

NAE NUKES

It's many years since I first came to Faslane to protest the presence of Trident missiles in the Gare Loch. The Community I belong to has since 1967 required its members as a condition of membership to actively oppose the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons, to work for a policy of their renunciation by our own nation and other nations. Like thousands of organisations and millions of individual citizens, we oppose nuclear weapons for many reasons:

- they are in contravention of international humanitarian law, and their very spirit is one of illegality, whatever government lawyers say.
- they are not a legitimate defence. Relying on nuclear weapons for deterrence means you are prepared to use them on civilians, with catastrophic humanitarian consequences. This is morally indefensible.
- they are but one facet of our complicity with death through our continuing and corrupt arms industry, most currently in Yemen.
- they give their message loud and clear, that power does indeed grow out of the barrel of a gun.
- their cost is an obscenity; more than £200 billion to replace the current system over its lifespan. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands in the UK are forced to resort to foodbanks, and housing, hospitals and schools struggle against underfunding.

Trident is capable of destroying most of the northern hemisphere in 10 minutes. 30 million people would be annihilated. Radiation would make much of the earth uninhabitable. We will be failing our children and grandchildren if we do not make a stand against it. I say this with passion as part of the unrepresented and ignored gender in the business of war making; women represent, on average, fewer than 10 percent of official negotiating delegations in peace talks, and only 2.1 percent of signatories to peace agreements.

Our campaigning is not just anger against nuclear weapons. We are passionate for peace because we are passionate for life. Our protests are not simply gestures of dissent, but efforts to reach across where the borders are most agonized and most threatening. The presence of

Trident 40 miles from Scotland's biggest city concentrates the mind wonderfully; its deadly impact on the beautiful landscape of Scotland is intolerable. And we love our land! This love for land and people inspires in us a deep reverence and gratitude for life, and moves us to action.

The majority of Scots are opposed to the renewal of Trident. But we don't just want nuclear weapons removed from Scotland. We want them removed altogether, from everywhere. That's why the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017 by the majority of the world's countries was so encouraging, including to those of us who live in states which actively oppose the Treaty. It is a significant shift in the global discourse on nuclear weapons and a major challenge to arguments about the necessity of these weapons for security.

The award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is a further stirring affirmation of the overwhelming desire of ordinary people worldwide for a world free of nuclear weapons. It is also a resounding challenge to the nuclear-armed states.

The Scottish ICAN partners, the Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre, Scottish CND, Trident Ploughshares, MEDACT, UN House Scotland, are therefore especially grateful to the international guests who have come to Scotland to show their solidarity as we campaign to rid our country, and all countries, of nuclear weapons. All of you are distinguished, long-time activists, experts in your own areas of peace work, and you represent millions more from a very diverse range of nations and contexts.

We warmly welcome you to Scotland, we are honoured by your presence, we thank you for your solidarity, and we in turn stand beside you in all that you do to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons from the world. Individually we are small; together our work has far-reaching consequences in the greater struggle to build justice, make peace and protect the fabric of our beautiful, shared planet.

To all of you here, I invite you to give our guests a good Scottish welcome!.....

And now, it's an honour to introduce a woman who is a great Scot and a great internationalist, our national poet, the Scots Makar, **Jackie Kay**.