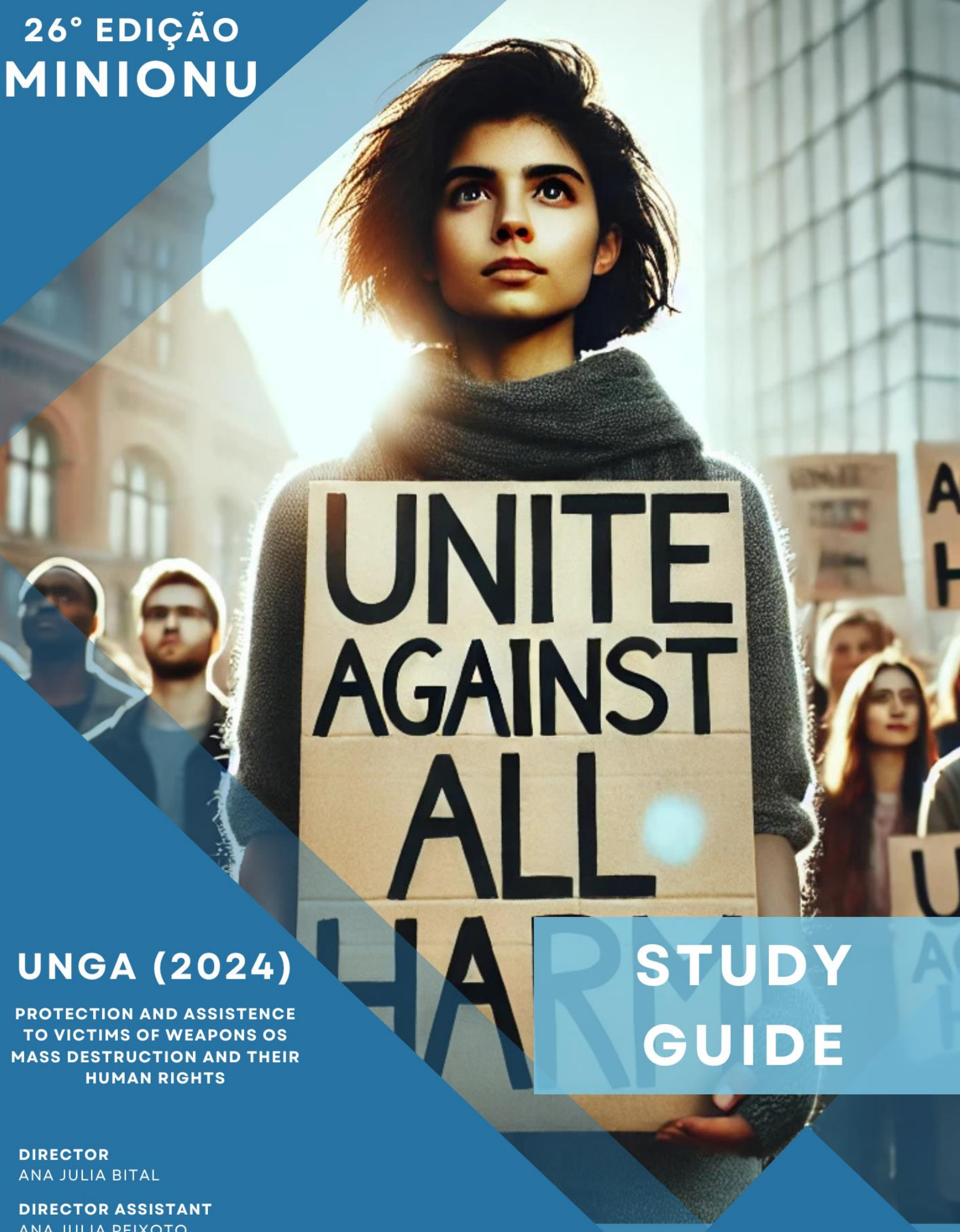
26° EDIÇÃO

MINIONU



UNGA (2024)

PROTECTION AND ASSISTENCE TO VICTIMS OF WEAPONS OS MASS DESTRUCTION AND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS

STUDY GUIDE

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11 A 14 DE OUTUBRO DE 2025

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1 TEAM PRESENTATION

1.1 Ana Júlia Bital Neto - Director

Dear delegates, it is with great enthusiasm that I welcome you to this committee on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Human Rights. My name is Ana Júlia Bital Neto, and I have the privilege of serving as your Director for this important discussion.

As a student of International Relations, I have a strong academic interest in security studies and politics. Beyond my academic pursuits, I am also a painter and a published author, which allows me to explore complex global issues through artistic and literary expression.

The idea for the theme discussed along this paper came from a simple video which contained an interview with a survivor of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks. This specific video sparked an interest with an aspect in the topic of weapons of mass destruction that is not discussed enough - the victims, their futures and human rights. It is imperative to advocate for and protect those who fall victim to such weapons, and to give them the voice and attention they deserve.

In this committee, we will discuss topics of human rights, international security and humanitarian responses, which are all critical to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of victims and potential victims. I highly encourage you all to bring your creativity, innovative solutions and dedication to the table as we strive to reach positive and meaningful outcomes.

A very warm welcome, and I look forward to engaging with you all!

1.2 Ana Júlia Peixoto - Assistant Director

Dear delegates, it is such a joy to welcome you to the UNGA 2024! My name is Ana Julia Peixoto, I am 21 years old and currently in my 6º semester of International Relations at PUC Minas. Throughout my academic journey, I've taken great interest in the international law field, especially in human rights matters.

I conduct research on violations of Afghan women's rights under the Taliban regime and, in 2023, had the opportunity to be a volunteer in a UNICEF committee, which discussed

the human rights violations against children in conflict zones in sub-Saharan Africa. This year, I am thrilled to be one of the assistant directors of this committee!

