

AUSTRALIA 'ODD MAN OUT' OF GLOBAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATION STARTING TODAY

Written by John Hallam
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PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

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STARTING TODAY

Starting today New York time, over 120 governments will gather at the United Nations in New York to discuss making nuclear weapons illegal.

Australia, barring a last – minute outbreak of rationality and commonsense, will not be amongst them.

The negotiating process to arrive at a nuclear weapons ban, prohibition, or 'legally binding international instrument', is the outcome of a long process of meetings auspiced by the UN starting in 2010, in which the humanitarian consequences of large-scale nuclear weapons use were explored in agonising detail.

The move comes at a time of growing danger that nuclear weapons may indeed, be actually used. The hands of the 'doomsday clock', which measure the estimate of experts in international security as to the likelihood of (mostly nuclear) catastrophe, are currently set at two and a half minutes to 'midnight' (midnight being the end of the world or at least of civilisation). Dire warnings that the risk of large-scale nuclear weapons use are as large as they were during some of the scarier phases of the cold war have come from Mikhail Gorbachev, former US defence secretary William Perry, and former commanders of both US and Russian nuclear forces.

The Australian (Turnbull) Government argues that a nuclear weapons ban is not 'practical' and will in some mysterious way 'undermine' the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The reality is that failure to participate in the ban negotiations is far more damaging to the NPT than a ban could ever be: A ban will reinforce and complement the NPT not undermine it. A ban would fulfil, not end, the NPT.

The Turnbull government has taken a decision that is both the wrong decision from the point of view of the planet as a whole, and that by leading to a less stable and more dangerous world, is also the wrong decision for Australia's own security. It is a decision that makes it more likely that Australian cities will face nuclear attack, an event that would kill most Australians.

We understand from media reports that Senator Lisa Singh, to whom the issue is very dear, is putting a motion in the Senate today, that will ask the government to do an about – turn and support the New York ban negotiation.

We urge cross-benchers to vote for it.

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We urge the Government to do what it recommends and to support the Ban negotiations and engage constructively and in good faith with them.

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