

FRIENDLY FIRE

The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons

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Welcome

Welcome to the newsletter of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW). Friendly Fire is published three times a year and collates the work of the 15 disarmament organisations from four continents who are working together to implement a global ban on the manufacture, sale and use of uranium weapons. Friendly Fire is compiled in the UK on behalf of ICBUW by the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium. Any submissions or queries about content or policy should be directed to office@cadu.org.uk. For more information on the work of ICBUW visit www.bandepleteduranium.org or to subscribe: info@bandepleteduranium.org.

Report from the 3rd ICBUW International Conference

By ICBUW



The 3rd ICBUW International Conference was held in Hiroshima, between August 3rd-6th. More than 300 participants, including more than 40 people from 12 different countries and many more from all over Japan, attended the proceedings.

The conference was financially supported by more than 600 individual donors and 70 groups in an incredible display of grassroots solidarity; ICBUW is profoundly grateful to all those who supported the event. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who helped in the smooth running of the conference, from the translators to the media workers, to those offering accommodation or acting as guides for overseas guests, the success of the conference was down to your hard work and commitment.

Of particular note were the staff and volunteers of the **NO DU Hiroshima Project**, an ICBUW member organization in Hiroshima, who as host group played a fundamentally important role in preparing and managing the conference. And of course, the ICBUW Board would like to extend our special thanks to **Prof. Nobuo Kazashi** and **Ms. Haruko Moritaki**, Director and Executive Director respectively, of the Hiroshima Organising Committee, for their tireless dedication and spirit.

In response to our conference call: 'Raising Our Voices with the Victims for the Abolition of Depleted Uranium Weapons,' DU victims, activists, scientists, legal specialists and journalists came to Hiroshima from all over the world. Many Japanese citizens, who have been involved in anti-DU, anti-war, anti-nuclear, environmental protection, human rights and victim support groups, joined the international delegates from across the country. More than 50 different presentations covered the entire DU issue, from the latest scientific research to new perspectives in global DU debate.

The conference opened with a warm welcome from **Mr. Tadatashi Akiba**, Mayor of Hiroshima City and President of Mayors for Peace; he was followed by keynote speaker **Dr. Rosalie Bertell**, biometrician, and founder of the International Institute of Concern for Public Health-IICPH. Dr Bertell's speech on 'DU and Gulf War Syndrome' clearly and concretely covered the health threats posed by the DU aerosols produced by the impact of uranium weapons on hard targets. She observed that once a DU aerosol is inhaled, and reaches the tissues and organs, it might damage DNA and cellular proteins, leading to some of the health problems associated with Gulf War Syndrome.



ICBUW also welcomed a speech by **Ms. Mizuho Fukushima**, President of Japan's Social Democratic Party, and member of the Japanese House of Councillors. Ms. Fukushima expressed solidarity with our cause and promised to question the Japanese government on the DU issue. We also welcomed **Ms. Nassrine Azimi**, Director of the Hiroshima Office for Asia and Pacific of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Ms Azimi was presented with a copy of some of the 200,000 signatories of ICBUW's International Petition to Ban Uranium Weapons at the closing session after a moving speech.



Prof. Nobuo Kazashi presents Ms Nassrine Azimi with part of ICBUW's international petition

The conference attracted many messages of support from people unable to attend. These included one from **Mr. Dirk Van der Maelen**, the Socialist Leader in the Belgian Federal Parliament, who introduced a Belgian law proposal to ban uranium weapons earlier this year, and one from **Dr. Caroline Lucas**, UK Green Party Member of the European Parliament. We also received messages of support and solidarity from NGOs across the world; including the **International Peace Bureau (IPB)**, **International DU Study Team (IDUST)**, **Women for Peace**,

No More Nuclear Power Movement, the **Finnish Peace Committee** and environmental NGO the **Iraqi Green Land Association**.

An appeal from the DU victims

During Thursday's opening session, **Mr. Khajak Vartanian**, an environmental radiation measurement specialist from Basrah in southern Iraq, reported that the local population continue to be exposed to military DU pollution. His mapping of contaminated sites clearly showed their proximity to urban areas around the city.

