

Introducing



Starting a better
conversation about
keeping safe.



NUCLEARBAN.SCOT

An unwilling host

Since the first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 24 January 1946 called for the “elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons”, a web of norms, laws, restraints and obligations affecting nuclear weapons has developed, and Scotland as a cultural and legislative entity has followed that development in how it understands the existential risk the UK’s nuclear weapons present to the world and to Scotland itself, and supports the proscriptions of the NPT on nuclear sharing, and proliferation.

The movement in Scotland that challenges the continuing UK nuclear weapons policy has developed as an element within a global movement of parliamentarians and governments, but also medical experts and disaster agencies, environmental academics, ethical and religious bodies, national and international trade unions and others from civil society who accept that nuclear violence or the threat it presents cannot contribute to any credible system of security.

While Scotland has representatives who serve as MPs in the UK Government, even when every one of them opposes the nuclear weapons policies of the UK Government, they cannot change the decision made by UK Parliament as a whole or the policies of the UK Government without support from MPs who represent English constituencies. The Scottish people and their elected representatives are thus precluded from meaningful representation in decisions about the UK’s nuclear weapons, which are all deployed from Scotland, putting the Scottish people’s human right to life at particular risk without representation. All of the UK nuclear weapons are primed for use from Scotland’s Faslane naval base, which depends on the warhead store at the nearby Coulport site. No one has come up with a viable alternative site for the UK’s nuclear weapons outside Scotland, whose whole parliament and present government oppose nuclear weapons.

It is time now for the NPT to be fully implemented in its commitment to disarmament, and this can be achieved through the TPNW leading from prohibition to elimination, and Scotland has a unique perspective on achieving this.

The Scottish Government could usefully be encouraged by UN member states in continuing to set out an inclusive national narrative based on a positive vision of Scotland in which nuclear weapons have no place, and allies in the member states of the TPNW can ensure that the lack of mandate by the UK Government for its deployment of nuclear weapons in the territory where they are sited can be exposed. Furthermore, an independent Scotland could accede to the TPNW and insist on the immediate disarming of the weapons in Scotland and their complete removal from Scottish territory.

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“Scotland has an important role to play in the global nuclear disarmament movement in two ways: 1) by reinforcing the web of international norms and law that constrains and delegitimises nuclear weapons; 2) by challenging the nuclear weapons practices and ideology of the British state.”

Dr Nick Ritchie, University of York, May 2021

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