



Science for Peace

December 17, 2024

President's Column



Dear Members,

For the United Nations system, the rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of the law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, and procedural and legal transparency. International humanitarian law is a key component of the rule of law as applied to conflicts between countries. Science for Peace has always been a strong supporter of international humanitarian law.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal seated in The Hague. It was designed as a tool of international humanitarian law. It is the first and only permanent international court with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. Most countries in the world, including Canada, are members of the ICC. Notably, however, several countries, including the US, Russia, China and Israel, do not recognize the court.

Last month, the ICC issued arrest warrants for the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the former Minister of Defense of Israel, Yoav Gallant, and the leader of Hamas, Mohammed Deif. The judges said there were “reasonable grounds” that the three men bore “criminal responsibility” for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war between Israel and Hamas. In the specific case of Netanyahu and Gallant, the Court in its response to an Israeli complaint, stated that “at the time of the alleged conduct, each bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.” The ICC also “found reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Netanyahu

and Mr. Gallant each bear criminal responsibility as civilian superiors for the war crime of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population”.

The Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, indicated that Canada will recognize the arrest warrants. As expected, US President Joe Biden has called the ICC arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant “outrageous”. Notably, when the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for crimes committed in the Ukrainian war, Biden said “Well, I think it’s justified”. Thus, it seems that for Mr. Biden, international law can be applied to US adversaries, but not to its allies. In this regard it should be noted that many more children have been killed in Gaza by Israel, than in Ukraine by Russia. Ukraine has a population that is 20 times larger than that of Gaza.

The arrest warrants issued by the ICC represent an important step forward in the struggle over whether international humanitarian law means anything, or it’s just a tool for Western hegemony.

Another recent event that is highly relevant to the goals of Science for Peace has been the meeting in Ottawa of Canada’s four leading nuclear disarmament organizations—the Canadian Pugwash Group, the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Science for Peace is a member of this network), Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and Project Ploughshares. During the meeting a Roundtable was convened on “Nuclear Disarmament in Times of Unprecedented Risk”. The conclusions of the Roundtable were submitted to the Government of Canada. The following is a summary of the submission:

A Five-Point Agenda for Renewed Canadian Action on Nuclear Disarmament.

The world now stands on the razor’s edge of the most severe nuclear weapons threat since the Cold War. Recent years have seen a deep erosion of the global nuclear arms control and disarmament framework, marked by the collapse of critical treaties, advances in destabilizing weapons technologies, record-breaking expenditures in conventional arms, and an alarming resurgence of great-power competition. Canada must take clear, urgent, and decisive action to reinvigorate its nuclear disarmament agenda, push for concrete progress towards nuclear abolition, and help avert a nuclear weapons catastrophe.

- 1) Prioritize Nuclear Disarmament in Canadian Security and Foreign Policies. Canada should reaffirm its commitment to nuclear disarmament as a core element of its security and foreign policies.
- 2) Promote a Shift in NATO’s Nuclear Doctrine. Canada should initiate a dialogue within NATO to address the risks inherent in, and the need to reduce, the Alliance’s reliance on nuclear deterrence as an essential element of its security strategy.
- 3) Engage in Urgent Diplomatic and Risk Reduction Efforts. Canada should take an active diplomatic role in de-escalating nuclear risks arising from the Ukraine conflict, facilitating dialogue between NATO, Russia, and Ukraine to establish clear red lines.
- 4) Prevent Further Erosion of the NPT Regime. Canada should take a proactive stance in strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by supporting efforts to establish concrete targets, benchmarks, and timelines for nuclear disarmament.
- 5) Advance a Framework for Alternative Security Arrangements. Canada must advocate for a shift in security policy that moves beyond nuclear deterrence and implement common security principles fully consistent with the UN Charter.

Notably, in its December 10 session, the Canadian Parliament unanimously approved the following motion:

That the House:

(a) recognize that today, on the International Day for Human Rights, the Nobel Committee has awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024 to Nihon Hidankyo, the Japanese grassroots organization of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, also known as Hibakusha; (b) acknowledge that Hibakusha have worked tirelessly for decades to raise awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use; (c) recognize the ongoing relevance of their message in a world where the threat of nuclear weapons remains a pressing concern; (d) affirm that nuclear disarmament is a crucial step toward ensuring global peace and security; and (e) encourage the government to take concrete steps to honor this award, including enhanced engagement with the TPNW, participation in international disarmament efforts, and collaboration with civil society to advance the cause of nuclear

abolition.

We at Science for Peace certainly welcome the adoption of this motion. However, we are very well aware that the Canadian Government will act on it only under strong public pressure. That is where we weigh in.

Happy Holidays.

