



BAN Tour 2010

IPPNW Biking Against Nuclear Weapons

Summary:

Next summer, International Medical Students for Peace will cycle from the coast to the heart of Europe – from Düsseldorf to Basel in an effort to attract public attention to the dangers of nuclear weapons, bring across their message that nuclear weapons are bad for people's health and support the movement for a Nuclear Free World.

Rational:

In 1990, the Iron Curtain fell and the Cold War which had brought the world to the brink of Mutual Assured Destruction by nuclear weapons came to an end. Today, we live in a world where failed development, AIDS, natural catastrophes and terrorism pose the gravest threats to our well being. Still, countries like Russia, the US, France, the UK and China hold on to their nuclear arsenals and quicker than expected, other countries like Pakistan, India, North Korea and Israel have joined this nuclear club, increasing the danger of nuclear weapons being used again. More than 60 years after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons are still around, threatening the lives of people around the world.

Today, nuclear arsenals are still set on hair-trigger alert, allowing thus to launch missiles with nuclear warheads within minutes, in the US, Russia and Europe, aiming at each other's capitals and endangering the health of the general public. Incomprehensible as it may seem, the world is still in danger of being destroyed by an accidental launch of Russian or American missiles. Germany and France are both NATO countries, harboring nuclear weapons for a possible attack by Russia. Chemical and biological weapons were banned, very recently a similar grass roots movement managed to push through an international ban on landmines. Why not nuclear weapons? The US stockpiles of nuclear weapons will not help protect it from terrorist attacks or aid in its struggle to pacify the Middle East. Instead, billions of dollars are spent each year for the maintenance of over 10.000 nuclear warheads. The absurd situation we live in today, with a peaceful and united Europe on the one hand and the continued nuclear stand-off on the other is not acceptable.

After the failed Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2006, it seems to many that only a public outcry can accomplish what diplomats have failed to: de-alerting the thousands of existing nuclear warheads and beginning the eventual abolition of these unnecessary and dangerous weapons of mass destruction. With terrorists threatening to employ fissile material in an attack on Western targets, the looming danger of hackers actually being able to trigger a nuclear launch and Russian nukes as vulnerable to theft as never before, the words of Muhammad el Baradei, the head of the IAEA, sound more and more realistic: "Never before has the danger of nuclear weapons being used been as high as today." Adding to that the threat posed by a nuclear arms race on the Indian subcontinent, the Korean peninsula and in the Middle East, we as the young generation of health professionals have an obligation to raise awareness of this growing threat for world health.

As conscientious medical students and young doctors from all over the world, we refuse to accept this irrational status quo and this grave threat to global health and human survival. We, the young generation of doctors, decision makers and inhabitants of this planet have to take a close look at the nuclear inheritance we are about to receive. In medicine, when there is no cure or treatment for a disease, we opt for a strategy of prevention. That is what we need to strive for. The proper therapy for this threat cannot be to protect oneself from nuclear attack, but to abolish these weapons once and for all.

For this reason, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985 for its work against nuclear arms will hold a large meeting of medical students and physicians from all over the world in Basel next August, where they will discuss ways towards the abolition of nuclear weapons and a possible campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, effectively banning these inhumane weapons of mass destruction. In order to raise public attention over this topic, a group of medical students and young doctors from all over the world will cycle from Düsseldorf through Germany, France and Switzerland to the IPPNW World Congress in Basel. Along the way, they will hold public rallies, explain the threat of nuclear weapons to the local population, meet with media representatives and decision makers like members of the NGO "Mayors of Peace" and make a strong case for the creation of a Nuclear Free Zone in Europe.

Methods

One form of informing the public will be installations of the international student project "Target X". In this project, medical students take to the streets with their message and place a large red "X" on the central square of a city, informing the passing public about the potential effect a nuclear bomb would have on their town. Explaining the radius of destruction modern nuclear weapons have, the long-term impact of radiation and the unimaginably high costs of manufacturing, transporting and storing these weapons and the effects this has on other aspects of society like education, culture and health, the medical students try to make people understand that nuclear weapons are unhealthy for society even without being used at all. These interactive teach-ins have already been undertaken in places like New York, St. Petersburg, Teheran, London, Vancouver, Melbourne and Berlin and have shown to be effective tools for mobilizing the population in the global campaign against nuclear arms.

Also, meetings with representatives of local NGO's, student organizations, medical faculties and members of the global movement of Mayors for Peace will attempt to establish a network of anti-nuclear activists across the region, which will be further supported by the programmatic work of the IPPNW World Congress.

Itinerary

The total route will encompass roughly 700 km and pass through three countries. The tour will commence in the German city of Düsseldorf on August 14th, 2010. In the state capital of Northrhine-Westfalia, we are due to meet politicians in the Landtag and will then continue along the Rhine River toward Southern Germany. On the 22nd of August, we will pass into France, after paying a visit to a US nuclear airbase in Büchel and a German nuclear power plant near Karlsruhe. From the French city of Strasbourg, home of the famous anti-nuclear campaigner and physician Albert Schweitzer, the last stretch of the tour will take us into Switzerland and to the site of the IPPNW World Congress in Basel, where we are planned to arrive on August 24th.

Funding

This tour will largely be self-funded by the bikers and their national IPPNW affiliates. Individual donations as well as a grant from the International Student Fund of IPPNW will ensure that the tour can take place as planned.

Contacts

In order to find out more about this tour, its route or the activities along the way, please contact the tour organizers at ban2010@gmx.net or take a look at our website www.ippnw-students.org/BAN

The Organizing Committee of the Biking Against Nuclear Weapons Tour 2010