

Written by John Hallam

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PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NSW HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT Sydney

PSR REPORT SHOWS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT MORE THAN EVER A HUMAN SURVIVAL PRIORITY: GOVERNMENTS SHOULD ACT ACCORDINGLY

A report released on 10Dec by Dr Ira Helfand of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), the US affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War shows that the elimination of nuclear weapons is more than ever a human survival priority.

The report, entitled 'Two Billion At Risk' is available on:

<http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/two-billion-at-risk.pdf>

It's author, Dr Ira Helfand of PSR can be contacted on:
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According to the Human Survival Project's John Hallam and Prof. Peter King:
"Full credit goes to Ira Helfand and PSR for this vital report. We simply want to emphasise a few points that flow from reading it.

"The first is that the full count of humans at risk from famine induced by global cooling from the smoke of burning cities in a regional nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan has been doubled from one billion, in the report's first edition, to two billion. This alone ought to give governments pause, and redouble efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons."

"The second point is that massive crop losses in the US and China are well accounted for—but the report does not analyse losses elsewhere. The report suggests, for instance, crop losses of 10-20% over a 10 year period for rice in China, with a massive 40-50% loss for winter wheat in the first year and a 10 year average decline of 31%."

"These figures alone are staggering, but the report is erring on the optimistic side by not including further losses that would take place globally, notably here in Australia, and in Europe, South America, and Africa, as well as in India and Pakistan themselves, where agriculture will have largely ceased. The 'two billion at risk' figure if it is based solely on lost production in China and the US, could actually be overoptimistic."

The report covers a 'regional' nuclear war in South Asia, between India

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and Pakistan, using as its model not more than a total of 100 10-20 kiloton sized warheads. (Actual warhead numbers are close to double that.) Even then, it neglects the detail that the clouds of smoke which blot out the sun for a decade afterwards are incinerated South Asian cities and people.”

“More importantly, the report (deliberately, of course – that wasn't its mandate) does not consider the results of a major nuclear exchange between the US and Russia, who continue to aim over 2000 missiles with warheads of 150Kt-1Mt size at each other and maintain these missiles in a state in which they can be launched in less than a minute, necessitating lightning fast presidential decision-making with utterly apocalyptic implications. There have already been a disturbingly large number of occasions about which one can say that the world nearly ended, most notably 26 Sept, now recognised as International Nuclear Disarmament Day”

“The indications are that the accidental use of US and Russian on-alert arsenals will create the coldest conditions since the last ice-age for well over a decade. Under those conditions, the survival of humans as a species could well be problematic.”

“Finally it is well to note that as few as five large warheads exploded in space above continental landmasses could, through electromagnetic pulse, destroy or make inoperable all the infrastructure of high-tech society that we take for granted and cause the global financial system, for instance, to literally disappear.”

On 13-14 February 2014 in Nayarit, Mexico, a conference will be held on catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons use at which these issues will all be discussed. It's vital that governments come prepared to accept the apocalyptic nature of nuclear weapons use and the consequences of that, namely that nuclear weapons are an existential threat and need to disappear immediately.”

“It is clear that the Australian government, which will be at Nayarit, still needs to fully internalise the threat that nuclear weapons pose to humans as a species. It should adopt a proactive approach that not only engages the nuclear weapons states, but does so in a way that actively pushes them to abolition and global zero.”

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