnews=2359>

GERMAN

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JAPANESE

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http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=584:pdf&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

Asian Leaders Campaign Against Nukes in Own Backyard

ARABIC

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GERMAN

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=599:asien-atomwaffenfrei&catid=5:german&Itemid=6

JAPANESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=587:asian-leaders&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

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Red Cross Movement Wants Nukes Abolished

ARABIC

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=601:red-cross&catid=3:arabic&Itemid=4

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=602:pdf&catid=3:arabic&Itemid=4

CHINESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=593:red-cross-movement-wants-nukes-abolished-japanese&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

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GERMAN

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=597:rueckenwind-fuer-atomwaffengegner-durch-rot-kreuz-bewegung&catid=5:german&Itemid=6

JAPANESE

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=587:asian-leaders&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=596:pdf&catid=2:japanese-korean&Itemid=3

TURKISH

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=585:kzl-hac-hareketi-nuekleer-kar&catid=4:turkish&Itemid=5



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What Others Say

Multiple Actions Planned for Nuke Abolition

By Jamshed Baruah

BERLIN (IDN) - A series of events are slated for the first half of 2012 in Asia, Europe and the United States to raise awareness for a world free of atomic power plants and nuclear weapons of mass destruction, according to data compiled by Abolition 2000 – the Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons.



The first in the series is a Global Conference for a Nuclear Power Free World in Yokohama, Japan on January 14-15. The conference is co-sponsored by Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, Friends of the Earth (FoE) Japan, Green Action, Greenpeace Japan, Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies and Peace Boat.

The organisers expect it to "create a venue for people from all around the world to gather in Japan and respond to the reality of Fukushima" and "bring together the voices of people who suffer from radiation exposure all around the world, whether by nuclear power or nuclear weapons to learn from each other's experiences" in workshops on:

- Fukushima: Raising common global awareness about what is happening in Fukushima
- Renewable Energy: Developing alternative sources of renewable energy is realistic and possible
- Safe Withdrawal from Nuclear Power: Draw realistic scenarios for complete withdrawal from nuclear power
- Global Hibakusha: Realizing the harmful effects of radiation and working towards solutions for people suffering from them.

Some five weeks later, the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space will hold its annual meeting February 24-26 on Jeju Island, South Korea, preceded by a mini conference and protest in Hawaii from February 18 to 22.

The importance of the venue is underlined by the fact that Gangjeong village on Jeju Island is in the midst of a tragic fight with the Navy to stop the construction of a base that will port Aegis destroyers, outfitted with "missile defense" (MD) systems, and aircraft carriers. These Aegis MD systems are being tested at the Pentagon's Barking Sands Pacific Missile Defense testing facility on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, says Network Coordinator Bruce Gagnon.

March 1, 2012 is Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day ('Bikini' Day) which marks the anniversary of the US 'Bravo' nuclear bomb detonation at Bikini Atoll in 1954. The explosion gouged out a crater more than 200 feet deep and a mile across, melting huge quantities of coral which were sucked up into the atmosphere together with vast volumes of seawater. The resulting fallout caused widespread contamination in the Pacific.

Powdery particles of radioactive fallout landed 100 miles away on the island of Rongelap to a depth of one and a half inches in places, and radioactive mist appeared 300 miles away on Utirik. Radiation levels in the inhabited atolls of Rongerik, Ujelang and Likiep also rose dramatically.

The US navy did not send ships to evacuate the people of Rongelap and Utirik until three days after the explosion. The people in the Marshall Islands, and elsewhere in the Pacific, were used as human guinea pigs in an obscene racist experiment to 'progress' the insane pursuit of nuclear weapons supremacy.

That's why for organisers of the event – Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and Abolition 2000 Indigenous peoples working group – March 1 is a day to celebrate the strength and endurance of indigenous Pacific peoples who have maintained and taken back control of their lives, languages and lands to ensure the ways of living and being which were handed down from their ancestors are passed on to future generations. ➔

Image: A nuclear weapon test by the US military at Bikini Atoll, Micronesia, on July 25, 1946. | Credit: Wikimedia Commons



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What Others Say

In solidarity with the Japanese people, suffering from the Fukushima disaster Human Chain Against Chain Reactions is organizing chains of people to demonstrate at nuclear power plants and related facilities on March 11, 2012. The actions will call for an end to nuclear power and a transition to clean, safe renewable energy, says Alice Slater.

