

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles St  
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Sir,

Seventy years after two devastating nuclear bombs were dropped on Japan, causing an estimated 250,000 casualties, the world still harbours 16,500 nuclear weapons which are many times more powerful than those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many are on hair-trigger alert, and all nuclear armed states are spending billions of dollars on modernising their arsenals.

The signatories of this appeal, who are all senior health professionals, strongly support the UN call to eliminate nuclear weapons completely. The medical, humanitarian, and infrastructural consequences would be so disastrous that we would not be able to offer any substantial medical help in the event of a nuclear attack. The consequences would be overwhelming and healthcare professionals would be victims just as everyone else.

Peer reviewed and widely accepted research shows that even a small nuclear conflict, for example involving an exchange equivalent to the fire power of one UK Trident submarine, would be likely to result in a “nuclear famine,” potentially causing up to two billion deaths because of massive crop failures. Moreover, near nuclear weapon accidents caused by technical failure or human error have already brought us near the nuclear abyss several times.

Therefore we call for prevention: don't let these weapons of mass destruction be used, either on purpose or by accident. Elimination is the ultimate preventive measure. A ban on nuclear weapons would be a huge step forward.

On 24 December 2016, the United Nations adopted a Resolution (L41) to launch negotiations in 2017 on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons as the next step towards their total elimination. 113 nations voted in favour of the Resolution, with 35 against and 13 abstentions. The Resolution includes the decision to convene a UN conference beginning in March 2017, open to all member states, to negotiate a 'legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination'. The negotiations will continue in June and July. The United Kingdom voted against the Resolution.

We call on the British government to reconsider its position and to honour its commitments under Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, viz '...to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament....', and to participate constructively in taking forward the negotiation of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons at the upcoming UN Conference.

Yours Sincerely,



Professor David McCoy.  
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Dr Sheila Adam

**Medact**

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