WHY JOIN THE ICAN MOVEMENT

Why does ICAN need my organization's help to eliminate nuclear weapons?

The world is facing what is widely agreed to be the highest risk of use of nuclear weapons for decades. Russia has invaded Ukraine and threatened to use nuclear weapons against anyone intervening in the conflict. These threats, paired with other risky behaviors from the other nuclear-armed states, have heightened tensions, reduced the threshold for use of nuclear weapons, and greatly increased the risk of nuclear conflict and global catastrophe. Now is the time for a concerted global pushback against nuclear weapons, and the existential threat they pose.

Russia’s actions have also revealed the true nature of nuclear deterrence: nuclear weapons being used not for maintaining security and stability, but for coercion, intimidation and facilitating illegal aggression. Any nuclear-armed country could employ this kind of nuclear coercion; the so-called “nuclear deterrents” possessed by other countries provide no remedy.

The risk is heightened by responses from other governments that imply possible retaliation with nuclear weapons, and by commentary and analysis examining scenarios in which nuclear weapons might be used in the Ukraine conflict. These developments are normalizing the idea of using nuclear weapons and eroding the decades-old taboo against their use.

And any use of nuclear weapons, however “limited” or “tactical”, would have catastrophic and wide-ranging consequences. A single nuclear detonation would likely kill hundreds of thousands of civilians and injure many more; radioactive fallout could contaminate large areas across multiple countries. Widespread panic would trigger mass movements of people and severe economic disruption. Multiple detonations would of course be much worse.

These developments make our mission of the global elimination of nuclear weapons all the more crucial and urgent. With the world’s attention once more on nuclear weapons, now is the time to redouble our efforts to reach and mobilize everyone on this issue. ICAN works across communities and sectors around the globe, and every new partner helps us amplify our message, engage new audiences and increase pressure on governments to take real action on nuclear disarmament.
What is ICAN exactly?

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is an international coalition of non-governmental organizations working to eliminate nuclear weapons by promoting adherence to and implementation of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is the only globally applicable treaty that prohibits the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. This landmark global agreement was adopted in New York on 7 July 2017 and entered into legal force on 22 January 2021.

ICAN began in Australia and was launched in Austria in April 2007. Our campaign’s founders were inspired by the tremendous success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which a decade earlier had played an instrumental role in the negotiation of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Since our founding, we have worked to build a powerful global groundswell of public support for the abolition of nuclear weapons. By engaging a diverse range of groups and working alongside the Red Cross and like-minded governments, we have helped reshape the debate on nuclear weapons and generate momentum towards elimination.

We were awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for our “work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons” and our “ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

The ICAN coalition consists of over 600 non-government organizations in more than 100 countries, from local peace groups to global federations representing millions of people. An international steering group and staff team coordinate the campaign’s activities. Our main office is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

What do nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament have to do with my organization?

The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons affect all countries and all people. They are therefore not just the concern of the countries that possess them, and not just the concern of peace campaigners. This is the fundamental premise that led to the creation of the TPNW. Like climate change and pandemic disease, the terrible risks posed by nuclear weapons constitute a global problem that requires a collective global response.

It is sometimes said that nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945, but that is not the case. Nuclear weapons have been used in more than 2000 test explosions, leaving an appalling legacy of environmental damage and health, economic and social harm to communities in Algeria, Australia, French Polynesia, Kazakhstan, the United States and elsewhere. Indigenous
and other marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected. Even when not detonated, nuclear weapons are used to coerce and intimidate. Russia has used its nuclear weapons to facilitate its invasion of Ukraine and to provide a cover for war crimes and violations of human rights.

The governments of the nine nuclear-armed countries spend an obscene amount on their nuclear arsenals: $82.4 billion in 2021 alone. They are modernizing and in some cases expanding their arsenals, and clearly planning to retain them for decades to come – while the rest of the world lives with the consequent risk of nuclear conflict and global catastrophe. Whether you campaign on health, education, environment or other social issues, those billions in public spending could have been put to far better, and more just, use.

Nuclear weapons are a humanitarian issue, a public health issue, an environmental issue, a social justice issue, a human rights issue, a financial resources issue, a technology governance issue, a racism and colonialism issue, and more.

What can my organization contribute to ICAN?

Given the many dimensions of nuclear weapons outlined above, our effort to eliminate them also works in many dimensions. We work internationally, regionally, nationally and locally. We work with different communities and sectors: parliamentarians, local governments, scientists, medical personnel, lawyers, the Red Cross, bankers, survivors, academics, and activists in many fields. We use the expertise, resources, experience, strategies, commitment and energy of all our member organizations. We work to reshape the narrative, to stigmatize and delegitimize nuclear weapons, to give a voice to survivors, to empower smaller countries, to persuade financial institutions to divest from companies involved in nuclear weapons production. We examine and expose the racist, colonialist and gender aspects of nuclear weapons. We recruit, we lobby, we analyze, we communicate, we persuade.

Whatever the interests and strengths of your organization, there is a way they can contribute to our work. We would love to have you join ICAN.

How will joining ICAN benefit my organization?

As an ICAN partner organization you will:

- Have access to our network of over 600 organizations in 110 countries, many of which will be eager to share experience, skills, campaign strategies and advice.
- Receive regular updates, materials, briefings, press points and social media resources. Many of ICAN’s activities and materials may be relevant to your organization’s goals.
- Be eligible to join the ICAN delegation to United Nations and other official meetings.

icanw.org
- Have the opportunity to benefit from ICAN training and support programmes.
- Be eligible to apply for small grants to support your organization’s activities in universalizing the TPNW.

ICAN partners are coordinated, connected, and cooperating on nuclear weapons abolition. Many partners discover connections with others with whom they share interests in supporting similar goals. ICAN’s global campaign coalition is greater than the sum of its parts. In ICAN, there is no shortage of opportunities for people with initiative who want to make a difference. The movement is constantly evolving, learning, sharing skills, developing campaign strategies, and becoming more efficient, inclusive and impactful.

**How to become an ICAN partner organization**

Any non-government organization is eligible to become an ICAN partner organization. No joining fee or annual subscription is required, although financial and other relevant contributions are welcome. Prospective partner organizations are requested to endorse ICAN’s partnership pledge and complete the application form: [https://www.icanw.org/become_a_partner](https://www.icanw.org/become_a_partner)

Partner organizations are expected to respect the ICAN [statement of values](https://www.icanw.org/policy/statements) and [code of conduct](https://www.icanw.org/policy/code_of_conduct).