To facilitate dialogue and build political momentum in support of the 2012 Conference on Establishing a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Horizon 2012 - Sailing in the Same Boat Toward a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East is scheduled for March 23-27. It is a joint effort of Peace Boat, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

Horizon 2012 combines land-based conferences with meetings on board the Peace Boat as it sails through the Mediterranean. The first Global Strategy Meeting of Horizon 2012's Advisory Group was held on board Peace Boat in March 2011, and included civil society representatives from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, India, the US, Japan and several EU countries, as well as UN representatives, parliamentarians, former military officials, international disarmament experts and Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Other events will include a conference in Civitavecchia/Roma, Italy on March 23-24, an onboard meeting as the Peace Boat sails to Piraeus/Athens, Greece, from March 24-27, and a press conference and upon disembarkation in Greece on March 27.

At the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington hosted by President Barack Obama, world leaders agreed to hold a second Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul in March 2012. The goals of the summits are on the very limited scope governments give to the term 'nuclear security', that is, "to come to a common understanding of the threat posed by nuclear terrorism, to agree to effective measures to secure nuclear material, and to prevent nuclear smuggling and terrorism." This includes "...the security of nuclear materials, leaving other broad topics such as nonproliferation, disarmament, and peaceful nuclear energy to different forums."

Knowledgeable sources say that the second Summit in South Korea on March 26-27 is likely to draw public and media attention – and perhaps of some participating governments too – on the regional issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program as well as on nuclear safety in light of the Fukushima catastrophe. In fact, NGOs could go further and use the media and political attention surrounding the Summit to advance nuclear weapons abolition and the phase-out of nuclear energy as the only realistic options for real security from nuclear risks.

The first NPT Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference will meet April 30-May 11, 2012 in Vienna, Austria. It will be the first conference of State Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) since they agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to a number of significant non-proliferation and disarmament measures. The Prep Com will be an important occasion to shine a spotlight on the agreements and build political momentum for their implementation.

Reaching Critical Will, in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, is producing three monitoring reports on the implementation of the 2010 NPT action plan. The first report, on "peaceful uses of nuclear energy," is available as of June 2011. The second report, on "non-proliferation", is available as of October 2011. The third report, on "nuclear disarmament", will be released in early 2012. An overview is available with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs.

Ahead of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) summit meeting in Chicago, May 20-21, peace and justice activists will gather at a counter summit on May 18-19 to voice a new vision of global security and peace. It will focus on retiring NATO and building a more peaceful, economically secure and environmentally sustainable world. War Resisters International says: "From Yugoslavia to Afghanistan and Libya the US has used NATO to enhance and extend its military, economic and political aims that ensure US and European dominance of the resources, markets and labor of the Global South. It has spread the cost of these adventures to its NATO partners."

Meanwhile, the Network for a NATO-Free World: Global Peace and Justice has released a Call to Action: Retire NATO, Create Jobs & Fund Peace, demanding complete withdrawal of all US and NATO troops from Afghanistan, withdrawal of all foreign deployed US troops, bases, nuclear weapons and "missile defenses," substantial reductions in the US and NATO military spending to fund communities and to meet human needs. [IDN-InDepthNews – December 24, 2011]



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What Others Say

Middle East Instability Increases Proliferation Threat, Former U.S. Official Says

By Lee Michael Katz

Special to Global Security Newswire

Photo: GSN | AP | Donald Stampfli ►

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23, 2011 -- Expanding instability in the Middle East is a matter “we ought to be watching with some concern” for the possible proliferation of biological or chemical weapons, according to a former top U.S. official who worked on containing these threats.

“That’s a part of the world in which all kinds of things can happen,” said Donald Mahley, an arms control veteran who served as U.S. special negotiator for chemical and biological arms control issues, “some with ... zealotry that defies all logic.”

Mahley noted that numerous Mideast nations are not bound by the Biological and Chemical weapons conventions. His comments to Global Security Newswire come amid the Assad regime’s continued struggle to stay in power in Syria and recent revelations about undeclared chemical weapons in Libya.

Syria’s extensive chemical arsenal is believed to comprise hundreds of tons of nerve and blister agents. There have been concerns from outside that the ongoing internal strife in the nation might open the door for those materials to be put to use or acquired by violent extremists.

Asked about Syria’s potential use of chemical weapons, Mahley replied, “With all of the Middle Eastern countries, you have a lot of irrational programs that have gone on for a long time.”

Mahley said Libya “doesn’t know exactly which [political] faction is going to come out on top” following the ouster and death of longtime dictator Muammar Qadhafi. He said, though, that the transitional government was cooperative in reporting newly discovered chemical weapons stockpiles.