I've always believed that our biggest goal as a society should be the well-being of every single human. But, in reality, our global frameworks often fail those who need protection most. This is something I realized when I first encountered testimonies from Hiroshima survivors or families affected by chemical weapons in Syria. While the international discussions about WMDs tend to focus solely on prevention and disarmament, the human stories, the devastating aftermath faced by survivors, remain largely untold.

That's why I believe our work in this committee is so vital! It represents an intersection between international security and fundamental human dignity. Behind every policy debate are real people whose lives have been irrevocably altered by chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons. These individuals deserve not only our acknowledgment, but our dedicated advocacy and action. We have the opportunity to shift the narrative and center the human experience in our policy discussions.

I look forward to encountering you in October and witnessing your creativity and commitment as we tackle this issue!

1.3 Marina Diniz Santos Avendanho - Assistant Director

Hello, dear delegates! It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 26th edition of MINIONU! My name is Marina Diniz Santos Avendanho, I am 20 years old, and I am an Assistant Director of the UNGA 2024. I'm currently in my 3º semester of International Relations at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC Minas).

In 2024, I had the opportunity to be a volunteer in the committee of Bangkok Conference (2024), which addressed the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. This year, I am truly privileged to take part as Assistant Director of the UNGA committee, which will discuss the protection and assistance of victims of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Human Rights, a topic that combines two areas that I have deep interest: the security and human rights field.

This committee's chosen subject is of great relevance and urgency. In a context that the world is marked with growing tensions and major concerns regarding the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, this discussion is extremely important. Moreover, the devastation caused by

WMDs leaves long-lasting impacts on the victims, being essential to approach this subject with a critical perspective.

In addition, the human rights of the victims are commonly overlooked, being vital to acknowledge their suffering and finding ways to protect them. That way, it is crucial to bring visibility to the victims, providing adequate assistance and try to prevent future harm to humanity. With that in mind, it is necessary to discuss this topic, pursuing a safer world.

I look forward to meeting you all in October! I hope you enjoy the committee's theme and the discussion!

2 INTRODUCTION

This UNGA committee aims to discuss what is sometimes ignored when it comes to Weapons of Mass Destruction - the impact of the usage on victims. It discusses the impacts of this type of warfare on the physical, psychological and environmental domains. It emphasizes the importance of existing treaties, along with the role of the UNGA in addressing the issues discussed in them. Besides that, rapid response systems for WMD[1] attacks are discussed, including medical and psychological assistance, as well as humanitarian and refugee programs.

The committee will also discuss the main points arising from the topic of disarmament and non-proliferation, with the main goals of recognizing the right of WMD victims to medical and psychological care, long term rehabilitation programs, and strong legal and institutional frameworks to avoid incidents and hold perpetrators accountable.

3 THEME PRESENTATION

3.1 Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) can be defined as "any and all nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 398). Besides that, it is understood that those weapons vary widely when it comes to all their "characteristics and destructive capabilities" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 398).

[1] Weapons of Mass Destruction

Firstly, radiological weapons (RW) generally can be defined as a "bomb which uses a conventional explosive to scatter radiological material" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 400), and are often confused with nuclear weapons (NW). However, while RW contain radioactive materials in their composition, they are not fissile in any nature, as is common with NW (Jordan et al., 2016; Godsen, Gardener, 2005). Moreover, the immediate damage caused by an RW attack is significantly less than that of a nuclear explosion, as conventional bombs are not the most efficient means of dispersing radioactive materials. As a result, only a relatively small area would be severely affected (Jordan et al., 2016).

However, an important consideration for RW usage, as with all WMDs, is its indirect impact on people, whether psychologically or economically. A radiological explosion could possibly trigger general panic and severe negative economic effects (Jordan et al., 2016). Furthermore, while few state actors have shown strong interest in RW, and none are known to maintain an arsenal of such weapons, possessing them could mean a dangerous threat if acquired by terrorists (Jordan et al., 2016; Godsen, Gardener, 2005).

Biological Weapons (BW), on the other hand, can be narrowed down as "weapons [that] include a living pathogen of some type - a virus, for example - or a toxin produced by living organisms" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 402). They have been used for thousands of years, and their target can be something different from humans, such as nature (Jordan et al., 2016). To realize their full destructive potential, BW are used in the form of aerosols or a dust cloud, for liquids and solids respectively. A prominent example of a widely employed BW is Agent Orange, which was used by the United States of America (USA) during the Vietnam War [2](Jordan et al., 2016; Godsen, Gardener, 2005)

Photo 1: A U.S. Air Force Fairchild C-123 Provider aircraft crop-dusting in Vietnam during Operation Ranch Hand.

[2] During the Vietnam War, which lasted between the 60s and early 70s, the American military used large amounts of so-called defoliant mixtures, including the now famous Agent Orange, called that because of being stored in drums with orange stripes. Three decades after the war, questions still remain about its long-term effects, including high risks of cancer, more specifically lymphocytic leukemia. During the war, around 19 million gallons of the herbicide were used in approximately 3.6 million acres of land from Laos and Vietnam in an effort known now as Operation Ranch Hand. Besides the aforementioned effects, the agent can cause congenital anomalies and handicaps in children, skin rashes, and psychological symptoms, which affected not only the local populations but also American veterans in contact with the agent (Frumkin, 2003).

Source: USAF - US Military Picture, circa 1962-1971.

