



PRESS RELEASE
WILPF International
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Women take the lead in protesting nuclear weapons at major NYC event next month

Thousands of women are expected to gather on 17 June in New York City and around the world to protest nuclear weapons and support their prohibition. Organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Women's March to Ban the Bomb is entirely women-led. This event is supported by dozens of sponsor and partner organizations that are representative of peace, disarmament, women's rights, indigenous, environmental, and human rights communities, among others.

The march will occur as 130 governments resume negotiations in the United Nations on a ground-breaking new treaty that will ban nuclear weapons. When adopted, such a treaty will make it illegal for any signatory country to possess nuclear weapons and will impose economic, legal, political, and social barriers to nuclear weapon possession. It will further stigmatize nuclear weapons and help compel their elimination.

"No one is safe from a nuclear attack," says Ray Acheson, a Programme Director at WILPF. "These are the ultimate indiscriminate weapons and don't care about race, age, gender, political affiliation, or nationality," she explains. "One detonation can potentially obliterate hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people in an instant, with longer-term impacts on the air, water, climate, and food sources. Simply put, they are an existential threat – which is why we must unite in protesting them."

Through the march and rally, WILPF and its co-organizers want to demonstrate the pivotal role that women have played in the peace and antinuclear movements, despite being largely under-represented in decision-making positions. The event is also meant to highlight that despite the inhumane and widespread impact of these weapons, control over them remains in the hands of a very small elite. The cost implications of maintaining a nuclear arsenal also mean less funds available for other needs; for example, the United States is spending \$1 trillion USD over the next thirty years to maintain its arsenals and will triple the killing power of these weapons.

Another important voice that will be highlighted through this event is that of indigenous



communities in the United States and elsewhere, which have been dramatically and negatively impacted by nuclear weapons testing over the last several decades.

WILPF and its event partners see a clear connection between the current momentum of the resistance in the United States and what is happening at the UN. The 130 countries that support the ban treaty face opposition from nuclear-armed countries and their nuclear-supportive allies. Alongside the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, a major impetus to the treaty talks is that almost 50 years have passed since the nuclear-armed countries agreed to disarmament provisions through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and there's been insufficient progress.

“Just as many people have been marching in the United States for justice and equality, inside the United Nations smaller and less influential countries are standing up to the powerful nations that hold us hostage by having these weapons,” says Ms. Acheson. “Like us, these countries are demanding a change to the status quo, challenging double standards and false promises.”

The march will begin with a brief rally at Bryant Park, and then proceed across midtown to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza for a longer event. Among the confirmed rally speakers is Kozue Akibayashi, who joined other feminist peace activists such as Gloria Steinem and two Nobel Peace Laureates, in a crossing of the the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 2015. Another speaker is Karina Lester, the daughter of well-known Yankunytjatjara Elder and Activist Yami Lester, who was blinded by the 'black mist' from the first Atomic Test Bomb at Emu Junction, South Australia. It will also feature the handover of a petition from a group of Japanese atomic bomb survivors, called *hibakusha*, to the president of the negotiating conference.

Sister events are taking place in other cities in the United States, as well as in Australia, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and elsewhere.

For more information please contact Allison Pytlak, WILPF Programme Manager, tel: +1 212 682 1265 / mobile: +1 917 755 2128 / email: allison@reachingcriticalwill.org

ENDS

Notes:

1. The Women's March to Ban the Bomb will begin at 12:00 on Saturday 17 June and end at 4:00pm. Details of the event route, speaker line-up and timings are available at www.womenbanthebomb.org and through the Reaching Critical Will Facebook page. Look for us on Twitter @RCW_ or @wmtbtb.
2. Photographers and journalists interested in covering the event are asked to contact Allison Pytlak for further information, including interview requests.
3. Negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons will take place at



the UN in New York from 15 June – 7 July 2017. This follows a first negotiating session that took place from 27-31 March 2017. WILPF is a member of the steering group of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the leading civil society movement for the treaty. More resources about the ban can be found at www.reachingcriticalwill.org or www.icanw.org.

4. Co-organizers of the march and rally include: Hibakusha Stories, International Peace Bureau, Native Organizers Alliance, PAX, Peace Action New York State, Western States Legal Foundation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (host), and WILPF-US.