

As world leaders converge on the United Nations (UN) in New York for their five-yearly review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) it's time to finally implement the decades-old call for a nuclear-free Middle East. In this global

before sanctions could be lifted. This led to 14 years of sanctions—with misery and de-development for the Iraqi people even though Iraq complied with the resolution's terms—as the illegal US-led invasion and occupation of the country in 2003 has since revealed.

weapons” and accept IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) “safeguards on all nuclear activities” so as to join the NPT.⁵ Sanders used the term “capability” rather than “options”—the first time the US acknowledged that Israel possesses nuclear

Time for a Nuclear-Free Middle East

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST

hotspot Israel has stockpiled between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons. Those known but unacknowledged nukes destabilize the whole region. As the Carnegie Endowment's Joe Cirincione has written, “most Middle East weapons programs began as a response to Israel's development of nuclear weapons.”¹

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The NPT began in 1970 and has since been signed by 189 states. It requires the original five nuclear weapons states—the US, Britain, Russia, France and China—to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, in exchange for which all non-nuclear states are obligated not to acquire nuclear weapons. Today, only three countries haven't signed the NPT: India, Pakistan, and Israel.

In 1991, in the wake of the first Gulf War, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 687 as part of the cease-fire arrangements. The Resolution required Iraq to rid itself of all nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons capabilities

It is less well known that Resolution 687 also reaffirmed “the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction.”² The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference also adopted this goal in the context of establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East.

ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL

Israel began to work on nuclear weapons shortly after it was created in 1948, collaborating extensively with France throughout the 1950s. Its Dimona nuclear reactor in the Negev went “critical” in 1964.³ After nuclear collaboration ended with France, Israel worked closely with apartheid South Africa, and the two are believed to have jointly undertaken a nuclear test in the Indian Ocean in 1979.

In the wake of revelations by the former Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu (whom Israel jailed for 18 years), experts concluded that Israel had a stockpile of at least 100 to 200 nuclear devices, according to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS). The FAS noted “The stockpile would certainly include warheads for mobile Jericho-1 and Jericho-2 missiles, as well as bombs for Israeli aircraft, and may include other tactical nuclear weapons of various types.”⁴

Cirincione notes that Israel is not mentioned in the semi-annual reports the US Congress requires from intelligence agencies on the acquisition by foreign countries of technology for weapons of mass destruction. Like so many around the world, he urges the US to “intensify efforts to create a zone free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in the Middle East.”

US CALLS ON ISRAEL TO “FORSEAR” NUCLEAR WEAPONS

On April 2, a State Department official, Jackie Wolcott Sanders, was quoted as saying Israel should “forsear nuclear

weapons.”⁶ Israel's own policy has been one of “nuclear ambiguity,” neither admitting nor denying possession.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Join the mobilization United for Peace and Justice has called for on May 1—see www.unitedforpeace.org for details.
- Support efforts to lift the restrictions on nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu's of movement and speech after his release in 2004. Amnesty International has condemned these restrictions—see www.amnesty.org. Find out more about Vanunu at www.vanunu.com.
- Ask your elected representatives to call on Israel to join the NPT, as US policymakers are doing, and tell them to support calls for a nuclear weapons-free zone throughout the Middle East, including Israel.
- Educate others on the dangers of nuclear proliferation. A just peace in the ME—beginning with an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—is the only road to security and human rights, not weapons of mass destruction. Learn more at the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, www.endtheoccupation.org.

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Iran and Israel's Nuclear Weapons,” *The Globalist*, 11 March 2005 www.theglobalist.com.
- 2 UN Security Council resolution 687, Article 14. See Appendix A, *Beyond the Storm: A Gulf Crisis Reader*, Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, 1991, Interlink Publishing.
- 3 See Federation of American Scientists report at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Sanders is ambassador of the Conference on Disarmament and special representative of the president for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. She made her remarks in the State Department's Electronic Journal.
- 6 See *Ha'aretz*, “U.S. says Israel must give up nukes,” April 3, 2005; see also *Christian Science Monitor*, “Israel, Iran, and nuclear weapons programs,” April 13, 2005.



The US Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign is based on human rights and international law, providing a non-sectarian framework for everyone who supports its *Call to Action*. Its strategy is to inform, educate, and mobilize the public so as to change the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.