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Statement from a victim of “Black Rain” radiation

A great number of people were killed or injured by heat effects, the blast, or radiation exposure resulting from the atomic bombing by US forces on August 6, 1945. As the temperature of the heat rays was 3,000 or 4,000 degrees Celsius, many people were burned to death. The blast bashed people against the ground or crushed houses with people in them. Even those who managed to get out of the collapsed houses were unable to escape the fires that broke out and they too were burned to death. Those who were exposed to radiation showed signs of acute symptoms such as vomiting, hair loss, and diarrhea. Health damage from residual radiation persisted widely.

In 1945, I lived in Hiroshima City with my parents, at about 700 meters from Ground Zero. My father was an elementary school teacher. My mother ran a fancy-goods shop. Amid an escalating war, our house was demolished to make a fire-lane for prevention purposes and my family moved to Kannon Village (now Hiroshima City’s Saeki Ward) about 8km west of Hiroshima City. That was four months before the city was devastated by the atomic bombing.

I can’t imagine what would have happened to my family if we had not evacuated our home.

I was four years and six months old. It was a sunny day. I was in the living room reading a picture book while my mother was hanging out the laundry. There suddenly came a flash and, with a loud horrendous noise, broken sliding doors and windows flew toward me. I got out of the room crying.

My mother pointed at the sky over Hiroshima. I saw burning skies shining red over the city. All of a sudden it became dark all around. Pieces of burnt cloth and pieces of wood began falling, followed by ash and large drops of rain. Torrential rain continued to fall for about half an hour. Vegetables growing in the field turned black, so did the river. Fish like minnows and eels were floating upside down with their white bellies exposed.

Many injured people came into the village. School buildings and private houses served as temporary first-aid stations.

However, medical care equipment was terribly lacking at these facilities and many injured people died there without receiving adequate care. This happened almost everywhere in Hiroshima. Today, a memorial stands there to remind us of the sad past.

The elementary school where my father taught became a temporary first-aid station. He was exposed to radiation while engaging in relief activities there.

My mother also continued to look after injured people who came to take shelter at one of the “first-aid stations” near our home.

Later, health damage spread to those who were showered with rain containing radioactive particles. At that time, they knew nothing about the cause of their illnesses and were worried for a long time.

I had boils on my hands and legs, and swollen lymph glands in my armpit and groin. I underwent surgery three times. I was frequently absent from school.

As part of our campaign demanding that designation of radiation contaminated areas be applied to wider zones, we published four volumes of the “Collection of Personal Notes.” We had collected testimonies and diaries from more than 100 Hibakusha. They complained about health problems since right after the bombing, including “repeated diarrhea, vomiting, and attacks of fever,” “frequent anemia causing falls,” “suppurating wounds that were difficult to heal,” and “diarrhea and bloody stool.” Many of them when they became adults felt themselves losing strength and had difficulty working.

I was later diagnosed with cardiac hypertrophy and hypertensive heart disease. When I had numbness in my hands and mouth, the doctor told me that I had a cerebral infarction. I was hospitalized, but recovered my health after two weeks of treatment.

The Act for Atomic Bomb Sufferers’ Medical Care was enacted in 1957. For 12 years after the atomic bombing, Hibakusha had been left without adequate medical care. The legislation was made possible by the development of the Movement against A and H Bombs and the Hibakusha movement demanding adequate relief measures for them. The Hibakusha Relief Measures Act of 1968 expanded designated areas of exposure to atomic bomb radiation by amending the government ordinance on the enforcement of the Medical Care Law to designate areas of high residual radiation as “special areas exposed to atomic bomb radiation.”

However, it was found that people’s health had been affected by the black rain even in areas that were outside the designated zones. This prompted residents of those areas and local newspapers to point out how inadequate the designation was. The Prefecture and City of Hiroshima began collecting related documents for further investigation.

In 1967, a law was enacted to issue the A-Bomb Health Handbook to those who were in areas of heavy black rain, acknowledging that they were in situations where it was likely for them to be affected by radiation. But those who were outside of the areas of heavy rain did not receive the Handbook.

Those people who were excluded even though they had sustained similar health damage from the “black rain” were not happy with this. They got together and formed an organization to demand that more areas be designated “areas of the black rain”. For 40 long years, they have carried on the movement with the help of some experts.

The “rainfall map” used for the designation was based on an investigation carried out immediately after the war. As stated by some involved in the investigation, “the map proved to be inadequate for the purpose.”

