The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons condemns NATO nuclear exercise in Europe

NATO's annual nuclear weapons exercise, Steadfast Noon, that started today involves practicing nuclear war in Europe. This year the exercises are taking place in Italy, Croatia and the Mediterranean and involve practicing the logistics of using these weapons of mass destruction that, if used or accidentally triggered, would kill and injure tens of thousands of people and cause lasting environmental damage.

As part of nuclear sharing agreements, pilots and aircraft from America's NATO allies take part in these exercises which envisage that in the event of nuclear conflict they would use American nuclear weapons stored in five NATO countries, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye.

Holding these exercises during the ongoing war in Ukraine that has increased the risk of nuclear war to its highest level since the Cold War due to Russia's repeated overt and veiled threats to use nuclear weapons, and as Russia seems on the verge of revoking its ratification of the nuclear test ban treaty, only threatens further escalation of nuclear tensions in Europe.

The Executive Director of ICAN, Melissa Park, said: "Practicing using nuclear weapons is reckless and irresponsible at the best of times, but doing so when a full-scale war that has already increased nuclear tensions to a post-Cold War high is being fought quite nearby is plain foolhardy. All nuclear exercises imply the willingness to indiscriminately kill and injure tens of thousands of civilians – an act that would constitute a war crime. Instead of engaging in war games, NATO countries should be joining the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which is the only way to truly ensure a nuclear war never happens."

All nuclear exercises are banned under the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and nuclear sharing is of disputed legality under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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