

## 2021 World Conference against A & H Bombs

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My name is Teruko Yokoyama. I was exposed to the atomic bombing when I had just turned four years old. At the end of July 1945, the air raids had intensified, so my two older sisters and I were evacuated by our grandparents to the countryside. My parents and my younger sister, who was one year and four months old, remained at home when the atomic bomb was dropped.

When the bomb exploded, my father was at Fuchi National Elementary School, 1.2 kilometers away from the hypocenter. He was blown away from the school building, over the playground and down the cliff.

My mother was at home, four kilometers from the hypocenter, when she learned that B-29 bombers were coming. She was about to dress my younger sister, who was playing naked in the front yard. She felt a blinding flash of light as she called out to my younger sister "Ricchan!" from the house. Immediately she put her own body over my sister. Inside the house, all the drawers of the wardrobe flew out, tatami mats floated, and windowpanes were shattered and impaled on the walls.

My mother went out to look for my father but wasn't able to see him again until the fourth day, when she found him in an air-raid shelter.

Inside the shelter, drips were falling from the ceiling, and there were only thin straw mats on the floor. Underneath was a soggy mess of vomit, dirt, and maggots that seeped through to the top of the mats. It made my mother hesitant to lay my sister down to rest.

In September, my sister's lymph glands swelled up and she had an incision. However, her voice gradually became hoarse. When she was five years old, she finally underwent throat surgery at the Nagasaki University Hospital which had opened at the Shinkozen Elementary School.

After the surgery, my sister's voice was reduced to a muffled whisper. After that, she was in and out of hospital repeatedly and started junior high school three years late. She was only able to attend junior high school for one semester of first year. She was forced to live in hospital until she passed away at the age of 44. Before her death, she became blind in both eyes and asked me from the darkness, "How many times am I suffering? What am I being punished for?" I could not say anything.

My mother often used to say, "In my dream last night, I heard Ricchan's voice."

Nine days after the bombing, my grandmother took me back to Nagasaki

from our evacuation home. I grabbed my grandmother's mom'pe (women's working pants under wartime regime) tightly and asked her, "Where am I? Where am I?" I still clearly remember walking a little and asking, "Where am I?"

My youngest sister, who was born three years after the atomic bombing, developed purpura when she started elementary school. Fortunately she survived but even she, who was born after the atomic bombing, suffered the aftereffects of the bombing.

In our family, someone was always hospitalized. My mother always took care of them. She died of stomach cancer at the age of 64. She always said, "The atomic bomb is to blame," and told me before she passed away, "Please take care of your father and Ricchan," Her regret and disappointment were immeasurable. Three years after her death, my father died of lung cancer.

If only the atomic bomb had not been dropped, my family would have lived a healthy and a happy life. Every day we were haunted by sickness and worries of the aftereffects. The atomic bomb did not only afflict us on that day but also afterwards and continues to torment us now and in the future.

"Let us achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons while we are still alive, so that there will never be another Hibakusha like us!" Many hibakusha have departed while wishing and fighting for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) and the Nagasaki A-bomb Survivors Council (Nagasaki Hisaikyo).

From right after the establishment of these associations, we travelled not only to many cities in Japan but also abroad to tell the reality of the devastation caused by the atomic bombing. We went to the five nuclear weapon states, European countries, across the United States, and Asian countries. Since 1974, I have participated in peace movement delegations to petition the United Nations to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 1977, the "International Symposium on the Damage and After-effects of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" was held by the U.N. Special NGO Committee for Disarmament, and the comprehensive damage caused by the atomic bombings was revealed to the international community. In the following year, in 1978, Ms. Chieko Watanabe made her appeal at the NGO Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. It was Ms. Watanabe's first trip abroad in a wheelchair. In May, the SSD-I (the First Special Session on Disarmament of the United Nations General Assembly) was held, and 41 delegates, including myself, from the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) joined 500 delegates from Japan. Four years later, at SSD-II, one million people gathered in New York and marched against A & H bombs. Mr. Senji Yamaguchi became the first A-bomb survivor to make an appeal at the United Nations General Assembly. His

powerful speech, "No more Hiroshimas, no more Nagasakis, no more war!" inspired us all. Furthermore, at the NPT Review Conference in 2015, Mr. Sumiteru Taniguchi made an appeal holding a photograph of his burn-injured back right after the bombing.

On July 7, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted at the United Nations and we rejoiced together from the bottom of our hearts. We offered our gratitude to all those who had passed away and were not able to share this joy with us. On January 22 this year, the treaty entered into force. In his last message, Sumiteru Taniguchi said, "The countries that do not have nuclear weapons must surround and isolate the countries that do." Let us all work together to increase the number of ratifying countries and encircle the nuclear states. More than anything, I am appalled that the only A-bombed nation, Japan, has neither signed nor ratified the treaty. It is an act of betrayal to the A-bomb survivors. Let's gather even more strength so that the Japanese government will sign and ratify the treaty. Let's work together to realize a world without nuclear weapons as soon as possible.