Jorge Filmus
President
Science for Peace

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“The Minefield For Campus Free Expression When It’s About



Israel and Gaza.”

by Dr. James L. Turk

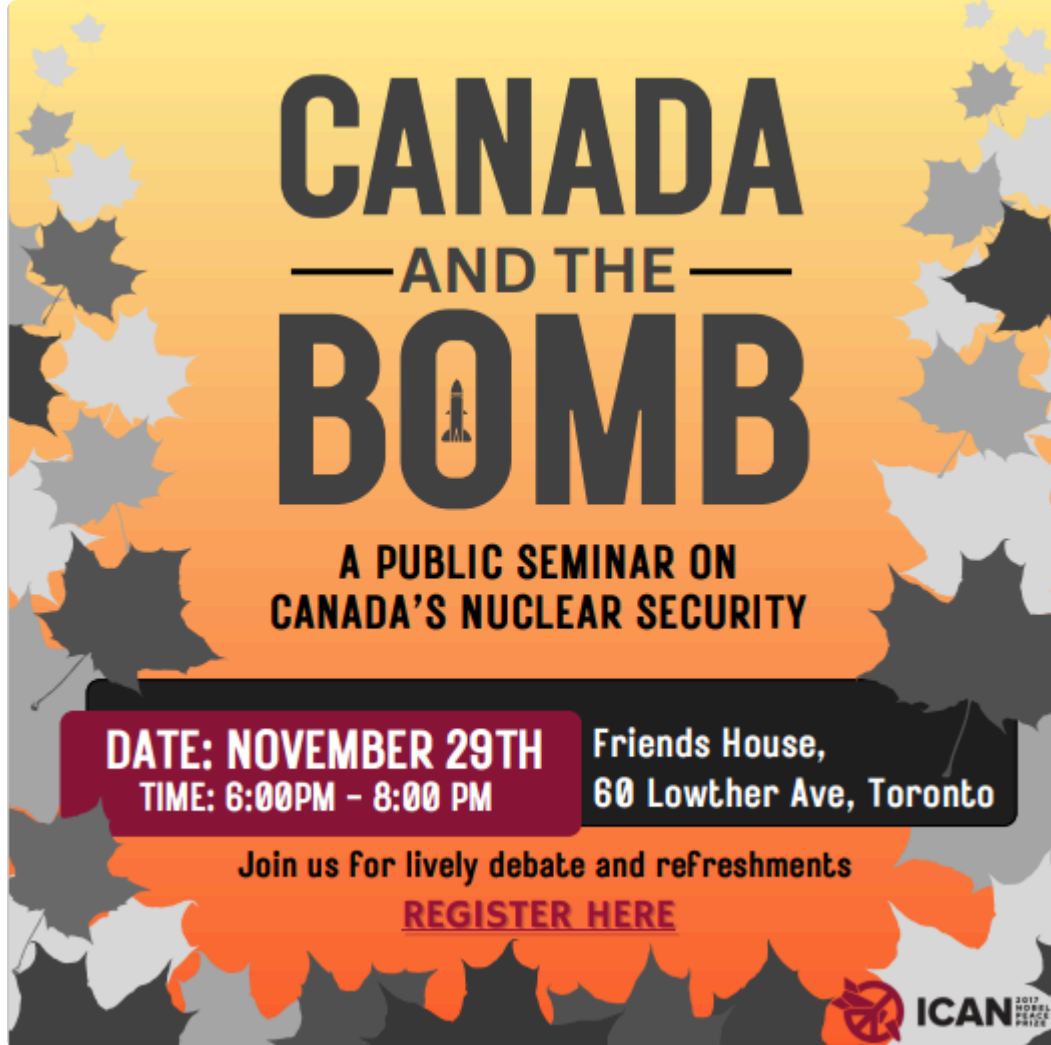


Dr. James L. Turk is the Director of the Centre for Free Expression (CFE) at TMU prioritizing public education, law reform, policy analysis, and court assistance on matters of intellectual and expressive freedom. He is a recipient of the Intellectual Freedom Award for outstanding contributions in Canada.

Tuesday, November 26, 2024
5pm - 6:30pm

Friends House
60 Lowther Ave
Toronto, ON, M5R 1C7

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Recent Publications

Humanity's Red Line Has Just Been Crossed

by Science for Peace members Shaun Lovejoy, Arnd Jurgensen, and Adnan Zuberi

No matter when one dates the beginning of the Ukraine conflict and no matter what your opinions you have of Putin and Biden, the Ukraine war has now crossed a red line for humanity.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine and arguably before, both Russia and NATO have been behaving in extremely irresponsible ways that endanger the lives of everyone on the planet. Science for Peace unambiguously denounced the resort to military force by Russia as unacceptable from the outset but it must also be understood that the refusal by the Biden Administration to engage with Russia when Russian troops were amassed on the border with Ukraine and in the context of a major Ukrainian offensive in the Donbas, was a form of diplomatic malpractice if not dereliction of duty. Their interventions since, to prevent a negotiated end to the conflict is similarly criminal. Nevertheless, the repeated threats by the Russian government to use nuclear weapons is completely unacceptable. The most recent serious escalation in the conflict has been from the NATO side and all indications point to an impending disaster that will bring it into direct conflict with Russia.