Dr. Jawad Al-Ali, the Head of the Department of Medicine at Al-Sadr Teaching Hospital, and Director of its Cancer Treatment Centre presented their latest epidemiological data, which showed a 1.4 times increase in the solid cancer incidence rate during the past eight years, an increase in the incidence rate from 44.7 and 61.5 per 100,000. He suggested that this increase could be attributed to the serious environmental destruction, of which DU pollution is a part, caused by conflicts in the region since 1991. Dr Al-Ali described the incredibly difficult conditions under which Iraqi physicians work because of a lack of basic equipment and medicines and called for international support in helping them undertake independent and environmental and epidemiological research.

Other presentations featured military veterans from the US, UK and Europe. US veterans **Herbert Reed** and **Dennis Kyne**, and trustee of the UK **National Gulf, Afghan and Iraq War Veterans' Charity Ray Bristow**, gave moving speeches describing how their health had suffered following their return from active duty in Iraq. Their experiences struck many parallels with those of **Filippo Montaperto** from the Italian group Osservatorio Militare. He and Italian journalist **Stefania Divertito** described the sudden rise in cancers seen in Italian veterans returning from the Balkans, and detailed the legal assistance their group has been offering to other sufferers of Balkan Syndrome.



Each of the veterans told similar stories of denial, cover-ups and a lack of concern amongst a military that had left them to fight for compensation, testing and recognition of their illnesses. One positive note was a determination to work more closely with each other and with veterans from other countries to campaign for a ban on DU.

In the US, Gulf War and Iraqi War veterans' calls for testing, medical care and compensation are growing. Connecticut, New York and Louisiana have passed bills that require DU exposure testing for National Guardsmen and for health registries to be set up. It remains to be seen whether such testing regimes will attract the level of state funding that they require to make a meaningful impact.

Herbert Reed, who independent testing has shown to be contaminated, and eight other veterans are now preparing a lawsuit against the US Department of Defence for concealing the facts about the health hazards of DU.

Meanwhile in Italy, independent military and veterans' associations like Osservatorio Militare have been helping veterans fight for compensation in the courts following exposure to DU in the Balkans. So far two cases have been won, with many more pending, but the Italian Defence Ministry is still trying to blame the illnesses on stress and bad diet with no mention of DU.

All of the victims called for a total ban on the use of uranium weapons, to ensure that no more civilians and soldiers need to needlessly suffer as they have done.

There was an urgent call for the international community to support both civilian and military victims. We heard from Japanese NGOs the **Japan Iraq Medical Network** and **Iraq Hope Net**, who have been working to help support Iraqi people, including medical staff, and held wide ranging discussions on the need to help DU victims elsewhere in the world, through both research and direct medical aid.

Regional Campaign Reports

ICBUW members, activists and journalists from across the world, including the US, Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia, reported on the domestic status of their anti-DU campaigns.

Perhaps the most significant **European** news is the European Parliament's vote on a moratorium leading to a ban last November. This was the third vote on DU since 2003 but the first time that they have called for a ban in addition to a moratorium. The Byzantine nature of European Union politics means however that this will not become law unless backed by the European Council of Ministers. The UK government held the rotating EU Presidency at the time and it is unlikely that they welcomed the vote. However the EP represents more than 400 million people and their recognition of the problems associated with DU is a great step forward.

In **Belgium**, law proposals covering uranium weapons have been introduced both at the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. ICBUW member **Belgium Coalition Stop Uranium Wapens** played a very important role in lobbying for the law proposals and cooperated closely with senators and representatives. A hearing in the Belgian Parliament is scheduled for this autumn. Experts from different disciplines will be invited, amongst them ICBUW advisors. The Belgian model of domestic coalition building, while not suitable in all countries has shown to be a valuable model for effecting political change.

