Non-violent action
to advance nuclear abolition

Presentation for
Nonviolence in the 21st Century
International Day of Nonviolence, October 2, 2021

Alyn Ware
(New Zealand, Czech Republic)
World Future Council, NZ Peace Foundation, Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament,
Right Livelihood Laureate 2009
Gandhi on nuclear weapons:
Nuclear weapons are not only the ultimate form of violence... They create an imperative to build a world based on nonviolence.

- **Danger:** “Unless now the world adopts nonviolence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind”
  Gandhi on hearing about the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

- **Impact:** “The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms, but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see.”
  Atom Bomb and Ahimsa
  Cited in The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi

- **Solution:** “The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through nonviolence.”
  Atom Bomb and Ahimsa,
  Cited in The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi
Methods/types of nonviolent action

• Protest and Persuasion
• Social non-cooperation
• Economic non-cooperation
• Political non-cooperation
• Non-violent intervention
Nonviolence and the New Zealand nuclear abolition campaign

• Until 1987, New Zealand was part of nuclear alliance with the United States;
• The government was welcoming visits by nuclear armed and powered submarines and surface ships;
• The New Zealand nuclear-free campaign of the 1980s used a number of methods of nonviolence to eventually achieve success with the nuclear free law being adopted in 1987.
• NZ has been nuclear-free ever since then.

NZ Prime Minister Robert Muldoon welcoming a nuclear warship to New Zealand, 1982
Local body nuclear-weapon-free zones

Political non-cooperation

- By 1984, 75% of New Zealanders lived in local body nuclear-weapon-free zones
- City officials and workers in Wellington – a NWFZ – refused to service the visiting nuclear warships to the port of Wellington.
The NZ Peace Squadron:  
Nonviolent intervention

• Ordinary people in yachts, small motorboats, kayaks and even on surfboards attempted to block the nuclear warships from docking at New Zealand ports (mostly Auckland and Wellington).

• **Key message:** *We love Americans. We welcome you here. But not your nukes.*
Symbol of peace glows above frigate
Rainbow Warrior and the Peace Flotilla to Moruroa

Non-violent intervention
Soviet American Peace Walk 1988
Citizen diplomacy
ICJ advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons - 1996

- The threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally illegal
- There is an obligation to negotiate to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons under international control.
Citizens’ nuclear weapons inspection teams

Nonviolent intervention

- Inspired by the ICJ Advisory Opinion and UNSCOM - UN weapons inspections of Iraq’s compliance with UNSC resolutions to eliminate their weapons of mass destruction programs;
- Citizens’ weapon inspection teams attempted to inspect nuclear weapons facilities in nuclear armed and allied countries in order to monitor compliance (or report non-compliance) with the law prohibiting nuclear weapons.
Citizens nuclear weapons inspection teams in the USA and Germany
Plowshares actions

Direct ‘disarmament’ actions at nuclear weapons facilities


- About 200 people have participated in some 101 plowshares actions since then. Most have been convicted and sentenced to time in prison.


https://kingsbayplowshares7.org/plowshares-history/

Angie Zelter, one of the Trident Ploughshares activists

Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Georgia
Nuclear boycotts and divestment

*Economic non-cooperation*

- General Electric boycott, 1980s
- Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign:
  - Cut nuclear weapons budgets, end investments in the nuclear weapons industry, socially responsible reinvestment.
  - Divest as an individual, university, religious organization, city, state, pension fund, federal government.
- Federal level: Lichtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland have adopted nuclear weapons divestment policy.

www.nuclearweaponsmoney.org
3DNukeMissile in front of the Euronext Stock exchange in Amsterdam

The action called for divestment from European companies involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons
Protect People and the Planet Appeal

- Nuclear risk reduction
- Cutting nuclear weapons budgets and investments to re-invest in COVID-19 recovery, climate stabilization and sustainable development
- Committing to elimination within a timeframe – at the latest by 2045.

Endorse at www.unfoldzero.org
Ela Gandhi: Endorser of the Appeal for a Nuclear Weapon Free World

“75 years ago the people of the world shocked at the devastating effects of nuclear weapons called for an entity that could intervene in conflict situations to avoid war and settle disputes through nonviolent means [the United Nations].

The abhorrent nuclear weapon should have been dismantled and its manufacture discontinued at that time. So the time is now to dismantle and discontinue its manufacture and work towards provision of SDGs instead.”