Photo 2: A Vietnamese Professor is pictured with a group of handicapped children

Source: Alexis Duclos, 2004

Contrary to common belief, not all existent BW are designed solely to kill; inducing illness can be sufficient to destabilize an enemy's population, whether civilian or combatant, and achieve strategic objectives. As of today, all BW intended to harm humans have been banned by the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) since 1972, although non-lethal attacks

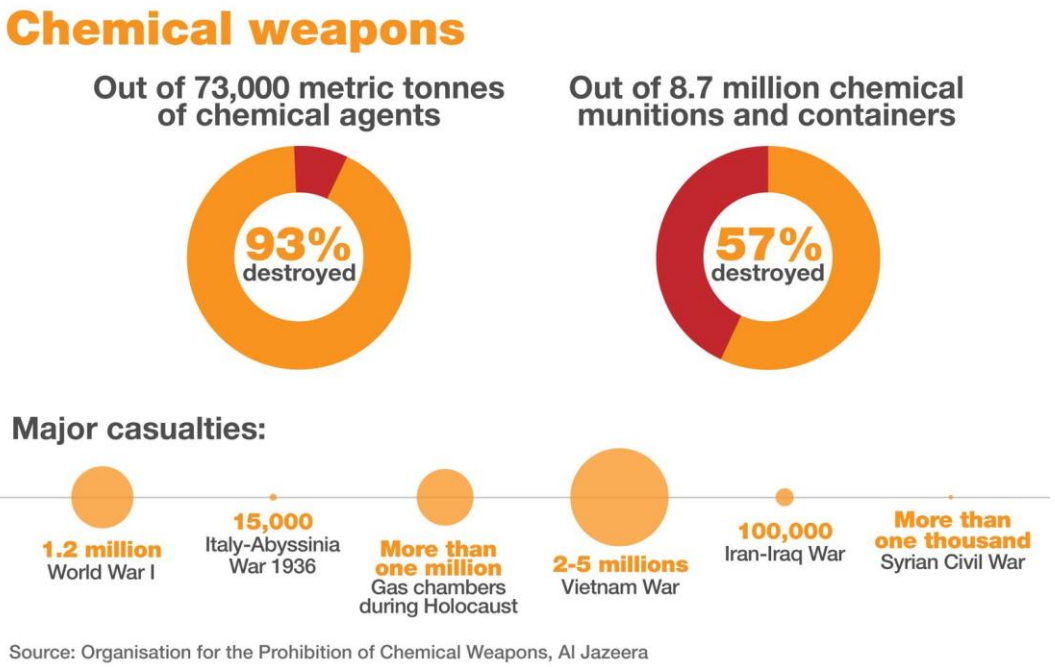
are not discussed in the Convention (Jordan et al., 2016). While the convention was signed by most states, about two dozen of them have not adhered to it.[3] While no state actively admits to the construction and maintenance of Biological Weapons, it can be speculated that some, such as North Korea, Syria, and Iran, do so (Jordan et al., 2016). However, determining whether a country possesses BW in its arsenal is a hard task (Jordan et al., 2016). Finally, although there is no record of a wide-reaching BW attack by terrorists, the possibility remains a concern for specialists, especially considering that the knowledge required for the creation of such weapons cannot be controlled by state agents (Jordan et al., 2016).

Chemical Weapons (CW) are the sole WMD that has been regularly used during war in the twentieth century (Jordan et al., 2016). CW are defined by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) (n.d.) as "well known commercial chemicals put into standard munitions such as grenades and artillery shells." (UNODA, n.d.). Some relevant examples are Chlorine and Mustard Gas [4](UNODA, n.d.). Furthermore, they have subsequently been used by Japan and China during the Second World War, and by Iraq under Saddam Hussein (Jordan et al., 2016). CW can be divided into choking agents, which inflict damage to lungs and include phosgene, which was widely used during the First World War; blood agents, which impact the usage of oxygen inside the body, leading to suffocation, exemplified by Hydrogen cyanide (which was used during the Holocaust); blister agents, which cause blisters and burns to the skin, classifying Mustard gas; and, finally, nerve agents, which are the most modern CW and cause intense and quick effects to the nervous system, being the most famous agents of this classification the G- and V- series (Jordan et al., 2016; Godsen, Gardener, 2005), as shown in the image below.

[3] Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Israel and Kiribati have not signed the treaty. Only signatory states include Egypt, Haiti, Somalia and Syria.

[4] Chlorine gas, widely used by the German army in World War I, is known to directly affect the bronchial or vascular musculature as it comes in a yellowish brown cloud with a characteristic odor and high density. It can create a burning of the eyes, coughing and asphyxiation. Mustard gas, on the other hand, has similar effects to mustard and phosgene while being less deadly. It also has a characteristic odor, similar to mustard, and can bring "laryngitis, pharyngitis, tracheitis, bronchitis. When exposed directly to skin, burns were experienced." (Zaremba, 2019, p.17). More harsh effects include conjunctivitis, photophobia, swelling of eyelids, epigastric pain, and vomiting, which brought the conclusion that it is more aggressive to the eyes as compared to other similar gases (Zaremba, 2019).

Photo 3: Chemical Weapons



Source: Al Jazeera, 2017

Besides that, the Geneva Protocol, which was signed in 1925, prohibited the use of CW, but it did not prohibit producing, developing or stockpiling them. As a result, an intense increase in production could be observed during the Cold War, with approximately 25 states involved in the Chemical Weapons development (UNODA, n.d.). In 1992, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was created under the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, prohibiting "the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties" (UNODA, n.d.)

