

## DPRK Test Must Not Deflect Global Nuclear Disarmament

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 26 May 2009 10:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 24 June 2009 20:24

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The greatest danger from Mondays North Korean nuclear test is that it may lead those who were never keen on nuclear disarmament to use it as an excuse not to proceed down a path that is essential for the physical survival of civilisation and human beings. This must not be allowed to happen. Yet the test comes because the war in Korea has never officially ended and the DPRK is profoundly threatened. This dynamic must be changed.

According to nuclear disarmament lobbyist John Hallam, who has just returned from being part of the Australian delegation to the nuclear nonproliferation preparatory committee conference at the United Nations in New York, the North Korean nuclear test of Monday morning must be understood in the context of regional tensions in Korea that have not gone away. The Korean War is still not officially over. Each year, the US and South Korea still practice what to the DPRK, looks like an invasion. The dynamics of this must be fundamentally changed if there is to be progress in the Korean peninsula, and the test shows this in sharp relief.

Yet at the same time, the recent test, some 20 times more powerful than that of 2006, could throw a spanner in the entire process of global nuclear disarmament that unfolded at the May 4-15 NPT conference in the UN, initiating a cascade of proliferation in Japan and Taiwan and creating tension and instability in the entire area.

According to Mr Hallam:

"This is the paradox: On the one hand, the DPRK test, ill - advised and unhelpful as it undoubtedly is, is a result of existing tension in the Korean peninsula, and the fact that the DPRK feels itself to be under threat. On the other hand, that test increases tensions in that region and potentially throws a spanner in the whole nuclear disarmament process, possibly initiating further nuclear weapons development in either Japan or Taiwan. More fingers on more triggers means that the likelihood that by madness, malice, miscalculation or malfunction, nuclear weapons may actually be used. This has to be bad news for the whole planet."

"At the recent NPT meeting in UN Headquarters in New York, the will of the entire planet for nuclear disarmament was clear. The stakes could not be higher: The large - scale use of nuclear weapons would still be terminal for civilisation and possibly humans. The DPRK test must not be allowed to deflect the global will for a nuclear - weapons - free world, or used as an excuse not to progress toward one."

The DPRK should consider carefully if it wishes to go down a road that the rest of the world agrees is as profoundly unhelpful as it is possible to be. We call on them to display greater wisdom than that. The rest of the world must understand that sanctions, threats and pressure are likely only to reinforce the determination of the DPRK to go down precisely that road and that the dynamic of relations in the Korean peninsula must be fundamentally changed. The DPRK test must not be allowed to lead to further proliferation in east Asia, or to deflect the world from the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether."

John Hallam

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NUCLEAR FLASHPOINTS PROJECT

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### MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 25 May 2009

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia

[www.icanw.org](http://www.icanw.org)

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The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) this afternoon expressed grave concerns following reports of a nuclear test explosion in North Korea.

“Any nuclear testing is unacceptable and flies in the face of a long-standing international moratorium on testing of these most deadly of weapons,” stated Assoc Prof Tilman Ruff, Chair of ICAN Australia.

Assoc Prof Ruff was recently part of the Australian government delegation at the United Nations participating in the Preparatory Committee meetings around the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Two other ICAN Australia representatives, Dimity Hawkins and Dr Ruth Mitchell also attended the New York conference as non-government observers.

“It is time for the international community to raise the expectation of the USA and China to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and help bring this vital treaty into force. It is only through international agreements on measures such as the CTBT that we will see North Korea truly isolated and pressured into extinguishing their nuclear weapons programs,” stated Assoc Prof Tilman Ruff.

“Today's nuclear test by North Korea, while not wholly unexpected, seriously flies in the face of the international progress around issues of nuclear weapons disarmament and non-proliferation,” stated Dimity Hawkins, ICAN Australia Board Member. “Recent statements calling for a world free from nuclear weapons by US President Obama, the Russian President Medvedev and even our own Prime Minister Rudd were largely supported by the world community at the NPT negotiations at the United Nations in New York just this month. North Korea is seriously out of step with the world view on these weapons and is endangering progress towards this goal.”

In April, US President Obama said that his administration would “immediately and aggressively” seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which would effectively create a global ban on nuclear testing. The USA and China, both nuclear weapons states, have failed consistently to ratify this treaty, which requires their participation and that of several other non-nuclear nations to be brought into force. Obama in April described nuclear weapons as “the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War.”

“Unless there is serious progress towards abolishing nuclear weapons we can expect

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more nuclear tests and nuclear proliferation. The nine nuclear weapons states\* must make the stated goal of a world free from nuclear weapons a reality," concluded Assoc Prof Tilman Ruff. "Our government should condemn North Korea's test and do everything in their power to pressure our allies to bring the CTBT into force."

\*nations with nuclear weapons are: the USA, Russia, France, China, the UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

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