Although he was in charge of U.S. efforts to dismantle Libya’s WMD programs in 2004, Mahley was never told of these chemical weapons in the aftermath of Qadhafi’s seeming decision the previous year to give up all of his nuclear, chemical and biological ambitions. The regime in Tripoli at that time declared only roughly 25 metric tons of mustard blister agent and a large stock of precursor materials.

Mahley revealed that he only had a dozen U.S. and British inspectors to cover all of Libya’s WMD programs on the ground. The team had no “mandate” or “resources” to make random, surprise inspections that could have discovered the undeclared chemical weapons, Mahley noted. The team’s transportation was provided by the Libyan regime.

Mahley has long experience in dealing with weapons of mass destruction, from serving as a nuclear weapons officer in the Army to being a key U.S. figure in establishing the Chemical Weapons Convention. His diplomatic roles have included serving as U.S. representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons from 1997 to 2002 and as deputy assistant secretary of State for threat reduction, export controls and negotiations from 2004 until his retirement in 2008.

In the lengthy interview, Mahley discussed the ability of North Korea and many other nations to produce biological weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the new challenges facing its enforcement body. ➔





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What Others Say

In the edited excerpts below, Mahley, who emphasized he is only expressing his personal views, also spoke of how easily terrorists could make biological weapons.

Q: What did you think about the decision at the recent Chemical Weapons Convention member states' meeting in resolving the issue of the April 2012 chemical weapons disposal deadline violations by the U.S., Russia, and Libya, without any penalties? (see GSN, Dec. 1).

Mahley: Look, the only one who's really concerned about trying to make a major point of this are the Iranians. Everybody else understands this is essentially a question of trying to keep what's already under control, under control until you can get through the technical issues of getting it destroyed.

Q: Iran points out it had chemical weapons used against it.

Mahley: Iran's skirts are not clean with respect to chemical weapons either. The United States for a long time has had a very strong suspicion about undeclared chemical weapons capability in Iran. And we are going to continue to have that suspicion as time goes forward.

Q: Is there danger in Libya's new discovery of undeclared chemical weapons material?

Mahley: Do we worry about the idea that in Libya, now that you no longer have a repressive government, there may be a question that the weapons out there might be of greater access to terrorists? Yeah, you do. On the other hand, the new government has been very straightforward in saying, "Oops, we think we've got some stuff here, and we're certainly going to declare it to the OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons]."

It becomes a security issue in trying to make sure you do everything you can to help the Libyans make those storage areas secure. For example, in the Libyan declared stockpile, when we went in in 2004, that chemical agent, it wasn't weaponized, but the agent itself was stored in warehouses in the suburbs of Tripoli with a simple padlock on the door. And we said, "Uh-oh!" So, we got them to relocate that stuff to a secure military ammunition depot with a real bunker and real military security around it.

One of the good things about Libya is that it's not a highly populated, urban country. So, the idea that you're going to be able to pull a snatch and run to hijack these things and then get them off into areas where you couldn't track them down very quickly is a little remote.

Am I concerned that those particular weapons are suddenly going to become a top priority for al-Qaeda or even Hezbollah? The answer is no. The Libyans never mastered the idea of making nerve agent. I doubt other places are going to sell them their front-line VX or anything like that. [The undeclared stocks are] most likely mustard [blister agent], and if they're 20 years old and been sitting around in the desert, it's not going to mean this is the most lethal chemical agent that you could ever think of.

Q: In a turbulent nation like Libya, are you worried about the material falling into the wrong hands?

Mahley: Certainly a country that's as turbulent as Libya and is struggling now to find a stable government and doesn't know exactly which faction is going to come out on top in their own sudden political struggle -- something they haven't had to worry about in 40 years -- I don't think that's as stable as we would like it.

Q: You were in charge of the U.S. effort to inspect Libya's chemical weapons on the ground. Do you feel the Qadhafi regime was honest with you?

Mahley: Well, if they had other chemical weapons they didn't tell us about, the answer is obviously no, they weren't. At the time, did I have any reason to suspect that they were trying to do an evade and escape? The answer is no. Our intelligence had uncovered [Libya's chemical weapons efforts]. ➔



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The amount of equipment, the amount of time, the amount of precursor material they had was consistent with the amount of mustard that they had, and so therefore, there were no big unaccounted-for gaps in the books. So, from all of that, along with the attitude that the Libyans displayed in terms of how cooperative they were in answering our questions at the time, did I have any reason to think that there was a big program they were hiding? No, I didn't.