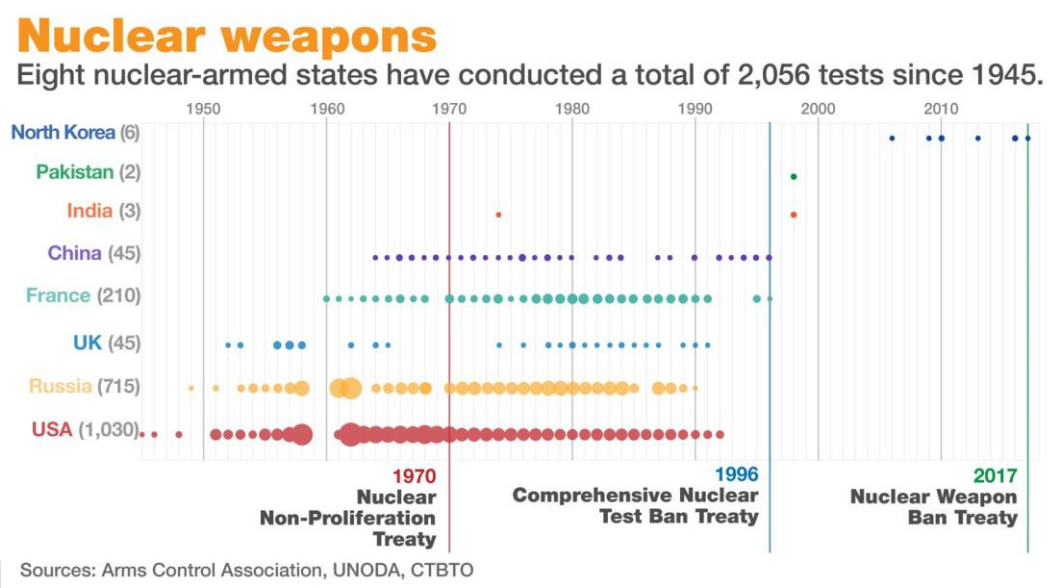
Finally, NW can be defined as a "device which rapidly releases nuclear energy, either through fission (as in the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki[5]) or a combination of fission and fusion (as in a thermonuclear or hydrogen bomb)" (DeNardi, 2012). They can be

[5] One of the most, if not the most, famous instances of nuclear fallout is the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States of America (USA) as a response to the bombing done by Japan at the Pearl Harbour military base during World War II, in the year of 1945. After a successful atomic test in the city of Los Alamos, USA, on July 16, 1945, the plane known as Enola Gay dropped the atomic bombs, first in Hiroshima, a city with 350,000 residents, and after in Nagasaki, which had a population of 270,000. The uranium based weapon, known as Little Boy, exploded with a force estimated as 12.5 kilotons of TNT. At the time of explosion, about 50% of people located within 1.2 km of the hypocenter died on the same day, and around 80 to 100% of those exposed at the aforementioned distance eventually died from exposure to the bomb, albeit injuries or radiation. In total, the bombs claimed 140,000 people from Hiroshima and 70,000 of Nagasaki (Selden, Kyoko, Selden, Mark, 1989).

divided as Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) and Strategic Nuclear Weapons (SNW). While TNW are delivered at "shorter ranges and are intended for battlefield use" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 426), SNW "generally have a larger yield and are delivered at long range, using intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) or heavy bombers" (Jordan et al., 2016, p. 426).

Besides that, states often use NW as a means of deterrence, which is the usage of threats, albeit explicit or implicit, to keep an enemy from acting in a way that is not wanted, especially considering their ability to cause immense damage and fast way of delivery (Jordan et al., 2016). Furthermore, a single NW can potentially destroy entire cities and kill millions of people, and their long-term effects can compromise an area for generations (UNODA, n.d.). NW have only been used twice, during the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945, but their tests are conducted until today (UNODA, n.d.) by countries such as North Korea, Pakistan, India and others.

Photo 4: Nuclear Weapons



Source: Al Jazeera, 2017.

A wide number of non-proliferation treaties for NW have been created, including the

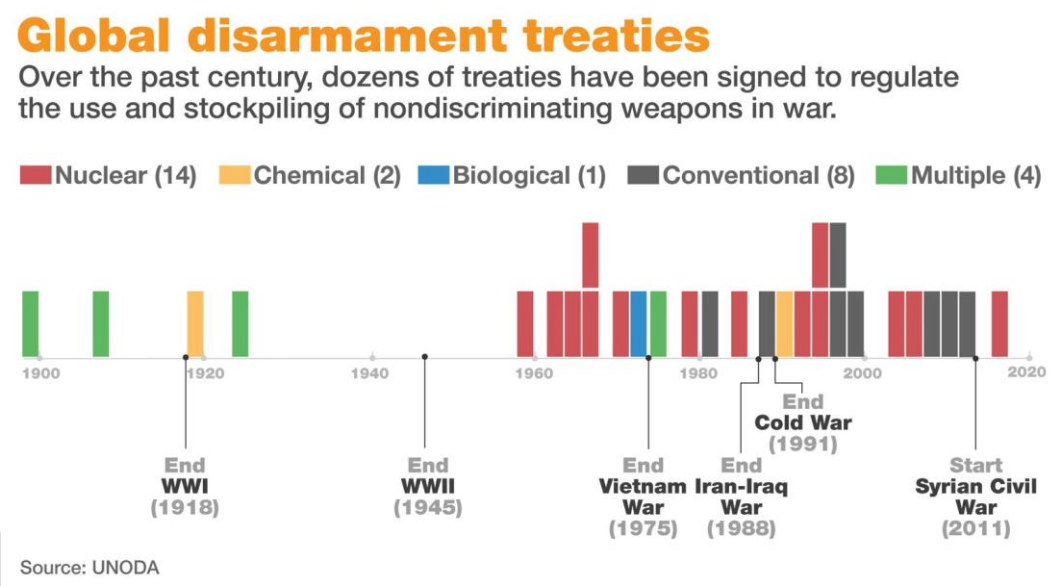
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was signed in

1996 but has yet to enter into force, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which will enter into force on 22 January 2021. (UNODA, s.d.)

The NPT only restricts the possession of NWs to five countries - Great Britain, China, France, Russia, and the USA, with all other countries that signed it renouncing their production or possession (Jordan et al., 2016). Some countries denied signing the treaty, such as India, Israel, and Pakistan, while North Korea, which initially was a signatory country, decided to withdraw in 2003 (Jordan et al., 2016). Besides that, there is suspicion that Iran, a signatory country, is attempting to break the NPT rules (Jordan et al., 2016).

Considering the treaties mentioned above, it is important to highlight that they are not the only relevant treaties on the subject. The graph below showcases many examples that are extremely relevant for non-proliferation efforts worldwide, putting into evidence all global disarmament treaties over the past century during relevant periods such as both World Wars, the Vietnam War and, more recently, the Syrian Civil War.

