**International physicians urge US and Russia to preserve INF Treaty, begin negotiations for nuclear abolition**

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Boston, MA – *Donald Trump announced on Saturday that the United States will withdraw from the 1987 Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), a decision confirmed by national security adviser John Bolton earlier this week. The following is the response of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize.*

In a world already nervous about the intentions of the nuclear-armed states and their continued modernization of nuclear weapons, the Trump Administration’s announcement that it will withdraw from the historic INF Treaty is grave and unwelcome news.

“It is very disturbing that yet another hard-won achievement to restrain nuclear arms deployments—a treaty that marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War and for which IPPNW campaigned throughout the 1980s—may be tossed aside by President Trump at the same time that the US is officially leaving the Iran nuclear deal,” said IPPNW board chair Dr. Bjorn Hilt of Norway.

The big loser in the new East-West confrontation could be Europe. Before the conclusion of the INF treaty thirty years ago, there was an uncontrolled arms race between the major powers. If nuclear war had broken out, either by intention or accident, it likely would have begun in Europe and would have obliterated the nations in its front lines. The signing of the historic INF treaty in 1987 by President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev relieved some of the immediate danger. Its impending demise threatens a relapse into a new Cold War, with Europe again at ground zero.

“Both the US and Russia own a share of the blame for this situation, with each accusing the other of breaking the treaty,” said Dr. Alex Rosen, chairman of IPPNW Germany. “The recent modernizations of the nuclear arsenals on both sides, especially the development of medium-range cruise missiles, but also the establishment of a missile defense system by the United States in Romania and Poland and the Russian deployment of short-range missiles in Kaliningrad clearly contradict the spirit of the INF agreement. It is time to settle these questions at the negotiating table."

Citing both President Putin’s and President Trump’s expressed desire at different points in their careers to negotiate the total abolition of nuclear weapons, IPPNW called upon the two leaders to begin a wider discussion of their nuclear arsenals, rather than ending an iconic nuclear weapons limitation treaty.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), adopted at the United Nations last year by a vote of 122-1-1, should provide the starting point for such discussions. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), co-founded by IPPNW in 2007, received the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its work in promoting the TPNW, through which makes a majority of nations have demanded the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

“These nations and the people of the world are sending a clear signal to the nuclear weapons states to pay heed to their obligation to completely disarm under the 50-year old Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT),” said IPPNW co-President Dr. Ira Helfand. “The [‘Back from the Brink’ Campaign](https://www.preventnuclearwar.org/) in the US outlines steps that could be taken by Congress and the US President, if they wish to be true leaders in avoiding nuclear war. This should not be a partisan issue. As President Reagan famously said, ‘nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.’ At a time when we desperately need steps forward toward disarmament, withdrawing from the INF treaty would be major step backward.”

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