

Remember Hiroshima, Remember Nagasaki

“Do not think yourself better because you burn up friends and enemies with long-range missiles without ever seeing what you have done.”

- Conclusion to a poem by Thomas Merton, “Chant to Be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces,” about the Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoess.

“Now I am become Death, destroyer of Worlds.”

- J. Robert Oppenheimer, Director of the Manhattan Project’s Los Alamos Laboratory, which produced the atomic bomb during World War II, quoting from the Bhagavad Gita.



A boy in Nagasaki carries the body of his baby brother, killed in the atomic bombing, to be cremated in the days immediately following. (Photograph by Joseph Roger O'Donnell, May 7, 1922- August 9, 2017.)

Nuclear Weapons: A Brief History

The United States government began the nuclear age 78 years ago with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and August 9th, 1945, immediately killing an estimated 120,000 people. Many of these were deaths by incineration at Ground Zero. By the end of 1945, the toll had reached an estimated 214,000. In subsequent years, many survivors and their offspring suffered (and died) from leukemia, cancer, and other “side effects” of the radiation from these bombings.

Many of us still alive today remember the “duck and cover” drills we were forced to endure in primary school in the late 1950s and early 1960s in

preparation for a probable nuclear war with the Soviet Union. **Even at such a tender age, we intuitively knew what the government wouldn’t tell us: that hiding under our desks could not possibly protect us from such a war.**

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a large, international movement to abolish nuclear weapons, or at least to “freeze” their production. But public awareness of the threat of nuclear war faded in the 1990s and into the 21st century, even as the nuclear powers (in particular, the U.S. and Russia) continued to upgrade and produce ever more lethal versions of these weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, the long-term results of the U.S. government’s subsequent use of Depleted Uranium in armor piercing ammunition in the 1991 Gulf War, in Serbia and Kosovo in the late 1990s, in the 2003 Gulf War, and in its ongoing military operations, are still being documented. Survivors, veterans, their family members, and their descendants have borne the results for generations.

In 2017, the long term efforts of determined citizens produced the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 2021. It has been signed by 92 nations. But the nine nuclear powers (the United States, Russia, France, China, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea) have ignored it and refused to sign it. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the global nuclear stockpile is now close to 13,000. **Together, the U.S. and Russia possess 90% of that stockpile.**

Action suggestion: Call the White House comment line at (202) 456 1111 or go to <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/> and send an email calling on our government to do the following:

- Renounce the use of nuclear weapons and sign the UN Treaty to ban them,
- Cancel the current \$1.7 trillion nuclear weapons upgrade program.
- End the use of Depleted Uranium.
- Cut dramatically the proposed \$826.45 billion in military spending for FY 2024, instead using the federal discretionary budget to fund the vast unmet human needs (including climate change mitigation) that face our own citizens and our entire planet.

**Join our vigil to RESIST THIS ENDLESS WAR every Sunday,
12-1pm, Broadway, Park and Elm Streets, New Haven [https://
newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com](https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com)
Sunday, August 13, 2023**