Photo 5: Global disarmament treaties



Source: Al Jazeera, 2017.

With the definitions of Weapons of Mass Destruction in mind, it is relevant to discuss the deep impacts that their usage inflicts on the general population and nature. In the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “Deaths of family members and the general upheaval of their lives as well as reports of an increased incidence of cancer as a late effect of radiation exposure

heightened survivors' anxiety and fears." (RERF, s.d.). In the Chernobyl disaster[6], it was found that "The respondents from the contaminated area showed significantly higher scores on most of the psychiatric symptom scales, namely the GHQ, and those for depression and somatization" (Havenaar et al. apud Kamite; Igawa; Kabir, 2016, p. 57). Therefore, considering the clear negative impacts WMD brings about to people, it is necessary to discuss its implications for human rights.

3.2 Human Rights and Victims of WMD

The United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an absolute milestone in the history of human rights. It declares, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (ONU, s.d.). Furthermore, it affirms:

> Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (United Nations, n.d.)

Consequently, human rights are universal, i.e., available to all people. Besides that, they are inalienable, which means they cannot be transferred or taken away, indivisible, meaning they are inherent to every human being, and non-discriminatory, i.e., should be respected regardless of colour, gender, religion, or other characteristics.

The use of Weapons of Mass Destruction violates multiple human rights, including the right to life (art. 6) and freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or

[6] The famous Chernobyl disaster occurred on April 26, 1986, after the fourth reactor of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (ChNPP) in what now is the country of Ukraine, but that, at that moment, was a part of the Soviet Union. The consequences of this explosion were harsh, with clouds of radiation extending to a height of between 1500 and 10000 meters and spreading over 40% of Europe, including "Austria, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Romania, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Greece, Iceland, Slovenia" (Yablokov et al., 2010, p.5), besides territories in Asia such as Turkey, Georgia and China, Northern Africa and North America. In a matter of days, the air and nature around the area such as the water and woods turned into dangerous resources for people (Yablokov et al., 2010).

punishment (art. 7) as stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the right to life (art. 3) and right of everyone to a standard of living for health and well-being (art. 25) as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the right of sovereign equality of all states (art. 2) of the UN Charter. This is particularly significant given that a state possessing WMDs holds disproportionate power and influence over those that do not (Yuen, 2002).

The use of WMD can cause an intense humanitarian crisis, which can include "mass migration, deterioration of public health, resource scarcity, food insecurity, increased crime rates, heightened fear, and loss of life and property" (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024, p.5). The psychological impacts of an attack can lead to "trauma, anxiety, depression, and lack of access to mental health services" (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024, p.5), with survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (*hibakusha*[7]) reporting symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder, including somatization and neurosis, mood changes, gross mental retardation, and fear of the late health-related impacts of the bombings (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024).

Furthermore, WMD can cause extreme and lasting damage to the environment, including impacts on "[…] soil and water contamination, air pollution, and loss of biodiversity, as seen in the civilian nuclear disaster of Chernobyl (which was not a nuclear bomb) and the chemical attack on Halabja[8]." (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024, p.5). In extreme cases, a nuclear bombing could exacerbate climate change by causing a so-called nuclear winter, which severely decreases global temperature and levels of precipitation (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024).

[7] defined as "someone who has directly received injurious effects from an atomic bombing (...), with special emphasis on the effects of radiation" (Naono, 2019, p. 334.)

[8] Between 1987 and 1988, the Iraqi regime, under Saddam Hussein, widely used chemical weapons against the Kurdiwsh populace, which defines themselves as the largest population without a state, in Iraq, attacking the town of Halabja with poison gas and killing an approximate number of 5,000 people in only a few minutes. Survivors describe an intense and sickening smell of rotten apples spreading in the city as the bombs hit the ground. With the rise of Hussein's government in the country, the persecution of Kurds only grew as it escalated into the eventual attack of the Halabja city of around 70,000 people. Many people died immediately, others died in panic on the streets, others tried to flee but fell victim to burning and blistering and to coughing of green vomit, with some reporting hysterical laughter coming from victims moments before their deaths, as their eyes and skin burned (Mlodoch, 2017).

3.3 The Future of WMD

More recently, almost all Nuclear Power countries have increased their arsenals, albeit in size, capability, or both (UCS, n.d.). This is contrary to the previous declining trend, marked especially by the partial dismantling of nuclear warhead arsenals by Russia and the USA, which together represent almost 90% of existing NW (Kristensen, Korda, 2024). The USA, Russia, and China are all undergoing a trend of modernization of their arsenals, while the smaller arsenals of other nuclear-armed states are in development or planning to develop (Kristensen, Korda, 2024).

As of 2024, the U.S. has maintained a stockpile of 3,748 nuclear warheads, with projections indicating a decline in the future. The United Kingdom has a stockpile of approximately 225 warheads. However, it is expected that the number will rise in the following years. France, on another note, has an amount of 290. China, on the other hand, has increased its stockpile to 500. A small increase was also observed in India, which has as of 2024 an amount of 172 nuclear warheads (NTI, n.d.)

Pakistan possesses the same number as 2023, amounting to 170 warheads, and projections estimate a probability of growth in the next years. It is very hard to estimate the number of nuclear warheads possessed by North Korea, but estimates place a number of around 50, with intentions of future increase. Israel is estimated to have around 90 warheads, the same amount as 2023, although some specialists place that number as high as 300. Finally, Russia maintains, approximately, 5.580 nuclear warheads, and although the number of strategic warheads increased since 2023, the number of non-strategic ones is estimated to have decreased, which results in an overall net decrease in their arsenal (NTI, n.d.; Kristensen, Korda, 2024).