Now, at the same time, did I have enough people or, frankly, a mandate to just go wandering around the Libyan countryside saying, "Hmm, what's that building over there? That looks like it's something that might be interesting. Let's go over and see what's stashed inside of that." No, I didn't have that.

The size of the team was very limited. The transportation was provided by the Libyan government, so if we had wanted to just take a car and drive around the countryside, we wouldn't have been able to do that. Unless we had wanted to go in confrontationally to the Libyan government, there wasn't any way to expand the scope beyond what we were doing.

The other thing is that there was a somewhat greater emphasis in that exercise about wanting to make sure that their nuclear program not only got stopped, but that we were able to document the connection between that program and the A.Q. Khan network.

Q: How did your inspections compare to the U.N. inspections in Iraq that followed the first Gulf War.

Mahley: The mandate we had was much less punitive and much less comprehensive than the mandate [U.N. inspection regimes] had in Iraq. ... I've never actually counted up the amount of manpower that was used in the [U.N. Special Commission] inspections, but it was a hell of a lot. Essentially the same or maybe even more manpower than the entire OPCW has for a global mandate, and certainly more than the 12 people that I had for the mandate in Libya.

Let me make sure that we underpin this with the appropriate caveat. Given the level of cooperation that the Libyan government was demonstrating, and given the intelligence information I had in terms of what did I suspect I needed to go try to find out, I had no reason to think that I needed to have rights to go out and wander around and poke my nose in anyplace in Libya that I wanted to go. But had I thought that, I would then not have had the resources to do it.

Q: How many of the 12 people the U.S. and British government gave you were chemical weapons scientists or inspectors?

Mahley: Two. I mean, two chemists.

Q: And any biological weapons experts?

Mahley: I was a biological weapons expert. And in terms of nuclear, we had, I think, three that amounted to nuclear physicists. ... Now, don't denigrate that in the sense that we had a lot of people that had a lot of inspection experience and a lot of verification experience. But in terms of chemists and physicists, that was about the extent of it. Do I wish I had some more people? No. It would have made the entire thing an enormously more complicated decision matrix in terms of what are you going to do. It is unlikely at any extreme that I would have had enough people to canvass the country and therefore potentially to find these undeclared stocks wherever they were sitting. And certainly not that I would have been able to get there to keep the Libyans from moving them.

Q: The OPCW is the monitoring body for the Chemical Weapons Convention. What should be the focus of OPCW as member nations complete elimination of their chemical stockpiles?

Mahley: The OPCW has a different problem in front of it, because they're now going to have to shift to become more of a nonproliferation organization, where before they've spent most of their manpower in the verification bureau looking at chemical weapons destruction.

Well, chemical weapons destruction, even though it's not finished, is going to [fall] right off the cliff in terms of level and breadth of activity very quickly next year because we're going to be down to a couple sites, the Russians a couple sites, the Libyans may have a site going -- and that's about it. ➡



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So they're going to have to talk about how do we now think about finding a clandestine chemical weapons program that's going to become our raison d'etre. That's a different skill set.

Q: Do you think they're going to be able to do that with the budget size or staff they have currently?

Mahley: And the kinds of expertise they have. I think it's going to be very questionable. ...That's where the challenge inspection came in. A challenge inspection is a request by any country to the OPCW to inspect a specific location regarding the chemical weapons treaty.

Q: Do you have full confidence in the organization since there's never been a challenge inspection?

Mahley: Do I have full confidence that the OPCW is guaranteed to keep the world safe from a chemical weapons program? No, I don't have full confidence in that. Do I believe the OPCW is a very good instrument to have for a number of things that it does and things that make having a chemical weapons program more expensive, more complicated, and more difficult? The answer to that is yes.

Q: How have environmental concerns affected the destruction of U.S. chemical weapons?

Mahley: One of the things I regret about the United States's destruction program is that, during the middle of the 1990s, we paused in the program when we'd already done a great deal of work to make things environmentally safe as best we could. But suddenly we decided we wanted to try to find the perfect environmental solution. And so, we actually kept ourselves out of the destruction program for about three or four years while we sought to do studies that would suddenly find this magic bullet. We never did.

We're now back to doing it about the same way we were doing it before. And all that did was cost us time and money and not get things done.

Q: There are new reports the U.S. is watching Syria's chemical weapons stockpile. Should the world be nervous that strongman Bashar Assad could use them against his own people?

