

# ADVOCACY BRIEF

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## A GENDER LENS ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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### The Issue

Nuclear weapons pose grave threats to the security and well-being of all people, and the risks of nuclear exchange appear to be growing. In the face of threats and policies that are challenging our global safety and security, people are deeply concerned about nuclear weapons and are mobilizing and calling on their policymakers to move away from security paradigms that place nuclear weapons at the centre of policy. CFFP views the elimination of nuclear weapons as one of the most pressing social justice and security issues of this generation. The current moment of increased public awareness of nuclear risks represents an exceptional opportunity to call on public pressure and political will to drive change and make progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Feminist perspectives on nuclear issues contribute to diversifying the debate on nuclear weapons and challenges established power relations, as it seeks to expose and challenge the gendered identities, power relations, and symbolic systems on which nuclear politics relies.

### Background

There is a long history of anti-nuclear campaigns and activism, led and fought by women, from protest and physical blockades at nuclear bases, to decades of advocacy and campaigning leading up to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 being awarded the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. This has created a unique momentum on nuclear weapons that has empowered many governments, civil society, and international organisations. To push for further change we need to work to facilitate the promotion of progressive disarmament initiatives that ensure meaningful participation of those who have been most affected by the weapons and address the underrepresentation of women, indigenous peoples and lower income countries in multilateral disarmament forums. We must recognise the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation; be mindful of the gendered and racial impacts of nuclear weapons; and strengthen the voices of those who have experienced the devastating effects of nuclear weapons.

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## Key Points

- Nuclear politics is heavily imbued with gendered identities, hierarchies and symbols which intersect with class, race and sexuality.
- The United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bans the use, possession, development, testing, deployment and transfer of nuclear weapons under international law.
- Nuclear weapons affect women and men differently, both in terms of the biological effects of ionizing radiation, and the social, economic and psychological impacts.<sup>2</sup>

## Numbers and Figures

- Nuclear tests have been carried out at more than 60 locations worldwide, often on the lands of indigenous and minority peoples.<sup>3</sup>
- Women are significantly underrepresented in multilateral forums addressing disarmament: only about one quarter of participants are likely to be women and almost half of all delegations are likely to be composed entirely of men.<sup>4</sup>

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Engage with organisations and networks that work on nuclear issues, and use their resources to learn more about how the gender lens contributes a richer understanding of nuclear weapons policy. Here are some alternatives:

- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and International Law and Policy Institute of Norway (ILPI) have produced useful research on the gendered and humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons:

**'Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons: Shared Goals, Shared Concerns.'**

**'Gendered Impacts: The Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons from a Gender Perspective'.**

- Utilise and contribute to the British American Security Information Council's (BASIC) **crowdsourced bibliography on gender and nuclear weapons.**
- Reaching Critical Will - the disarmament programme for Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - have a **research program on gender and disarmament.**

## SOURCES

1. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, The History of CND. Available at: <http://www.cnduk.org/about/item/437>

2. UNIDIR and ILPI, 'Gender Development and Nuclear Weapons: Shared Concerns, Shared Goals'. Available at: <http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/gender-development-and-nuclear-weapons-en-659.pdf>

3. ICAN (2018) 'The Legacy of Nuclear Testing'. Available at: <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/catastrophic-harm/the-legacy-of-nuclear-testing/>

4. Article 36, 'Women and multilateral disarmament forums: patterns of underrepresentation'. Available at: <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf>