

Stop the Doomsday Clock Before It Strikes Midnight!

by Polly Mann

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (BAS) has reset their nuclear clock at 2.5 minutes to Doomsday, symbolizing the likelihood of nuclear disaster, and it's ticking for everyone on earth. From the statement provided by the BAS Science and Security Board, a warning for 2017:

Over the course of 2016, the global security landscape darkened as the international community failed to come effectively to grips with humanity's existential threats, nuclear weapons and climate change...the United States and Russia which together possess more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons remain at odds in a variety of theaters, from Syria to Ukraine to the borders of NATO; both countries continued wide-ranging modernization of their nuclear forces and serious arms control negotiations were nowhere to be seen..."

In an effort to prevent such a nuclear disaster, this spring more than 120 nations gathered at UN headquarters in New York to begin negotiations for a legally binding treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

A number of scientific reports warn that "the risks of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized, or intentional use of nuclear weapons are evident due to the vulnerability of nuclear command and control networks to human error and cyberattacks, maintaining of nuclear arsenals on high level alert, forward deployment and their modernization." Nonnuclear nations are concerned because "nuclear detonation would not be constrained by national borders and would have global consequences causing destruction, death, and displacement and long-term damage to the environment, climate, human health and well-being, socioeconomic development, social order and could even threaten the survival of humankind."¹ Risks increase with time and the possibility of non-state actors acquiring weapons.

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and its affiliate, Physicians for Social Responsibility, revised their report, "Nuclear Famine: A Billion People at Risk? Global Impacts of Limited Nuclear War on Agriculture, Food Supplies, and Human Nutrition" to estimate that the number of people at risk of starvation could actually be two billion. The earth would experience darkness long enough to destroy agriculture and create starvation on a massive scale.² And that's if there were a *limited, regional* nuclear war.

Unfortunately, all nine nuclear nations refused to attend the ban the bomb conference, and once again the United States is on the wrong side of the fence. The U.S. boycott of the UN's meeting is like a mother's refusal to permit her child to be vaccinated against smallpox in the midst of a smallpox epidemic.

But together, the participating nations persevere in their belief that the conference will contribute to "the progressive stigmatization of nuclear weapons" (UN Press Release).

As citizens of one of the most nuclear-armed nations, our public participation is also necessary.

We are called to heed the warning of the Bulletin for Atomic Scientists and the ticking of the clock:

The probability of global catastrophe is very high, and the actions needed to reduce the risks of disaster must be taken very soon.” In 2017, we find the danger to be even greater, the need for action more urgent. It is two and a half minutes to midnight, the Clock is ticking, global danger looms. Wise public officials should act immediately, guiding humanity away from the brink. If they do not, wise citizens must step forward and lead the way.

We must be those wise citizens that step forward and lead the way. In the U.S., we have to stop this obsession with Russia and North Korean demand that our leaders work together with those nations and the other nations of the world to preserve life on earth for ourselves and future generations.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor to the newsletter.

Endnotes:

¹ “2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.” Nonproliferation Treaty/CONF.2015/W.P29 tinyurl.com/m48lnmb

² Report: tinyurl.com/ktko5xd

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Action: Help raise awareness of the need to ban nuclear and other weapons by participating in **the Annual WAMM Walk Against Weapons—part of the WAMM Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons.** If you are unable to walk that day, please consider participating or sponsoring a walker.

Further Resource: *Nukewatch Quarterly*: a publication devoted to news and information on nuclear weapons, power, waste and nonviolent resistance. Available at nukewatchinfo.org, mail subscription, or free at Twin Cities locations.