Mahley: With all of the Middle Eastern countries, you have a lot of irrational programs that have gone on for a long time. And certainly, I think this is one of the things that we ought to be watching with some concern, and I'm sure we are watching with some concern, as suddenly stability starts to disappear in those countries.

... Am I worried about the fact that we've got a bunch of Middle Eastern countries that aren't part of the Biological Weapons Convention? Oh, yeah, because that's a part of the world in which all kinds of things can happen, some with ... zealotry that defies all logic.

Q: The U.S. opposes a verification protocol to the BWC. Do you think there should be one? (see related GSN story, today).

Mahley: The answer is absolutely no. You put a verification protocol in, and all of a sudden, you have established what it is countries have to do to remove themselves from suspicion of having a biological weapons program.

Now, I don't think there's any reasonable doubt that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program. Common sense says that's true. But the international community will not come to that judgment. Translate that into the Biological Weapons Convention, that means you can have all kinds of inferential evidence a country has a biological weapons program, and unless you actually catch them with literally a biological weapon loaded and ready to use, nobody's ever going to take the step of saying, "we've now got to punish these people for having a biological weapons program."

Given the inherently dual nature of biological weapons work ... if you technically want to talk about what could be used to produce a biological weapon, you're going to have to include almost every advanced country in the world. ➔



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Q: Are you worried about reports that North Korea, an unstable regime, is producing anthrax? And it's undergoing a transition of its own right now (see related GSN story, today).

Mahley: Would I prefer to have a stable regime that wasn't thinking about doing that kind of thing? Yes, I really would. Does the very fact that somebody says, "Oh, my God, we know that they've stockpiled tons of anthrax," does that particularly worry me? No.

I have no reason to believe that they could not produce in 30 days as much as they would need for any biological weapons attack they ever might want to launch, anyway. Why have it just hanging around, getting old, and potentially a storage problem to try to keep it effective?

The idea that they've got a stockpile of it, I really don't really believe they do. Because I don't believe they're quite that stupid. I realize "North Korea is not stupid" is perhaps an oxymoron, but I don't.

Q: So, the chilling bottom line is that, despite the Biological Weapons Convention, there really is no way to deter a nation from easily making biological weapons?

Mahley: Right. There is no prevention that puts a physical barrier against a country having that capability. If you can produce a vaccine for mass inoculation of your population against endemic diseases, you can probably produce biological weapons.

Now, as we discovered when we had a biological weapons program, producing a dangerous pathogen and making that dangerous pathogen into a distributable biological weapon is an engineering problem which is not necessarily trivial.

But particularly if you're willing to say it doesn't have to be horribly effective, if it's 25 percent effective, that's fine, do I think that you've got a whole bunch of people that can have a biological weapons program? Oh, you better believe it!

Q: What deterred Qadhafi from using his chemical weapons and what would prevent North Korea from using biological weapons in the future?

Mahley: Unless you are confident that there isn't going to be anybody left that's going to be able to do anything to you, that's the thing. When you get small regimes like Libya or if North Korea had biological weapons and they were enormously successful in using them, what's the extent of what they might do? Well, they might actually kill 100,000 people in the United States, they could kill a couple hundred thousand people in Japan, kill 400,000 or 500,000 people in South Korea, all of which is horrible, horrific.

But it doesn't mean that North Korea is sitting on top of the world. There's a lot of retribution going to come their way real quick.

Q: We've seen anthrax deaths here in the United States. How easy is it for terrorists to make biological weapons?

Mahley: Practically any terrorist group that's worth the title "terrorist group" can get their hands on dangerous pathogens.

Q: Secretary of State Clinton just said at the BWC review conference, how easily weapons could be to make with college-level chemistry and biology. She noted an al-Qaeda call for "brothers with degrees in microbiology or chemistry to develop a weapon of mass destruction." What could be the consequence of biological weapons attack?

Mahley: The first thing that's going to happen, if they ever get around to it, is that it matters less the number of people they kill, as the panic that they cause. And the U.S. reaction to the October, 2001 anthrax episode is a classic example of that. It killed five people, and I'm very sorry for the five people ... but it shut down the United States Senate for about two months and disrupted postal delivery in the Washington area for a whole bunch of time.

About every six months, I go out to Fort Leonard Wood to the Joint Senior Leadership Conference. There's a bunch of military and reserve people who are first responders. We're worried about weapons of mass destruction responses. And I always tell them -- the way you deter that is you make the impact of a localized biological weapons attack by a terrorist much less effective.