However, the recent Russia-Ukraine war has created new tensions in the International System. In February 2023, Russia's president Vladimir Putin stated his intentions to retreat (or 'suspend', in his words) their participation in the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), which represents a "bilateral strategic control treaty between Russia and the United States" (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p.287), placing a "cap on the numbers of Russian and US deployed strategic nuclear forces and allows for on-site inspections to verify compliance" (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p.288). With that, the

USA is unable to verify the Kremlin's compliance with the obligation to "deploy no more than 1550 strategic warheads" (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p.288). The Russian president and other governmental members have alluded to nuclear use during the conflict in speeches.

It is important to emphasize that these threats can escalate the conflict and, on the other hand, discourage international intervention, which extends the humanitarian and displacement crisis, together with damage to infrastructure and resources in Ukraine (Ahmed, Azzawi, 2024). This tension, followed by the threat posed by North Korea, the traction between China and Taiwan, the tension between India and Pakistan, the Israel-Palestine conflict and Iran's missile attacks on Iraq and Israel all contribute to a significant security challenge, one that brings about fear of usage of WMDs.

Predictions for the future are not so optimistic, as NW are likely to play a more present role in the emerging international security environment, and, by 2030, the incentives for retention and/or acquisition of nuclear warheads may increase (Jr., Carus, 2014), a consequence of an uncertain and decreasingly secure international environment. Besides that, "longstanding efforts to exclude WMD from international competition and conflict could be undermined" (Jr., Carus, 2014, p.38). The dominance of the USA as the main geopolitical actor will also be undermined due to the growing tendency of multipolarity in the International System. Particularly, it will have an especially hard time projecting power in regions where rising big competitors are present, especially in Asia (Jr., Carus, 2014).

Besides that, more effective ways of delivering chemical agents, including encapsulation and nanotechnology, will be observed, which increases the likelihood that those objects will be more widely possessed. Another possibility is the combination of more than one form of WMD into one device, which will make it harder to combat. There is a chance that more advanced bioweapons will be developed by both state and non-state actors, which can be expected to assist the offensive side more than the defensive one (Jr., Carus, 2014). Finally, the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can make the production of WMD more efficient and faster, and with AI assistance, individuals or groups without prior knowledge of producing fissile materials or toxic substances could potentially gain the capability to develop WMD.

Finally, the usage of WMD, whether nuclear, biological, chemical, or radiological, constitutes one of the most egregious violations of human rights in modern conflict history.

These weapons not only inflict immediate physical destruction but also cause long-lasting psychological trauma, environmental devastation, and socio-economic disruption. The sheer scale of their impact inevitably undermines key human rights as affirmed in international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, n.d.) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966).

However, discussions on WMDs have traditionally been centered on state security, deterrence strategies, and non-proliferation efforts, leaving the human consequences largely overlooked. Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for instance, have faced not only physical and genetic health consequences but also profound social stigma and psychological suffering, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders (Kamite, Igawa, Kabir, 2016; RERF, n.d.). This reality emphasizes the need to reframe WMD discourse with a victim-centered perspective.

Addressing the long-term impacts of WMD use requires a multi-layered and sustained international response. States must, then, ensure victims' access to adequate and ongoing medical and psychological care. As outlined by Ahmed and Azzawi (2024), WMD exposure can lead to chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, and even intergenerational trauma. Rebuilding the lives of WMD victims demands that humanitarian principles and human rights norms be placed at the core of disarmament policy. Without such an approach, the invisible wounds of WMD warfare will continue to be neglected.

4 RELEVANT COUNTRIES

When it comes to Weapons of Mass Destruction possessing countries, it is highly agreed upon that the maintenance of those weapons come as a form of deterrence (Kristensen, Korda, 2024). The nine nuclear weapon waging countries possess together, as of 2024, a total of approximately 21.121 nuclear weapons, being 9585 of them judged as likely to be operationally available. Out of those, there are about 2100 that are kept in a form of high operational alert, being 1000 more than the previous year (Kristensen, Korda, 2024). On the other side of the spectrum, there are important countries that advocate for the disarmament of all WMD´s. With that in mind, it is important to address all of them separately.

4.1 United States of America (USA)

Possessing one of the biggest nuclear arsenals in the globe, the USA appears to comply with the new START treaty, however, after a lack of compliance from Russia, the USA stopped giving updated annual information on their nuclear arsenals as of 2023, in order to induce compliance from its counterpart.

The 2023 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) made available by the Joe Biden administration determines three main uses for nuclear weapons: “Deter strategic attacks, assure allies and partners, and achieve US objectives if deterrence fails” (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p.5). As of recently, the UNGA member country has relied heavily on refurbishing the already existent warhead types in order to manage its arsenal, and it has been moving towards producing new or modified warheads (Kristensen, Korda, 2024). Their offensive nuclear forces include “heavy bombers, land-based ICBMs and nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)” (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p.5).

4.2 Russia

As of 2023, president Vladimir Putin decided to remove Russia from the New START treaty, which would place a cap on the numbers of Russian and US deployed strategic nuclear forces and allows for on-site inspections to verify compliance (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p. 18), which means the USA cannot effectively verify if the Moscow kept in touch with the treaty's guidelines or not. On Russia's official deterrence policy, updated lastly in 2020, explicit conditions on which to use WMD are stated

> (a) the receipt of reliable data on a launch of ballistic missiles attacking the territory of Russia or its allies; (b) the use of nuclear weapons or other types of weapon of mass destruction against Russia or its allies; (c) an attack against Russia’s critical governmental or military sites, disruption of which would undermine the nuclear forces; and (d) aggression against Russia with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy. (Kristensen, Korda, 2024, p. 18)

However, as previously mentioned, the Russia-Ukraine war has brought with it questions about Russia´s WMD policies, especially under the possibility of usage of those weapons, after several speeches from government officials alluded to this action (Kristensen, Korda, 2024).

4.3 China

The Chinese nuclear arsenal has increased, with around 90 more nuclear warheads in 2024 than in the previous year, and recent projections are of continuous growth. However, as a member of the UNGA, they have maintained, for a long time, a policy of not threatening to use or using nuclear warheads against non-nuclear possessing countries or nuclear free zones (Kristensen, Korda, 2024).

