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Election 2020: Let's get disarmament on the agenda

What do the political parties say about disarmament?

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This document is part of our Election 2020 disarmament resource, which includes sections on what good disarmament policy would look like, disarmament questions for candidates, and links to further information - the resource is available at <http://disarm.org.nz>

Introduction

On 24 August 2020, we sent five questions to all of the political parties with candidates in Election 2020 asking about their policies on disarmament, fully autonomous weapon systems and military expenditure. This was necessary because none of the political parties have a coherent disarmament policy available in a single document (although the Green and Labour parties have some disarmament elements in their foreign affairs policy and elsewhere).

To date, we have received replies from seven: the Greens and Labour sent substantive replies; National said they had forwarded our questions “to the Office of Hon Mark Mitchell, National’s Spokesperson for Defence and Disarmament for his consideration”; the Māori Party asked for more time; TOP and Vision NZ said they do not yet have a disarmament policy; and the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party answered each question with reference to their sole focus, legalising cannabis.

From the replies received, the Green Party has the most points in common with our recommendations of what good disarmament policy should look like, and they share Peace Movement Aotearoa’s commitment to using non-violent means to resolve conflict.

Labour’s reply has few points in common with our recommendations of what good disarmament policy should look like, although Labour did reinstate the Disarmament and Arms Control portfolio after the 2017 election in keeping with its manifesto, even if it took some time to do so (see, for example, ‘Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control reinstated’, www.facebook.com/PeaceMovementAotearoa/posts/1617938474920182)

Labour’s policy does not seem to have been updated since the 2014 election: it includes a reference to “working with like-minded countries to outlaw nuclear weapons, including through a Nuclear Arms Convention” just below references to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which does exactly that, and which the current government ratified in July 2018.

Labour's replies to the general questions refer only to nuclear disarmament, somewhat surprising given the role the fifth Labour government played in negotiating the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, including hosting the second to last negotiating conference in Wellington in February 2008, and the range of disarmament issues it has promoted while in government since 2017.

Labour's position on fully autonomous weapon systems is disappointing, as is their focus on maintaining combat ready armed forces regardless of the cost.

What do the political parties say about disarmament?

Our questions (in italics) and the replies received from the Green Party, Labour Party, and the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party are included below in the order they were received.

Green Party, 9 September 2020

1) Disarmament policy: Does your party have a disarmament policy? a) If yes, what are the key provisions of the policy? Can you kindly attach a copy to your reply, and tell us where it can be accessed online by voters.

Yes. The Green Party believes Aotearoa should show leadership by looking at new ways of dealing with global conflicts and work towards an international framework of peacekeeping, peace mediation and humanitarian relief. We would retain sufficient capabilities for activities such as peacekeeping, search and rescue, disaster relief, fisheries enforcement and border control tasks. Specialised military equipment that exceeds these requirements should be phased out.

More information about our global affairs priorities, which include disarmament issues are available at: https://www.greens.org.nz/global_affairs_2020

2) Spokesperson: Who is your party's spokesperson on disarmament and/or foreign affairs?

The Green Party spokesperson for Defence, Disarmament, Security & Intelligence is Golriz Ghahraman.

3) Fully autonomous weapon systems: Does your party have a policy on the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapon systems? (fully autonomous weapon systems, also known as 'lethal autonomous weapon systems' or 'killer robots' are robotic weapon systems that use artificial intelligence to select targets and attack on their own, without any meaningful human control)?

Yes. The Green Party rejects the development and use of weapons that create long-lasting risks to civilian populations. Fully autonomous weapons systems pose a significant risk of civilian casualties in armed conflict, as well as removing personal accountability and placing the power to kill in the hands of inanimate machines, which diminishes the significance of a military decision to end human life.

However, the Green Party notes that partially automated drone systems could play a useful role in pest control to achieve the Predator Free 2050 goals, including by dropping bait in areas difficult to access through other methods. In continuing to explore the options for new pest control technologies the Green Party will only fund research done by organisations that have no involvement with producing weapons for military use.