In **Italy**, **PeaceLink**, an Italian ICBUW member, has been supporting veterans' compensation claims and legal battles. They have also accused the US government of stockpiling DU weapons at US bases on Italian territory and keeping a close eye on Sardinia's testing ranges. High levels of leukaemia and other cancers have been reported in villages surrounding these ranges and researchers suspect there may be a link between the release of toxic nanoparticles and these illnesses.



The **UK** government and military have been content to continue to hide behind the findings of the 2002 Royal Society Report into DU – in spite of its shortcomings – and claim that DU only becomes a health hazard in ‘extreme’ cases. The continued use of DU by UK forces in wartime remains at odds with public opinion. They still refuse to recognise Gulf War Syndrome as a verifiable disease or set of symptoms and, given the history of other UK public health scandals where compensation is an issue such as asbestos exposure, are unlikely to do so in the near future.

Because of the incredibly close links between the arms manufacturer BAE Systems and the government (“the most protected company in the UK”), it is apparent that the choice to use DU in Challenger tanks (manufactured by a subsidiary of BAE) will continue to be heavily influenced by industry. Recent claims by defence ministers that they are still undertaking trials with tungsten alloys and are keeping an open mind can be construed as little more than platitudes.

The voluntary DU testing regime for returning UK veterans – the Depleted Uranium Oversight Board – succeeded in not finding any wide scale evidence of DU contamination. They found no positive results from the 378 veterans tested, although caveats remain because the scheme was voluntary, poorly advertised and there was little trust in the MoD from veterans. In addition, the study was not representative because it relied on personal reporting, rather than a statistically correct cross section of veterans.

In recognition of the need for more independent research into DU, the **Campaign Against Depleted Uranium** (CADU) is collecting international donations for the Iraqi Children’s Tooth Project, which seeks to assess the geographical extent of DU contamination in Iraq.

In **Germany**, it has been decided that German ICBUW members should follow the Belgian model and build up an anti-DU domestic coalition. Of particular importance is cooperation with other

post-conflict and disarmament NGOs such as the **German Cluster Munitions Campaign**.

In the **US**, radioactive contamination through all the process including uranium mining, production of uranium weapons and testing, has been a great concern. In Concord, Massachusetts, where the Starmet Corporation. manufactured DU shells for 25 years, **Citizen’s Research and Environmental Watch** (CREW) and **Grassroots Actions for Peace** were active in pushing for Superfund status. Superfund Status is granted to hazardous waste sites requiring cleanup owing to their being a risk to human health or the environment. Since 2001 Starmet has been a Superfund site and over 3,000 drums of depleted uranium were removed from the Starmet Corporation. site in March 2006. Both grassroots groups are now working for cleanup of the site to residential levels.

As mentioned previously intense lobbying and legal actions are also underway in the US, aimed at supporting veterans returning from Iraq.

Mr. Lee Si-woo, a photojournalist and peace-activist from **South Korea** who attended the conference, highlighted the dangers associated with the storage of DU munitions in US bases in Asia. Days before the conference began, *Mainichi*, a Japanese national newspaper reported that 400,000 depleted uranium bullets were stored at the **U.S. Kadena base in Okinawa** in 2001. This is the equivalent to half the total number of rounds used by the US in the 1991 Gulf War. This report was based on declassified information from a Freedom of Information request submitted by a friend of Mr Lee Si-Woo based in Hawaii. During his presentation he reported that: “Huge amounts of DU munitions are stored in the US bases in Korea and Okinawa. The amount of munitions stored in the bases is different from the volumes described in the documents. They are missing somewhere. This situation indicates serious problems with the storage and management of DU munitions.”



This is a critical issue for the Asian regional campaign. Following the conference, it was suggested that activists in the region should demand clear information on the storage of DU munitions in US bases in **Japan, South Korea** and other **Asian countries**, and the subsequent removal of all such munitions from the region.

It is hoped that the conference encouraged closer ties between south and east Asian campaigns and highlighted the need for solidarity between them.