I keep telling these first responders if we could sustain an anthrax attack that made 1,000 people sick at a Super Bowl by simply being able to surge the medical response, the triage, isolation, quarantine and the treatment to where it never got beyond that. And most of those 1,000 people recovered. We could go on about our regular business in the rest of the country regardless. That is the one element that has the chance of deterring a terrorist.

Because what he does is, he looks at that and says, "I spent all this time and all this effort, and I make myself out to be a really, really bad, bad guy by doing a biological weapons attack, and they shrug it off and go on with their business. And it's not worth it." ☑



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Civil Society Perspective

MoD Softens Under Pressure on Trident

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament welcomed on December 9 the Ministry of Defence's admission that it may yet publish findings from the Trident Alternatives Review. The MoD also confirmed that spending commitments now totalling £6 billion will not be used to influence the parliamentary decision due on Trident replacement in 2016.

The Government has been under increasing pressure over its attempts to bury the Trident Alternatives Review. Defence Secretary Philip Hammond stated recently that there were 'no plans' to make the Lib Dem-led review into alternatives to Trident replacement public. But December 7 debate on Trident revealed a softening of the MoD's position on the report. Junior Defence Minister Peter Luff stated that although the MoD would 'not be able to publish the study itself' on "national security" grounds, "no decisions have yet been taken about what it might be possible to say".

The Government has also faced fierce criticism over its commitment to spend a total of £6bn on both the submarines, prior to the construction decision in 2016, and on nuclear weapons facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in Aldermaston. Peter Luff claimed, however, that 'nothing that we are doing will prevent us from being able to make the right decision in 2016.'

CND General Secretary, Kate Hudson, said:

"These are small but significant developments for all of us worried about a lack of transparency and accountability over Trident replacement. Concerns have been expressed that so much money will have been spent up front that we will be presented with a fait accompli in 2016 – that we will have to go ahead because of the money already spent. But now Peter Luff has quite categorically reassured us that will not be the case. We welcome that.

"We also welcome the possibility – confirmed by the Minister – that some of the findings of the Trident Alternatives Review may be made public. Following concern that debate will be suppressed, it is good to know that the Government is responsive to public feedback. Given that this is our money being spent and our security that is being put at risk by government plans to replace Trident, we will continue to work for a full and transparent review of Britain's nuclear weapons possession."

Pressure from a cross-party range of MPs has also mounted, with Caroline Lucas (Green) describing the cost of replacing Trident as "eye-watering", while Liberal Democrat MP Tessa Munt called it a "ludicrous waste of money". Jeremy Corbyn MP (Labour) warned that the pressure must be maintained if the public want to avoid "sleepwalking" into "massive levels of expenditure".

[Source: www.cnduk.org/media/item/1305-mod-soften-under-pressure-on-trident | December 9]

Trident Spending Rising as Tories Suppress Debate, Says CND

CND expressed December 1 outrage at Government bad faith over Trident replacement. Answers given to two recent Parliamentary Questions show that:

MoD spending on Trident replacement – prior to the Main Gate Parliamentary decision point in 2016 – is actually £2 billion more than the previously reported almost £4 billion.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond has stated that the government has "no plans" to publish the Lib Dem-led 'Trident Alternatives Review'.

Kate Hudson, General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, has issued the following statement:

"The decision on whether or not to go ahead with Trident replacement is not due until 2016. But the MoD is behaving as if it has already been taken. This is an affront both to Members of Parliament who are due to make that decision and to the British people who deserve no less than an open and transparent debate on this issue. To spend ever increasing sums on a project which has not even been authorised is a shocking act of bad faith particularly at a time of such savage government spending cuts.

"The icing on the cake of Government bad faith is the news that the outcomes of the Lib Dem-led Trident Alternatives Review will not be published. This is suppression of debate, pure and simple. One is forced to conclude that the Government is afraid of the debate and fears it will be defeated if exposed to genuine discussion and review. By suppressing the debate and spending ahead of a decision, presumably the Government wishes to create a fait accompli of replacement, but this cannot be allowed to happen. CND calls for a full and transparent strategic review of Trident and UK nuclear weapons possession and an open public debate on our security needs. This is not an issue where democratic corners can be cut." [Source: www.cnduk.org/media/item/1302-trident-spending-rising-as-tories-suppress-debate-says-cnd | December 1] ☑

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SGI-IPS Project Director: Katsuhiko Asagiri, President IPS Japan, Tokyo

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