

Doomsday Clock Now '2 Minutes to Midnight'

by Jessica Corbett via james - CommonDreams *Friday, Jan 26 2018, 9:25am*

international / prose / post

In response to rising nuclear tensions and concerns about inadequate action to address the climate crisis, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced Thursday the hands of the Doomsday Clock have been moved and it is now just two minutes to midnight, a signal to the world that international scientists and policy experts are increasingly worried about the likeliness of global catastrophe.

"In 2017, world leaders failed to respond effectively to the looming threats of nuclear war and climate change, making the world security situation more dangerous than it was a year ago—and as dangerous as it has been since World War II," said a statement from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

The Bulletin was established decades ago by creators of the atomic bomb and aims to keep the world informed "about threats to the survival and development of humanity from nuclear weapons, climate change, and emerging technologies in the life sciences."

"North Korea's nuclear weapons program appeared to make remarkable progress in 2017, increasing risks for itself, other countries in the region, and the United States. Hyperbolic rhetoric and provocative actions on both sides have increased the possibility of nuclear war by accident or miscalculation," the statement continued. "On the climate change front, the danger may seem less immediate, but avoiding catastrophic temperature increases in the long run requires urgent attention now."

Advocates for climate action and nuclear disarmament responded to the announcement with alarm and condemned world leaders who have escalated concerns about global annihilation.

Global Zero executive director Derek Johnson recalled when, "largely in response to candidate Trump's alarming campaign rhetoric," the Doomsday Clock was moved up to two-and-a-half minutes to midnight last year. A year later, Johnson said, "the reality of a nuclear-armed President Trump running loose in the world is worse than we feared, and that is clearly a central factor in this decision."

"In the last year, nuclear brinkmanship between the U.S. and North Korea has terrified millions of people across the world," noted Kate Hudson, General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The announcement, Hudson added, "highlights the breakdown of bilateral nuclear agreements between Russia and the United States, the potential for a new nuclear arms race, as well as the undermining of the Iran nuclear deal—in particular the attempt to block certification by the U.S. President."

"We have been lucky to avoid conflict through intentional or accidental means, but recent posturing and the false alarms in Hawaii and Japan show our luck is about to run out if we don't move quickly," warned Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear

Weapons.

"It's always sobering to be reminded just how close humanity is to destroying itself with nuclear weapons," noted Paul Kawika Martin, senior director for policy and political affairs at Peace Action. "The majority of the world is quite ready to live without the constant fear of nuclear war hanging over our heads, but the nuclear-armed nations of the world are acting like children who only follow the rules when the rules suit their perceived interests."

Both Martin and Fihn called on nuclear-armed nations to support the historic UN treaty to ban nuclear weapons that was passed by 122 countries last July. "Other nations need to join the process," Fihn said, "so we can stop flirting with our own destruction and destroy the Doomsday Clock once and for all."

Looking forward, the Bulletin's president and CEO Rachel Bronson, called on humanity to join together in order to turn the clock back. "It is urgent that, collectively, we put in the work necessary to produce a 2019 Clock statement that rewinds the Doomsday Clock," Bronson stated. "Get engaged, get involved, and help create that future. The time is now."

The Bulletin held a press conference to explain the reasoning for moving the Doomsday Clock 30 seconds closer to midnight. Scientists and policy experts weighed in with their observations.

Creative Commons attribution applies.

See also:

<http://jungledrum.hopto.org/news/story-3142.html>

<https://tinyurl.com/ycr3v2qz>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-3146.html>