4) *Military expenditure:* Does your party have a policy on military expenditure?

Yes.

a) *Should the amount allocated to Vote Defence and Vote Defence Force be: decreased / increased / remain at a similar level as it is now?*

Decreased.

b) *What is the rationale behind your party's position on this?*

The Green Party wishes to deprioritise expenditure on military assets and capabilities. These assets enable Aotearoa to take part in overseas combat operations but have few peacekeeping applications. The nation's focus should turn to maintaining a defence force that concentrates on peacekeeping, disaster relief, and the protection of maritime borders and marine resources from illegal fishing or mining operations. We therefore oppose the purchase and installation of technologies that enhance our ability to make war, such as anti-submarine weaponry on our maritime surveillance aeroplanes.

5) *Other information:* Please feel free to supply any further information that is not already covered by the questions above.

The Green Party is committed to non-violence as one of our core charter principles. We will work to achieve our vision of a world where there is a just distribution of global resources, where governments respect human rights and where disputes are settled peacefully. Disarmament is a necessary first step toward realising this vision and the Green Party will lead by example to achieve it.



Labour Party, 17 September 2020

1) *Disarmament policy:* Does your party have a disarmament policy?

Labour adopted a staunch nuclear free stance back in the 1970s, and we have a proud history of leadership on nuclear disarmament.

a) *If yes, what are the key provisions of the policy? Can you kindly attach a copy to your reply, and tell us where it can be accessed online by voters.*

Early in our term in Government, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, “At a time when risks to global peace and security are growing and the rules-based system is under such

pressure, we must recommit ourselves to the cause of non-proliferation and disarmament, and to the norms and rules which support those endeavours.”

Making sure New Zealand’s voice is heard on disarmament and non-proliferation is as vital today as it was when Norman Kirk and David Lange took a stand against nuclear testing in the Pacific. That’s why when we came into Government, Labour reinstated the Cabinet position of Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control. One recent aspect of that role has been to advocate for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. New Zealand was one of the early countries to sign the treaty, and we have expressed our sincere wish to see it enter into force in 2020.

This term we held a Pacific Conference on Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, in line with our proud history of being nuclear-free.

Under Labour, New Zealand will:

- be nuclear-free, in line with the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act (1987)
- be a leader in promoting disarmament by working with like-minded countries to outlaw nuclear weapons, including through a Nuclear Arms Convention.

Labour’s policy platform can be found here: <https://www.labour.org.nz/party-policy-platform-2019>. We have not yet released our 2020 manifesto but details of our policies can be found here: <https://www.labour.org.nz/policy>.

2) Spokesperson: *Who is your party's spokesperson on disarmament and/or foreign affairs?*

David Parker

3) Fully autonomous weapon systems: *Does your party have a policy on the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapon systems? (fully autonomous weapon systems, also known as 'lethal autonomous weapon systems' or 'killer robots' are robotic weapon systems that use artificial intelligence to select targets and attack on their own, without any meaningful human control)? a) If yes, what is the policy?*

Labour believes strongly that human control should be maintained over lethal weapons systems, in line with international humanitarian law. We have serious concerns about the legal, ethical and human rights challenges posed by the development and use of LAWS. We support strong and effective international rules to address these issues.

Autonomous weapons are currently prohibited by international law, especially through Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions. However, our priority is to ensure that this law is implemented more effectively. Wider use of Article 36 weapons reviews in particular will ensure that there will always be meaningful human control over weapons incorporating autonomy.

While in Government we have also supported calls for a high-level political declaration, which was one of the options laid out by the United Nations Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament. Such a declaration would set clear rules on the development and

use of autonomous weapons to ensure meaningful human control and operational safeguards.

Beyond this we will continue to support and advocate for ongoing policy work and discussions to address ethical issues arising from the development of LAWS, including the consideration of a possible ban.

