

## Scottish WILPF submission to UN nuclear disarmament talks

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### Open Ended Working Group: Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations, Geneva 2016



**Submission by Janet Fenton, Scottish branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK, a partner of ICAN UK.**

Panel III: Additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation.

"I would like to speak about the impact of the inherent democratic deficit of nuclear weapons, the impact of a gendered norms around how we consider arming and disarming and a little about how the risks posed by climate change and the need for human migration can affect the interrelationship between potential effects of a detonation and I will try to communicate a little of Scotland's unique perspective and suggest something of the kind of contribution that Scotland may be able to make.

30 years ago today, a hard rain fell on the misty mountains of Scotland. To this day, levels of radioactive Caesium 137 from Chernobyl are far higher in Scotland than England. Sheep from Scotland intended for market were still being tested for their radioactivity until as recently as 2010 as part of the aftermath of that disaster. Children, ages with my own children, came to Scotland for a couple of weeks each following year to gain some good food and fresh air. The Caesium figure is from Post-Chernobyl surveys in Great Britain by [The Institutional Repository of the Natural Environmental Research Centre](#).

Winding back to 1962, A group of Swiss women, of all ages and political persuasions, along with their children in prams were outside the Pregny gate just here holding a silent vigil, called We Have Had Enough. A flier for the event, and a picture of the women is in the archive of the Centre pour l'action non violente in Lausanne. The women were protesting the French underground nuclear test in the Algerian Sahara on 1st May 1962. The concrete cap sealing the weapon burst sending flames radioactive gas and dust into the atmosphere. Radiation was detected hundreds of

kilometres away and a hundred soldiers and officials were irradiated. The number of contaminated Algerians is unknown. The vigil organisers were women who were seeking the elimination of all nuclear weapons and an end to atomic testing. If they'd had enough in 1962 I can imagine that they might be experiencing significant distress at this stage.

Women have been active in protesting against nuclear weapons since their inception, but they aren't heard and the actions are forgotten. There is an issue in terms of the increased health risk for pregnant women and children I don't think that's why. This is an issue of gender. Being powerful, ready to go for the military and wield a weapon are the masculine behaviours adopted by men. The people who want to talk, put the weapons down, or abolish them altogether are seen as feminine, and the next step is that those behaviours are interpreted as weak, naive and unrealistic because of the assigned gender roles.

Last November, I was at Osaka University Peace and Gender Studies department and The 70 year Commemorative Nuclear Victims Forum in Hiroshima. John Hersey's account of the effects of the bomb used by the US Government at Hiroshima was my start point to join CND in my teens and I knew this was an appalling act of deliberate devastation and destruction that must never be repeated. In addition to the Hibakusha, I heard testimony from women evacuees from Fukushima and Korean victims of Hiroshima who were held there as prisoners until they became nuclear victims. I watched a film about Jadugoda, in north east India. The film depicts the Uranium Corporation of India, the people and the environment, and acts as a record of a tragedy for the tribal people of Jadugo.

Ordinary people experienced terrible and unacceptable effects of thermonuclear power in a democratic deficit that beggars belief in a modern world with technology that can put people on the moon and transplant the human heart. Nuclear weapon technology is mired in secrecy of a sinister sort. Every step in the development funding construction, deployment, transference, protection and transportation of nuclear weapons is conducted without the knowledge permission or acceptance of those who stand to become its victims including all of those who are victims without detonation, and all of those who will be held accountable because of their nationality, rather than their deeply held convictions as citizens. This last is a very bitter pill that brings no healing.

The UK's nuclear weapons are all in Scotland. Compelling and robust evidence that moving the UK weapons outside of Scotland is not congruent with what the Ministry of Defence name "continuous at sea deterrence" is in John Ainslie's **No Place for Trident** from Scottish CND.

Fully armed nuclear **warheads are transported** on a regular basis between Coulport near Glasgow to the south of England for maintenance, without any warning signage for road users.

Scotland is holding its Parliamentary election tomorrow, and whatever the divide

between parties, there will be no change at the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in the commitment to opposing Trident and supporting a global ban of nuclear weapons which is held by all leading parties. That Parliament will also maintain its much better gender balance than the Westminster one through proportional representation rather than the first past the post only system in the South and because the Scottish political parties are strongly committed. This may influence the UK's UNSEC COUNCIL RES 1325 NAP.

At the UK Parliament, Scotland sent 58 MPS to London to represent us and 57 of them support the same view, no to Trident and yes to the Humanitarian Pledge. The desire to make an international contribution to peace and real lasting human security is one that Scots aspire to, along with Faith leaders, the Scottish Trade Union Council and the Scottish independence movement, which is growing because it seems as though that is the only way to put that aspiration into practice. Another Scottish CND publication from John Ainslie, [Trident Shambles](#), based on Freedom of Information work, describes how a serious defect at the submarine prototype reactor has disrupted plans. There are shortages of key staff. The submarine is late and over budget. The Atomic Weapons Establishment is badly managed and staff shortages there are compounding the problems.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has opposed war as a means of conflict resolution and upheld women's human right to equal representation since its inception a hundred years ago. It called for the elimination of nuclear weapons even before the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament](#) was founded, advocated the establishment of the League of Nations and then United Nations and the UN first resolution commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Acceleration of climate change and the ongoing environmental degradation constitute profound challenges for our times. Both would be exacerbated by nuclear detonation, or by accidents and leakages of waste and the effect of climate change or environmental degradation could provide a trigger for deliberate or accidental detonation(s). Gendered perspectives which equate strength and effectiveness with military spending and dominance exclude women from authoritative social and political roles in addressing these threats reduce the effectiveness of women in infrastructures and negotiation.

The right to life carries greater validity than that of borders. A militarised response to movements of people creates rather than resolves conflict. Military expenditure is rising beyond the point at which governments can meet the basic needs of the people they represent. This has a devastating impact on the resources available to tackle climate change, a major cause of resource shortages and conflict. In addition to tackling the causes, it is increasingly urgent that energy and food can be produced locally to minimise the effect of shortages. This requires the elimination of the nuclear threat.

Returning to the final statement of the [Nuclear Victims Forum](#), I'll finish with an excerpt:

“We also reconfirmed that every stage of the nuclear chain contaminates the environment and damages the ecosystem, causing a wide array of radiation-related disorders in people and other living beings... adequate response to such a disaster is impossible. We further see that radioactive contamination is inevitably a global phenomenon. We know that “military” and “industrial” nuclear power are intimately connected...

“We call for the urgent conclusion of a legally binding international instrument which prohibits and provides for the elimination of nuclear weapons.”