All out for Faslane on Sunday 26 September!

To coincide with the **International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons** on **Sunday 26 September**, the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is calling for a major demonstration from across Scotland at Faslane on the Clyde, *writes Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot.*

Faslane is the home for the UK state's Trident submarines and nuclear weapons. The theme of the demonstration will be "**Disarm for Our Planet for peace and climate**", because it is also the run up to the COP26 gathering of world leaders in Glasgow in November. COP26 takes place less than 50 kilometres from the Faslane nuclear weapons base. The demonstration also marks the culmination of a week long 'Climate Fringe' to help build protest events around the COP26 taking place across Scotland (and in the rest of the UK where it is known as "Great Big Green Week").

Die-in Protest

Demonstrators will stage a mock "die-in" on marine/wildlife themes at the Faslane base to highlight the destructive effect of nuclear weapons production on our planet and oceans. In towns and villages where people cannot make the transport to Faslane (possibly due to the ongoing Covid crisis), activists will be encouraged to organise parallel "die-in" events. The idea of the "die-in" is to give the protest an ecological theme that links nuclear weapons production and potential use with the enormous death toll that pursuit of such weapons does to the natural life of the planet.

The **26 September** demonstration starts at **2pm (14.00)** at the North Gate and the die-in will take place at 3pm. You can

register and find the details for the demonstration here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/disarm-for-our-planet-tickets-164178902517 and transport will be arranged from around the country by local peace, CND and COP26 coalition groups. See the Scottish CND website for up-to-date information: https://www.banthebomb.org/index.php/news/2147-cop26

Nuclear Weapons and COP26

Scottish CND rightly argue that nuclear weapons should be an important issue at the COP26:

> ***Why does it matter?***
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> *Conflict and militarism are among the biggest contributors to climate change.*
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> *Any nuclear conflict would cause climate catastrophe overnight: changing weather patterns, plunging billions into famine, and devastating the Earth's ecosystems. No climate justice is possible until all nuclear weapons are disarmed.*
>
> *But the catastrophe isn't just waiting to happen sometime in the future. The military is one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions, in the UK and in other countries. Government promises on climate change – for whatever they're worth – barely even acknowledge the military problem.*
>
> *And every stage in the lifecycle of nuclear weapons, from mining uranium for warheads, to the impossibility of safely disposing of nuclear waste, is seriously damaging to humankind, to our natural world and to the survival of our planet as a whole – and that's before we account for the impact of accidents, nuclear 'tests' and attacks. We are already paying an enormous and unacceptable price – which, once more, falls largely on the shoulders of the world's poorest and most disenfranchised communities. It's time for change. (Source: Scottish CND)*

Increase in warheads

Earlier in 2021, the UK government announced a massive increase in the number of warheads within the UK's Trident nuclear arsenal. You can read more about this appalling development here. Far from focussing on the priority of economic recovery from the Covid pandemic, as the Scottish Tories claim should happen, the UK Tory government are spending billions of pounds of taxpayers' money on a major and possibly illegal escalation of the arms race. Meanwhile, opposition to nuclear weapons is growing and more and more countries are signing up to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Independence

Many advocates of Scottish independence are also against nuclear weapons. Faslane in Scotland is now the sole base of the British nuclear weapons fleet, though there are manufacturing and storage facilities elsewhere in the UK state. The Scottish National Party (SNP) has been the ruling government in the Scottish Parliament for 14 years and have proclaimed their opposition to nuclear weapons for decades before that; however in 2012 they changed their policy to one of supporting the UK and a future independent Scotland remaining in the NATO nuclear alliance. The leader of the newly formed Alba Party, Alex Salmond, was among the strongest supporters of NATO membership when he was SNP First Minister of Scotland.