4) *Military expenditure:* *Does your party have a policy on military expenditure? a) Should the amount allocated to Vote Defence and Vote Defence Force be: decreased / increased / remain at a similar level as it is now? b) What is the rationale behind your party's position on this?*

Labour will continue to invest in a modern Defence Force that contributes to the well-being, environmental security, and welfare of New Zealanders and the Pacific region. We will invest in the well-being of our military personnel, including supporting diversity and mental health.

Our Defence Force needs to be prepared and deployment-ready for current and emerging world issues relating to the climate crisis, pandemics, other disasters, forced movements of people, the threat of new weapons systems in cyberspace and outer space and rising tension between foreign nations. Labour places the well-being and security of people at the heart of our Defence policy.

5) *Other information:* *Please feel free to supply any further information that is not already covered by the questions above.*

Labour is proud of New Zealand's reputation as an independent, principled country that promoted policies for a better, more peaceful, and fairer world. In government, Labour will give New Zealand a strong and independent voice in the world.



Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party, 22 September 2020

1) *Disarmament policy:* *Does your party have a disarmament policy?*

No our party does not have a disarmament policy in the traditional sense, but the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party has been involved in a type of war called The Drug War. On closer examination the war is not on drugs, but a war on a people who choose to use a God given herb. 350,000 New Zealand citizens have been criminalised over the past 10 years for cannabis. Once you have a conviction you become a second class citizen limiting your career and future travel options. People have been persecuted, prosecuted, imprisoned resulting in family break up and job loss. The worst part about this shocking treatment of a sector of our community, is that no one 'blinks an eye'! The ALCP advocate for a more humane way for cannabis consumers and agree with the Law Commission Report of 10 years ago reported that cannabis was better handled as a Health issue, not a Criminal matter.

Prohibition of cannabis is a failed costly policy and it is time to end this unjustified drug war that was never based on scientific fact, but on what we now called fake news propaganda.

There will be a saving of \$200,000 million per annum on policing and court costs which will be put in to health and education.

2) *Spokesperson:* *Who is your party's spokesperson on disarmament and/or foreign affairs?*

We do not have a spokesperson on disarmament and or foreign affairs. Our focus is on changing this terrible law on cannabis that unjustly negatively affects Maori at four times the rate. We are doing battle on the home front.

3) *Fully autonomous weapon systems:* *Does your party have a policy on the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapon systems? (fully autonomous weapon systems, also known as 'lethal autonomous weapon systems' or 'killer robots' are robotic weapon systems that use artificial intelligence to select targets and attack on their own, without any meaningful human control)?*

The ALCP is a party of peace. All our actions in the last 24 years have always been peaceful. We do not have a specific policy but the three planks of the cannabis industry R20 Recreational, Medicinal and the Hemp Industry is estimated to bring \$1.4 Billion in tax (BERL) will bring jobs, wealth while saving our planet. The fully autonomous weapon systems sound terrible and more liable for mistakes in this electronic day and age. In principle I would be surprised if any 1,700 s of our party members would support a system that is to kill life and destroy nature, when we are in the opposite 'business' of promoting environmentally bio friendly industries that will reduce pollution, reduce need to cut forests and plant pines, and the highly nutritious seed reduces the need to eat and farm meat, while cleaning our air and water.

4) *Military expenditure:* *Does your party have a policy on military expenditure?*

No.

5) *Other information:* *Please feel free to supply any further information that is not already covered by the questions above.*

The Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party hopes that the people of Aotearoa will vote Yes for the Government Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill. Any concerns about cannabis are not solved by leaving it in the Black Market where there is no age or strength control. Continuing to unfairly criminalise people for using a herb which now is deemed to have medicinal properties, is just plain wrong and needs to stop.

The ALCP say Voting Yes for Cannabis regulation and control, is the responsible action to make a positive change both socially and economically for Aotearoa.

Thank you.