A total of 170 locations were investigated for the designation, but they were geographically unevenly distributed. In addition, some areas were excluded from the designation merely because an interviewee said black rain did not fall there. Other areas were not even included in “light rainfall area” despite the fact that there were interviewees who testified that it had rained heavily. The number of investigated locations was very limited compared to the breadth of the areas in question. There were areas that were designated as heavy rainfall areas without any investigation. It came to light that officials arbitrarily drew the line between heavy and light rainfall areas without adequate investigation on the ground.

Pressed by our movement, and with the realities of radiation damage revealed more and more through the victories of hibakusha class actions for A-bomb disease recognition, the Prefecture and City of Hiroshima in 2010 conducted an opinion poll on how Hibakusha felt about their experiences and health problems linked to the atomic bombing. Thirty thousand people were asked to fill out the questionnaire, and 1,000 people were interviewed. The survey found that the black rainfall areas were six times larger than what the central government had designated. Based on this survey, the Prefecture and City of Hiroshima requested that the central government designate expanded areas of exposure to atomic bomb radiation.

In 2011, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry organized a panel to study the black rain. The ministry examined the findings of Hiroshima’s survey and rejected the request by denying all the details revealed by the Prefecture and City of Hiroshima about the damage and after-effects of the atomic bombing.

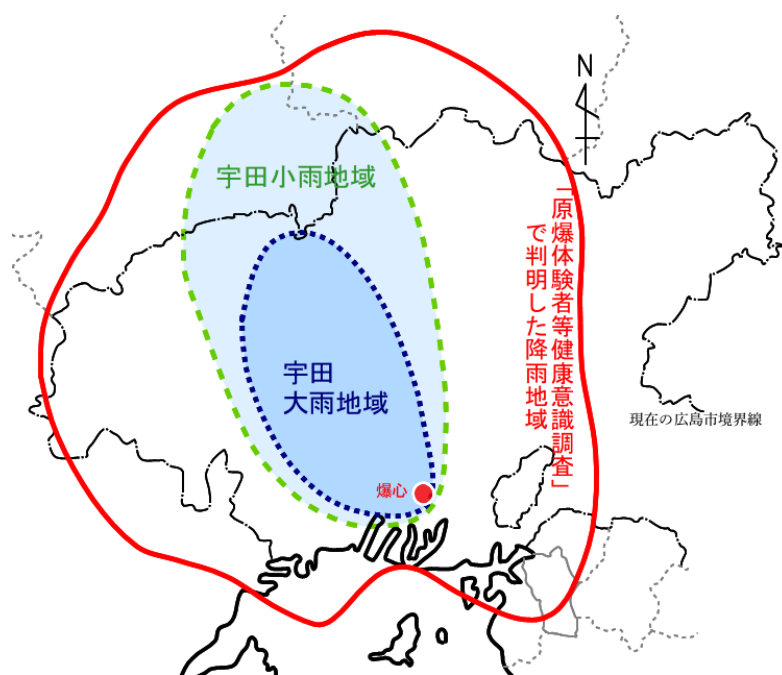
The ministry argued that no radioactive fallout had been detected outside of “heavy rainfall areas.”

It said that no exposure to radiation, either internal or external, was confirmed, that people became ill as a result of thinking too much about being exposed to radiation, and that the testimonies were given more than 60 years after the atomic bombing under the influence of memory inaccuracies.

The government even refused to visit the areas in question or interview people affected by the atomic bomb radiation before reaching the conclusion.

We filed a collective lawsuit with the Hiroshima High Court in 2015 demanding that the government revoke its decision to reject Hibakusha’s request for the A-Bomb Sufferers’ Health Handbook and issue the handbook to the 80 plaintiffs.

There have been 16 sessions of oral arguments. But the government failed to show any evidence to draw a line between areas of heavy rainfall and those of little rainfall. This revealed the absurdity of the designation of “heavy rainfall areas” without any plausible ground.



According to meteorological commonsense, it is hardly believable that rain falls in an oval-shaped area. It is unthinkable that only the rain in heavy rainfall areas is radioactively contaminated. Arguing that only one side of the river is radioactively contaminated while the other side is not is unconvincing.

The court trial has entered a crucial stage. Nine of the plaintiffs have died since the lawsuit was filed.

The damage from the “black rain” has shown the fact that the damage and aftereffects of the atomic bombing are very serious, extensive and protracted.

Any use of nuclear weapons, intentional or accidental, wreaks tremendous damage.

Hibakusha have called for nuclear weapons to be abolished. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons gives us hope and strength to carry on.

In concluding, I express my determination to continue the efforts until the ban treaty goes into force, stigmatizing nuclear weapons and paving the way for the abolition of nuclear weapons.