The pro-independence All Under One Banner organisation supported by the NOW Scotland independence campaign called for the independence movement to hold a demonstration against British nuclear weapons at Faslane on **28 August.** But there was a relatively poor turnout and an eclectic programme of speakers . Independence is certainly a route to eliminating

nuclear weapons from Scotland (and hence it is supported by Scottish CND). Campaigning for independence does not absolve us from fighting against the current UK government or guarantee that a future independent Scotland will not hide under the NATO nuclear umbrella. The Scottish Labour Party Conference voted against Trident in 2015. But in the Scottish Labour manifesto for the UK General Election it advocated support for the UK Labour Party policy of keeping Trident and spending 200 billion pounds on its renewal. Thousands of Labour members and voters reject the party policy of support for nuclear weapons.

While we should support all broad-based protests against nuclear weapons, the priority for environmental and independence activists should be to build the widest possible basis for opposition to all nuclear weapons and the NATO nuclear alliance. Both environmental and independence activists should support CND, the organisation leading the mass campaign against nuclear weapons in Scotland and across Britain for over 60 years.

Put COP26 and opposition to nuclear weapons centre stage

This autumn we need to link the campaign against nuclear weapons with the forthcoming COP26, that puts Glasgow at the centre of the world stage, and that means mobilising as many people as possible for the Scottish CND demonstration on peace and climate at Faslane on **Sunday 26 September**.

No more Nukes: Time to Scrap Trident!

The Tory UK government has announced a massive increase in the number of Trident nuclear warheads to be held in Scotland at the Faslane submarine base just along the Clyde river from Glasgow.

The integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy published on March 16th included a 40% increase in the nuclear weapons stockpile. The UK currently has around 200 warheads, but had previously announced a cap of 180 by the mid-2020s. It will now increase this cap to 260 warheads.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament immediately called an emergency online protest rally addressed by speakers such as Green MP Caroline Lucas and former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn – the rally can be watched here.

Scottish CND was already planning a campaign against Trident and other nuclear weapons for the forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections on Thursday 6th May. An online public meeting of Scottish CND discussed this campaign on 17 March and was well attended by activists from across Scotland.

Candidates contesting the Scottish Election are to be asked: 1) to commit to supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to outlawing nuclear weapons; and 2) to commit to disarming the UK's nuclear arsenal in Scotland by the most direct route possible; and 3) to speak out publicly, and commit to sign the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Parliamentarians' Pledge if they are elected.

With the entire UK arsenal of nuclear weapons based in Scotland, how the parties line up on 6th May will be an important aspect of the Scottish Parliament elections. The Tories will be supporting nuclear weapons and their government

at Westminster will be pursuing the replacement of the Trident system at an estimated eventual cost of 200 billion pounds. The leadership of Keir Starmer means that the UK Labour Party will also line up with the Tories and support nuclear weapons and Trident replacement. The Scottish Labour Party conference voted in 2015 to oppose Trident and its renewal. However in its manifesto for the UK General Election in December 2019, Scottish Labour declared that as defence was a matter 'reserved' for the Westminster parliament Scottish Labour candidates would back the UK Party policy of supporting Trident. The new Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, has made noises that the Scottish party will maintain opposition to Trident but it remains to be seen whether they will back Starmer's leadership or risk a row within the party. The SNP say they are against Trident and want to scrap Britain's nuclear weapons. However in 2012, the SNP changed their policy on NATO from opposition to one of support. Under SNP leadership, an independent Scotland would join NATO. But NATO is a first and foremost a nuclear alliance and members face considerable pressure to accept nuclear weapons – no NATO member has yet signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and would face possible expulsion were they to do so. At a recent online seminar on whether an independent Scotland could rejoin the EU, a leading expert argued that it would have to show commitment to "EU values" by joining NATO first (EU-NATO coordination is expanding rapidly and all EU member states are encouraged to support NATO). The Scottish Green Party are the only one of the existing parties in the Holyrood parliament who support CND's policies of opposition to both nuclear weapons and NATO.

JOIN CND! STOP TRIDENT! NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SCOTTISH WATERS!

Mike Picken, ecosocialist.scot 19 March 2021