It is speculated that Chinese intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are likely to outnumber those of the USA and Russia, but its nuclear stockpile, in general, is supposed to remain smaller than those of the aforementioned countries (Kristensen, Korda, 2024).

4.4 Ukraine

Following its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine had over 1.700 Soviet nuclear weapons left on its territory. However, Ukraine never possessed any control of those weapons operationally, and they were all sent to Russia in 1994, under an agreement that exchanged it for security assurances. The agreement was broken in 2014, with the invasion of Crimea, and in 2022, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia (NTI, s.d.). Besides that, they still have 4 planned nuclear power plants, and rely on 15 of them to generate over half of the electricity needed in their territory (NTI, s.d.).

Regarding biological weapons, they have not engaged in any activities since independence. Similarly, chemical weapons were stored and tested prior to 1991, but they were returned to Russia for elimination (NTI, s.d.). Ukraine is a member of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which bans all nuclear explosion tests on Earth, besides being a member of the NPT, that advocates for non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful use of nuclear energy. They are also a part of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which requires countries to destroy all chemical weapons while prohibiting developing, using and stockpiling of it. Finally they partake in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which is an informal, non-treaty association composed by governments which aim to reach non-proliferation of missiles, unmanned air vehicles and other similar technologies (NTI, s.d.).

The war in Ukraine was “the first time there has been a full-scale war in a country with a significant nuclear power structure “(Roth, 2022), which includes the Zaporizhzhia power

plant, which is the biggest one on the European continent (Roth, 2022). This specific power plant was ultimately taken by Russia, which represents an extremely dangerous situation, especially considering over 50% of the country depends on nuclear energy, and that a meltdown at a reactor or a fire could cause radiological contamination, which can put the environment and people's health at risk (Roth, 2022).

4.5 Brazil

A Member state of the UNGA, Brazil had once engaged with nuclear competition against Argentina, but renounced this action with the fall of its military dictatorship. Besides that, it has one nuclear-power attack submarine (SSN) currently under development (NTI, s.d.). It operates two nuclear power reactors and has never engaged with chemical or biological weapons, besides abandoning its ballistic missile program during the 1990s (NTI, s.d.).

Brazil is a member of the NPT, besides having created the ABACC, which is a binational safeguards agency formed by Brasília and Buenos Aires to ensure that all usage of nuclear weapons is for peaceful intents only. It also signed the Tlatelolco Treaty, which prohibits all signatory Latin American countries from possessing, acquiring, testing or using nuclear weapons, besides being a member of the CTBT.

4.6 South Africa

During the Apartheid government, South Africa worked with the development and research of WMD. Yet, in 1989, it became the first country to ever achieve the ability of developing nuclear weapons and voluntarily giving it up. Furthermore, in 1993, it ended its ballistic missile, chemical and biological programs all together (NTI, s.d.). In total, it had built 6 nuclear weapons during the 1980s before giving them up.

It has also guided efforts to build the Treaty of Pelindaba, which establishes the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone (ANWFZ), and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), besides being a member of the TPNW and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) (NTI, s.d.).

5 THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the "only universally representative body of the United Nations" (CFR, 2024), and is one of the major bodies of the UN, together with the Security Council (UNSC), the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Their function revolves around subjects related to international peace and security, with the presence of debates, discussions and recommendations. Topics may include human rights, international law, disarmament, development and the peaceful arbitration of disputes between nations (CFR, 2024).

It is through the UNGA that the non-permanent members of the UNSC and other UN bodies are elected, and it is the body responsible for appointing, based on the UNSC's recommendations, the new Secretary-General. The UNGA also approves the general budget of the UN and evaluates reports of the four main organs of the UN, besides working together with the ICJ to elect their judges (CFR, 2024).

In total, there are 193 member-states of the UNGA, each one with a vote in the Assembly, and each member should not have more than five representatives (UN, n.d.). The president rotates annually, being elected by the members themselves (CFR, 2024). The functions of the president are "to enforce rules of procedure, such as opening debate, setting the agenda, limiting speaking times for representatives, and suspending or adjourning debate" (CFR, 2024). Furthermore, the decisions of the UNGA are settled by a two-thirds majority vote of the present members (UN, n.d.). The UNGA meets annually, with exceptions for special sessions when required, and it may create subsidiary organs that it judges necessary (UN, n.d.).

In 1950, the UNGA established Resolution 377, named Uniting for Peace, recognizing that there is a large scale of international tension and the possibility of failure from the UNSC to exercise its designated functions of maintaining international peace and security in a situation with an apparent threat or branch of peace or action of aggression, in the event that unanimity between its permanent members cannot be reached. Hence, the Uniting for Peace resolution determines that the UNGA must act in a manner to maintain or restore such peace and security (UN, 1950).

When not in session, the UNGA must gather in an emergency special session within a total of 24 hours from the request, if voted by a majority of members of the UNSC without the

usage of veto powers, as it's considered a procedural measure (Scharf, 2023). Under these circumstances, the UNGA can respond to and make recommendations for any measures it deems necessary without the possibility of a veto, allowing it to take a more active role in maintaining peace and security (Melling, 2022). With that, the Assembly can make recommendations or take decisions including the use of force, when necessary, as long as there is a two-thirds majority voting (Scharf, 2023).

Therefore, in a context where tensions rise internationally, threats to use, produce, or maintain WMD increase, and considering that many countries in possession of WMD have the right to veto proposals at the UNSC, the role of the UNGA, under resolution 337, is to act in an assertive way aiming at maintaining peace and security internationally and controlling the spread and risk of usage of WMD to ultimately protect the human rights of all affected people.