Unsurprisingly there were powerful and numerous submissions from the **Japanese** groups present. Between them the groups had been involved in: citizens investigations into DU contamination in Iraq and inviting Iraqi medics for training in Japan (**NO DU Hiroshima Project**); negotiations with the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Agency and actions against the Japan Atomic Energy Relations Organization (**NO DU Citizens' Network**); the observation of the removal of the removal of DU penetrators and contaminated soil by the Serbian government (**Stop DU Campaign**); and, from **UWBAN**, additional proposals to the draft convention that were approved by the ICBUW legal team.

The Science Panel

The conference attracted scientists from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds. In addition to **Dr Rosalie Bertell**, ICBUW warmly welcomed **Dr. Keith Baverstock** (former WHO Regional Adviser for Radiation and Public Health, now Docent, School of Environmental Sciences University of Kuopio, Finland), **Heike Schroder** (a specialist in biological dosimetry using chromosome analysis, University of Bremen, Germany), **Dr. Thomas Fasy** (Clinical Associate Professor of Pathology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, US), **Dr. Souad N. Al-Azzawi** (Associate Professor in Environmental Geological Engineering, Iraq), **Dr. Antonietta Gatti** (a nanopathology specialist, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy) and **Dr Stefano Montanari** (Scientific and Technical Director

Nanodiagnostics, Italy) and many Japanese scientists and commentators.

In spite of their different backgrounds, each of them stated, using concrete data from their own research that DU is chemically toxic and radioactive, and that internal exposure from DU aerosols, especially in their non-natural form, represents a public and environmental health hazard.



Dr Keith Baverstock, formerly of the WHO, discusses possible synergistic effects between uranium's chemical and radiological hazards

However it is clear that many questions still remain over certain areas of research and that further study is necessary. Some of the main discussion areas included the size of particles produced by DU weapons and their range and distribution in the environment, the dynamics of DU in the body, a detailed mechanism for biological damage and a causal relationship for the illnesses observed in exposed populations.

There was widespread agreement that we know



On the opening day, Dr Rosalie Bertell, Khajak Vartanian and Dr Jawad Al-Ali lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Park Memorial

enough to pressurise governments into applying the precautionary principle. This was particularly true of DU's chemical toxicity, which is beyond dispute. In addition the burden of proof should be placed on the military and governments to prove that DU is safe, not on affected civilians and soldiers, NGOs or independent scientists.

All of the scientists who took part in the conference pledged their continued support to our campaign and agreed to promote further research into the hazardous effects of DU.

Meeting the Hibakusha

The decision to hold the conference in Hiroshima was no coincidence. Although uranium weapons

and nuclear weapons are fundamentally different, both in their physical destructive power, mechanics and subsequent impact on health, both of them lead to radioactive contamination and radiation exposure. On the 4th of August, halfway through the conference, the Hiroshima regional court ruled that the Japanese government had wrongfully denied Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors recognition as sufferers of radiation sickness, but rejected the plaintiffs' demands for damages. One of the key points in the case was the extent of the damage caused by internal radiation.

In the special session of the conference entitled "Interaction with Hibakusha", **Mr. Rikito Watanabe** from the organisation that supports the Hibakusha



in their legal fight described how, even in the case of the Nagasaki and Hiroshima survivors, uncertainties still surround the effects of both internal and residual radiation. He then stressed that, in the case of uranium weapons, using the excuse of uncertainty in order to deny suspected health effects is far from scientifically justified.

Supporting the international campaign

The use of uranium weapons remains illegal under international humanitarian, human rights and environmental law; and the conference again confirmed that we should strengthen our campaign to demand the swift implementation of the Convention to Ban Uranium Weapons. Its scope is far wider than a simple ban, as it aims to also outlaw the production, transport, storage, testing and trading of uranium weapons and to give support and compensation to the victims.

The conference gave the movement a huge boost by reinforcing our solidarity with an incredibly diverse range of activists. From the victims of DU exposure, to the grassroots anti-DU groups across the world to the specialists from dozens of countries who are researching DU's hazardous effects, there was widespread support for both the Draft Treaty and the movement as a whole. This sense of solidarity expressed itself via our closing appeal (see final page), which called on scientists, NGOs, the media and governments to support our work.

