

# Health Appeal: Avert Nuclear War and Respect International Humanitarian Law

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

## **IPPNW STATEMENT | 22 February 2023**

One year on since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we call once again for peace.

The danger of a nuclear war is escalating every day this war continues. Any and all nuclear threats, explicit or implicit, should cease immediately. The use of nuclear weapons would be a crime against humanity and could easily lead to full-scale nuclear war.

We once again call on all nuclear-armed states to declare that nuclear weapons will not be used. It is paramount that we step back from the brink of nuclear war, where even an accident or use of tactical nuclear weapons would be a disaster of enormous proportions and could spark an even greater nuclear conflagration. As a second step, we call on nuclear-armed states to de-alert their nuclear forces to prevent the risk of a launch due to a false alarm and allow more time for communication between adversaries.

IPPNW has educated the public since its founding about the health and humanitarian effects of nuclear war and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985 for this work. Again, we repeat today, as health professionals: In a nuclear war, we would be unable to help you. The effects would be such that any medical response would be completely inadequate. On this, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Medical Association, and other international health organisations are agreed. **The only cure is prevention.**

Because of the serious risks posed to human life and the environment by nuclear accidents, nuclear power plants should never be deliberately or unintentionally attacked. We call for demilitarised zones in and around all nuclear power plants and, in particular, for armed forces to immediately withdraw from NPP Zaporizhzhia.

We condemn all contraventions of international humanitarian law, notably attacks on civilian infrastructure, particularly hospitals and schools. Depriving people of heating and light in winter is a direct attack on civilians. A lack of discrimination between military and civilian targets is prohibited under the Geneva Conventions. Adherence to international humanitarian law is essential to preventing the worst atrocities in warfare.

Any and all use of weapons that contravene existing treaties must end immediately, including landmines and cluster munitions. These weapons threaten the civil population disproportionately and indiscriminately, taking away land and property, and lying in wait for decades after war's end. The injuries caused by these weapons require intensive care and surgery, putting extra strain on hospitals that are often already affected by military strikes and understaffed because of the war. Continuation of war will add to the global arms race, impede international cooperation and further endanger health, education, climate action and other welfare measures.

We call on all health professionals to support this statement today.

Read and share the full statement: [www.peaceandhealthblog.com](http://www.peaceandhealthblog.com).