6 THE COMMITTEE'S MAIN POSITIONS

The threat of a WMD attack is smaller today than it was during the Cold War, for example, but that does not mean it is non-existent. The fear of terrorists acquiring WMDs is growing, particularly since, unlike states that may be deterred by the threat of retaliation against their territory or allies, terrorists operate without such constraints, as they are not inherently tied to any specific country (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005). Besides that, the fear of the maintaining of WMD by new (and arguably unstable) nuclear countries, such as North Korea and Pakistan is related to what's called a WMD chain reaction, which can happen when other states, observing the acquisition of NW or other WMD recently by those countries, may be compelled to start their own WMD programs as well (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005).

In a case where the number of WMD countries increases, and those are faced with little to no consequences, together with the failure to fulfill the disarmament obligations from states known to possess them, and, especially, if there is a status to be gained from owning them, it is possible that countries such as Brazil and Ukraine will reconsider their internal WMD policies (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005).

Because of WMD, in more than one event, the entire fate of the world was at risk. Non-proliferation efforts have, however, advanced steadily ever since the USA bombed Hiroshima

and Nagasaki, but not without setbacks, with some nations acquiring arsenals against the will of strong states such as the USA (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005).

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) started in 1970 and is the main treaty when it comes to non-proliferation, having 191 state parties and being complemented by the "Atomic Energy Agency (AEA), safeguards, national export control laws, coordinated export control policies under the Nuclear Suppliers Group, U.N. Security Council resolutions, and ad hoc initiatives" (CRS, 2024). The NPT recognizes five states as possible of maintaining nuclear weapons - USA, Russia, France, United Kingdom, and China. Only three states - India, Pakistan, and Israel - have not signed it, and North Korea, which signed it previously, decided to withdraw in 2003.

That, together with regional tensions brought about by those states, such as the decades-lasting conflict between India and Pakistan, may bring about regional wars and, possibly, nuclear catastrophe (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005). It is possible to consider that there is, at a certain level, a missile race between countries such as India and Pakistan, and India and China. In the Middle East, a conflict-prone area, the development of nuclear programs by Israel and Iran and the possession of CW by neighboring states could increase the volatility of the area, possibly increasing the number of WMD-possessing countries (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, Rajkumar, 2005).

Furthermore, many countries, including Brazil and South Africa, decided to abandon their nuclear programs to join the treaty, and states such as Ukraine gave up Soviet WMD that were present in their territories and joined the NPT in the 1990s. (CRS, 2024). It forbids non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) from acquiring nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapon states (NWS) from giving weapons to NNWS or aiding them in their nuclear programs (CRS, 2024).

The UN General Assembly addresses disarmament through two main bodies: the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). With that in mind,

> Some major achievements of the UNGA in the field of arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament include the endorsements of the NPT (1968), Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons (BTWC, 1972) and Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (CWC, 1992). Additional achievements include the adoption

> of the Final Document of the First Special Session on Disarmament (1978), the Program of Action agreed at the Conference on the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SAWL, 2001), the CTBT (1996), and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT, 2013). The General Assembly has held three special sessions on disarmament — in 1978 (resulting in adoption of a consensus report), 1982, and 1988 (NTI, s.d.)

Following up on that, the United Nations has developed a complex and evolving toolkit to address the proliferation and use of WMD, focusing on disarmament, non-proliferation, humanitarian response, and legal accountability. While the Security Council is often the most visible body in WMD-related crises, the UNGA, the UNODA, and several specialized agencies also play a significant role in shaping the international response. Beyond treaties like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the UNODA serves as a technical and institutional backbone of WMD-related UN efforts. It supports negotiations, transparency mechanisms, and verification regimes, and engages in capacity-building in member states (UNODA, n.d.). The UNODA also, through Resolution 377 (Uniting for Peace), can act when the Security Council is paralyzed by vetoes.

Humanitarian agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are also essential actors. They respond to the immediate and long-term consequences of WMD usage, including public health crises, contamination, and mental health trauma. These organizations, often in collaboration with the UN, facilitate the rehabilitation and support of affected populations, as seen in responses to Agent Orange in Vietnam or the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Finally, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays a vital role in ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear technology and verifying compliance with nuclear safeguards. It submits annual reports to the UNGA and works closely with member states to prevent nuclear proliferation (NTI, 2024)

Under the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the provisions of the IAEA Statute, the IAEA submits annual reports to the UN, which are reviewed during UNGA meetings. Each year, the UNGA adopts resolutions and decisions addressing nonproliferation, disarmament, arms control, and international security, based on recommendations from its First Committee (NTI, s.d.). A

number of states who are not members of the NPT, like Israel, India, and Pakistan are members of the IAEA and allow for inspections of some, but not all, of their nuclear activities to be done (CRS, 2024).

7 RELEVANT QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSIONS

- How can the use or threat of using WMD compromise human rights? Can WMD be used in a manner that doesn't compromise human rights?
- What specific forms of humanitarian aid and long-term support should states provide to victims of WMD attacks? How can UNGA ensure that victims receive not only immediate medical assistance but also psychological support and rehabilitation?
- How can the UNGA address potential human rights violations related to WMD exposure, including those that arise from inadequate medical treatment or social discrimination?
- What steps should be taken to strengthen countries' preparedness for WMD incidents, including response capabilities and infrastructure?
- How can UNGA balance respect for national sovereignty with the international community's responsibility to protect civilians from WMD harm?

8 LIST OF DELEGATIONS

Nº	**Name**
1	United States
2	United Kingdom
3	France
4	Russia
5	China

6	Japan
7	Iran
8	Iraq
9	Syria
10	Ukraine
11	India
12	Pakistan
13	Israel
14	North Korea
15	South Africa
16	Germany
17	Brazil
18	Mexico
19	South Korea
20	Turkey
21	Ethiopia
22	Nigeria
23	Indonesia

24	Argentina
25	Egypt
26	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
27	International Atomic Energy Agency
28	International Committee of the Red Cross
29	World Health Organization
30	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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