November 19 was a momentous day. For the first time, the United States authorized Ukrainian forces to fire US supplied ATACMS missiles deep into Russia. The targets were determined by US satellites, and then US technicians transformed the data into the detailed firing codes needed for the missiles to hit their targets. US authorization was also needed (and given) for subsequent attacks on Russia by French SCALP and British Storm Shadow missiles.

Pressure to permit these direct attacks had been building for months. In September, Starmer and Zelensky went to Washington, to plea for permission, that was denied. Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin explained that the strikes would escalate the conflict without bringing significant military benefits. This time, pretexting the (still unconfirmed) presence of North Korean troops in Russia, the pentagon was bypassed and permission was granted.

Direct NATO attacks deep in Russia cross one of Russia's few red lines and that "changes the very essence of the conflict" (Putin). NATO's proxy war is now a direct war against the world's most powerful nuclear armed state.

November 19th was momentous for another reason: president Putin announced a change in Russia's nuclear doctrine. For the first time it now includes the option of a nuclear response to a non-nuclear attack when the attacking country is backed by a nuclear one. From now on, Russia's promised retaliation could theoretically be nuclear. Putin furthermore declared that, since Russia now sees itself as in direct conflict with NATO, the "missile defense" installation in Poland (which can in a matter of minutes be converted to firing nuclear capable Tomahawk missiles) is a legitimate target.

Then, on November 21, just when the media were mocking Russian threats as bluffs, the retaliation came.

The Oreshnik hypersonic missile that struck Ukraine's Yuzmash missile factory in the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk was unlike anything seen before. According to detailed analysis by Theodore Postol, a leading MIT missile expert, the missile is based on revolutionary new technology that effectively makes existing missiles obsolete. According to Postol, claiming - as the Ukrainian government has done - that Oreshnik is simply an upgrade of a previous missile system, is like claiming that "a modern EV is 'just' an upgrade from a steam-powered car". Travelling between Mach 10 and Mach 12 (3 – 3.5 kilometers per second), it separates into 6 independent re-entry vehicles, but unlike the old Multiple Independently-targetable Re-entry Vehicles technology, each of these is separately maneuverable and in turn releases submunitions. The impact velocity is so large and the temperature so high (almost that of the sun), that Oreshnik's warheads don't even need to be explosive: it is believed that the munitions used in Dnipropetrovsk were simply highly penetrating metal rods whose energy was much greater than dynamite. Oreshnik is so fast that there are no systems on Earth remotely capable of stopping it. With a range of over 5000km, Oreshnik can reach anywhere in Europe and if launched from East Asia, it can reach much of the United States.

Oreshnik is also nuclear capable. To avoid any misunderstanding, the Russians gave the United States 36 hours to remotely observe the prelaunch missile preparation so that they could clearly see that the payload was non-nuclear. Then, 30 minutes beforehand, they tipped them off that a launch was imminent.

Although Russia's message is clear, with US permission, France and the United Kingdom are pressing for more attacks on Russia and next time, Russia' response may not be confined to the Ukraine.

In military parlance, Russia has now achieved "escalation dominance" - at least with conventional weapons. What will NATO do? Over the last two years, rather than negotiate, it has continuously and incrementally escalated the conflict introducing new weapons one after another (tanks, then missiles, then fighter jets) each time hypocritically crossing their own "red lines". Now, with Oreshnik, NATO has run out of non-nuclear escalation options. They are now faced with the incredibly dangerous choice of backing down and losing face, or going all-in for nuclear Armageddon. And this option indeed appears to be on the table. On November 20th, Rear Admiral Buchanan, Director of Plans and Policy at the J5 (Strategy, Plans and Policy) for US Strategic command (responsible for deterring nuclear war), stated that "...if we have to have a [nuclear] exchange, then we want to do it in terms that are most acceptable to the United States.... That puts us in a position to continue to lead the world...".

According to Dimitri Polyanski, Russia's deputy ambassador to the UN, "We are in a situation today that is far more dangerous than the Cuban missile crisis, we have never been this close to nuclear war in the history of the world" (quoted from Consortium News, Nov. 25). We do indeed seem to be in a missile crisis more dangerous than the first. Then, Kennedy and Khrushchev were on speaking terms and were able to bypass the hawks and negotiate a de-escalation. Today we are dealing with a US president too demented to run for president but yet intent on escalation at any cost. He is supported in this insanity by a subservient and ignorant NATO political class. This includes Trudeau cheerleading us to the precipice. Could the insistence on "Trump proofing" support for

Ukraine articulated by the Biden administration with its partners in Europe and Ottawa take the form of coaxing Russia into attacking the missile defense base in Poland to trigger Article 5 of the NATO treaty?

Since Trump has promised to end the war when he takes office in January, events may now move quickly. We must now do all in our power to inform and mobilize our fellow humans while there is still time.

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