

US Votes 'No' As UN Adopts Landmark Resolution Calling to Ban Nuclear Weapons

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Global Research, October 28, 2016

[Common Dreams](#) 27 October 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [United Nations](#)

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The United Nations on Thursday adopted a landmark resolution calling for the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

[Resolution L.41](#) (pdf) was accepted by a vote of 123-38, with 16 member nations abstaining. The vote was held during a meeting of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, which deals with disarmament and international security matters.

"For seven decades, the UN has warned of the dangers of nuclear weapons, and people globally have campaigned for their abolition. Today the majority of states finally resolved to outlaw these weapons," [said](#) Beatrice Fihn, executive director of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons (ICAN).

[Setsuko Thurlow](#), a survivor of the Hiroshima and leading proponent of a ban, also celebrated Thursday's vote.

"This is a truly historic moment for the entire world," Thurlow said. "For those of us who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is a very joyous occasion. We have been waiting so long for this day to come."

As expected, nuclear powers including the United States, France, Canada, Israel, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as well as several of their European allies, were among the nations who voted against the ban.



Earlier:

In what is being called a historic moment for nuclear disarmament, United Nations First Committee meeting in New York City on Thursday are voting on a nonbinding resolution to ban nuclear weapons.

Co-sponsored by 57 nations, the [resolution](#) (pdf), known as L.41, states: “Deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons,” as well as “the risks related to the existence of nuclear weapons,” the General Assembly “Decides to convene in 2017 a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

Ahead of the vote, the European Parliament [declared](#) its support for the resolution and encouraged EU member states to “support the convening” and “participate substantively” in the negotiations.

Noting that there are currently 15,395 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of nine countries, the EU resolution states, “MEPs are deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation around the EU and beyond, due to the deterioration of relations between the nuclear powers such as Russia and the United States, or India and Pakistan, as well as the recent spike in the nuclear potential of North Korea.”

Updates on the vote are being shared on social media with the hashtags [#goodbyenukes](#) and [#firstcommittee](#) while the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has a [live blog](#). The live United Nations video feed can be viewed

below:

According to reports inside, the United Nations chambers was packed to capacity as the roll call began.



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Conference room 4 pretty much full to capacity waiting for L41
and the big vote for a @nuclearban in #FirstCommittee
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Unsurprisingly, [according to Bloomberg](#), nuclear powers—the U.S., Russia, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, China, France, and the U.K.—attempted to head off the resolution ahead of Thursday’s vote.

Opposing the call for a “nuclear-free world is awkward for world leaders, and none more so than U.S. President Barack Obama,” *Bloomberg* noted, who “was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in large part for what the award panel called his ‘vision of, and work for, a world without nuclear weapons.’”

But that didn’t stop Robert Wood, the U.S. special representative to the UN’s Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, from telling the Assembly earlier this month that the U.S. would be voting “no” on L.41 and “would refuse to participate in the negotiations over a nuclear ban if it passes,” *Bloomberg* reported. Wood argued that the “ban treaty runs the risk of undermining regional security.” U.K. representative Matthew Rowland reportedly made a similar statement.

Indeed, the U.S. reiterated this position during arguments on the General Assembly floor Thursday.



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.@USAmbCD: US does not accept premise of #L41. Will not help, could harm. Will divert focus, polarize, etc. (usual story) #FirstCommittee

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U.S. & @POTUS standing on the wrong-side of history. @USAmbCD statement contradicts a vision of a world w/out nukes. #firstcommittee twitter.com/RCW_/status/79...

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Countering that claim, Jen Maman, peace adviser for Greenpeace International, [argues](#) that the presence of nuclear weapons anywhere is affront to peace everywhere. “As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of accidental or deliberate use will be present,” Maman wrote in a blog post ahead of the vote. “If used, nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences, and in the case of a detonation, no state or humanitarian organization could provide any meaningful relief.”

Throwing Greenpeace’s support behind L.41, Maman explained that such a ban “would even affect the behavior of those states outside the treaty.”

She continued:

The existence of the treaty would require states to decide if they support nuclear weapons or not. This pressure would influence other international forums, as well as debates at the national level. A ban on nuclear weapons will establish an international norm against the possession of nuclear weapons, which will help to reduce the perceived value of such weapons. It will draw the line between those states that believe nuclear weapons are unacceptable and illegitimate and those states that believe nuclear weapons are legitimate and able to provide security.

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