

Northern California Climate Mobilization, Oakland, CA, Nov. 21, 2015
Rally speech by Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation
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Climate change and nuclear weapons and are twin existential threats.

In January, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of its Doomsday Clock to 3 minutes to midnight, citing the “extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity” posed by “unchecked climate change, global nuclear weapons modernizations, and outsized nuclear arsenals,” and the failure of world leaders to act.

In 2007, Jonathan Schell wrote: “[G]lobal warming and nuclear war are two different ways that humanity, having grown powerful through science, through production, through population growth, threatens to undo the natural underpinnings of human, and of all other, life . . . we may be in a better position today, because of global warming, to grasp the real import of nuclear danger.”

Today, in Syria, the U.S., Russia and now France - three nuclear-armed nations – are bombing side-by-side and on different sides. In Ukraine and Eastern Europe, the two major nuclear powers, the U.S. and Russia, are fighting on opposite sides of the conflicts. There, U.S. nuclear-armed allies, Britain, France and Israel, are also involved. An accidental or intentional military incident, could send the world spiraling into a disastrous nuclear confrontation. The recent bombing attacks on neutral hospitals remind us that in the chaos of war such mistakes are all too common.

To add to the potential conflicts, the U.S. and China, another nuclear-armed nation, are facing off against each other in the seas bordering China and other Asian nations. The danger of wars among nuclear-armed states is growing.

And there’s no end in sight. The United States is planning to spend \$1 billion dollars over the next three decades to modernize its nuclear arsenal.

There are nearly 16,000 nuclear weapons in the world. Recent studies by climate scientists show that a nuclear war involving 100 Hiroshima-sized atom bombs could produce climate change unprecedented in recorded human history. A drop in average surface temperatures, reduction of the ozone layer, and shortened agricultural growing seasons would lead to massive famine and starvation resulting in as many as 2 billion casualties over the following decade.

It’s easy to see the parallels in terms of effects, but it’s equally important to look at the common causes: nuclear weapons and climate change are predictable products of an economy and society dependant on endless material growth, driven for centuries by ruthless competition among ever growing authoritarian organizations.

It you care about nuclear weapons, you should care about climate change... and, if you care about climate change, you should care about nuclear weapons.

We need to build a broad “movement of movements”, as called for in today’s Points of Unity, to foster a world united to repair the ravages of climate change; a world with an economy that works for people and the planet; and a demilitarized world with peace and social justice for everyone; where Black Lives Matter; where good jobs, clean air and water, and healthy communities belong to all. In this new world there will be No Wars, No Nuclear Weapons or Nuclear Power! Let us go forward together, in solidarity!!