

# Nuke war just a 'tantrum away': Nobel winners



Berit Reiss-Andersen hands over the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to Beatrice Fihn (AFP)

## Oslo, Norway

The winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), yesterday warned mankind's destruction is just one "impulsive tantrum away" as the United States and North Korea exchange warlike threats over the nation's nuclear tests.

"Will it be the end of nuclear weapons, or will it be the end of us?" ICAN head Beatrice Fihn said in a speech after receiving the peace prize on behalf of the anti-nuclear group.

Tensions on the Korean peninsula have spiralled as Pyongyang has in recent months increased its number of missiles and nuclear tests. It

has exchanged warlike threats with Trump, who has ordered a military show of force.

"The only rational course of action is to cease living under the conditions where our mutual destruction is only one impulsive tantrum away," Fihn added.

ICAN, a coalition of hundreds of NGOs around the world, has worked for a treaty banning nuclear weapons which was adopted in July by 122 countries.

The text was weakened by the absence of the nine nuclear powers among the signatories.

In an apparent snub of the ICAN-backed treaty, the three western nuclear powers -- the US, France and Britain --

broke with tradition by sending second-ranking diplomats rather than their ambassadors to Sunday's ceremony.

Supporters of nuclear weapons argue that they serve as a deterrent for starting a major conflict as it would guarantee mutual destruction for the nations involved.

"They are a madman's gun held permanently to our temple," Fihn said.

"These weapons were supposed to keep us free, but they deny us our freedoms."

Berit Reiss-Andersen, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said in her lecture during the ceremony that ICAN's "message resonates with millions of

people who perceive that the threat of nuclear war is greater than it has been for a long time, not least due to the situation in North Korea."

## Hiroshima remembered

Several survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings, which killed more than 220,000 people 72 years ago, attended the ceremony in the Oslo City Hall.

One of them, Setsuko Thurlow, received the Nobel on behalf of ICAN jointly with Fihn.

Speaking to AFP ahead of the ceremony, Thurlow recalled the horrific aftermath of the first atomic bomb

striking Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 when she was 13 years old.

Thurlow described corpses lying on the ground, the injured and dying calling for help and the survivors looking like "a procession of ghosts".

"The hair was standing up and they were all burned on the skin and their flesh was hanging from their bones," she said.

"Some were carrying their eyeballs. It just was like hell on earth," added the 85-year-old who now lives in Canada and uses a wheelchair.

## 'Heed our warning' -

Although the number of

nuclear weapons has dropped since the end of the Cold War, there are still around 15,000 atomic bombs on earth.

"Listen to our testimony. Heed our warning. And know that your actions are consequential," Thurlow said during her speech at the ceremony, referring to the leaders of nuclear-armed nations.

The Nobel prizes in literature, physics, chemistry, medicine and economics were to be awarded later on Sunday at a separate ceremony in Stockholm.

Each prize consists of a diploma, a gold medal and a cheque for 9 million Swedish kroner (900,000 euros). -AFP

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## Abbas, Coptic Pope decline to meet Pence during Mideast visit

### Jerusalem

Neither the Palestinian Authority president nor the head of the Coptic Church in Egypt Pope Tawadros II plan to meet with US Vice President Mike Pence when he visits the Middle East later this month, to protest the US declaration that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

The rejections emerged as the Anadolu Agency said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and French President Emmanuel Macron agreed to work together to persuade the US to change its stance on Jerusalem. Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee member Hanan Ashrawi said the United Nations Security Council should now move to "bring the US to compliance."

Protests against the US move extended for a third day in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. The Gaza Health Ministry said four Palestinians were killed in the past 24 hours in clashes with Israeli soldiers or by Israeli air strikes, launched in response to rocket fire on southern Israeli towns.

Trump's decision, presented as being in "the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians," has been denounced across



Pope Tawadros II

the Arab world. Members of the Security Council condemned the move Friday as contradicting international law and prejudging the outcome of negotiations. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the decision "courageous" and "just."

Palestinians claim the eastern sector of Jerusalem, with shrines sacred to Muslims, Jews and Christians, as the capital of a future state. Israel's current government sees the area as part of the nation's eternal capital.

Jerusalem's status must worked out in peace negotiations with Israel, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said in Cairo, where he added that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas wasn't planning to meet Pence and stressed that the



Mahmoud Abbas

peace process needed a new mediator.

Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Church in Egypt, also won't meet Pence because the US administration's decision fails to take "into consideration the feelings of millions of people," the church said on its Facebook page.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, said Trump's Jerusalem announcement "extended a lifeline to terrorist groups and armed organizations, which have started to lose ground in the region." He expressed hope that Trump would retract it, according to state-run WAM news agency. -Bloomberg