Before and after the conference, many Japanese peace and anti-nuclear groups and organisations such as **Gensuikin** (Japanese Congress Against A and H-Bombs) took advantage of the presence of our delegates to organise meetings and workshops to discuss the DU issue further. In Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima, Fukuoka and Nagasaki concerned citizens had the chance to hear about the latest research and personal experiences of our guests, while the conference itself generated a significant amount of both local and national media coverage.

The most powerful message to come out of the event, a message shared by all our delegates, was that we must move forward in solidarity to promote the campaign for a ban on uranium weapons through regional activities and through international lobbying, for the sake of all the victims of uranium weapons and for future generations.

Information

You can stream online video footage of the conference at: <http://www.nodu-hiroshima.org/en/>

A full compendium of collected conference papers will be published at the beginning of 2007. For further information: info@nodu-hiroshima.org

Hiroshima Conference Appeal to Ban Uranium Weapons

We have gathered in Hiroshima from across the world to demand, together with the victims, a total ban on uranium weapons. Meeting in this city, we have shared the sorrow, loss and hope of the people of Hiroshima and the Hibakusha, atomic bomb survivors, for a world free from war and suffering from radiation.

In Hiroshima, we have listened to victims from four continents that have suffered because of uranium weapons. From mine to battlefield, uranium products have been implicated in a trail of illness, environmental destruction and death. Claims by the nuclear industry and the military that low-level radiation is not harmful to human health must be rigorously challenged.

We call on scientists from all backgrounds to assist in assessing the dangers associated with the chemical and radiological toxicity of uranium. Its unique properties when aerosolized are a hazard to human health and the environment.

We strongly condemn the United States and United Kingdom, whose armed forces have used large quantities of uranium weapons in Iraq and the Balkans. ICBUW is also alarmed by growing evidence that uranium munitions may have been used in both Lebanon and Afghanistan. Furthermore, we call on Japan and other countries to withdraw their support for military activity whenever and wherever uranium weapons are deployed.

We call on the media around the world, especially in the US and UK, to investigate the issue of uranium weapons. It is imperative that they inform citizens about the issue, and the global abolition movement.

The use of uranium weapons is illegal under international humanitarian, human rights and environmental law. The United Nations Human Rights Sub-Committee has condemned them, like nuclear, chemical and cluster munitions, as: weapons of indiscriminate destruction, with long-term consequences for the environment, human health and life, causing civilian suffering for years after the cessation of hostilities. In light of this ruling, and a growing body of compelling scientific research, we support an adherence to the Precautionary Principle, and will use each and every legal tool and instrument at our disposal to secure the full implementation of a complete and lasting ban.

ICBUW will move forward in solidarity with environmental, disarmament, anti-nuclear, human rights and peace movements from across the globe; and will back Japanese moves to support Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which demands peaceful coexistence and non-aggression.

We reiterate our support for ICBUW's Mission Statement, which calls for:

- i) An immediate and universal ban on the military use of uranium and other radioactive materials.
- ii) The cleaning up of all sites contaminated by these weapons with compensation for all affected populations.
- iii) A halt to the production, testing, sale, stockpiling, transport and export of these weapons and a decommissioning of all existing stockpiles.
- iv) The immediate medical assessment, treatment and long term monitoring of all those who have been exposed to uranium weaponry.
- v) The full disclosure of all locations where uranium weapons have been used as well as the amounts of uranium involved.
- vi) Financial support from organisations and individuals to provide independent medical and environmental investigations in affected countries.
- vii) We call on governments to exclude their troops from alliance with any government that uses uranium munitions.
- viii) The successful implementation of a Convention for a Total Ban of Uranium Weapons

We, the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, call on the global community to sign our international petition and participate in the International Day of Action to Ban Uranium Weapons on November 6th. We also call on the international community to act now to support our campaign to prevent the continued chemical and radiological contamination of this, our shared Earth and our shared future.