

**World Conf. against A & H Bombs  
August 2021**

**Beatrice Fihn – Speech**

Hi everyone, I'm Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN.

First let me say thank you for having me here, and thank you to for organizing this important conference on a topic that really is one of the most pressing global issues to solve.

It is always really fantastic to see how committed people in Hiroshima are to abolishing nuclear weapons. The energy and passion that Japanese people bring to this issue, inspires our entire global movement.

It is not surprising — Hiroshima knows better than anyone the consequences of nuclear bombs. But it is not just the hibakusha that know this, not just the people who lived through the experience and the rebuilding of this cities from the ashes that know this — but also regular citizens today, including young people, carry the stories with them, and carry the passion to make sure this is never done to anyone else again. Japanese people know the cost of nuclear weapons, and are dedicated to eliminating them.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are cities of hope. They have emerged from the ashes of nuclear darkness to become beacons of light for the rest of the world. It inspires me that we can do the same with this campaign to ban nuclear weapons worldwide.

The risk for nuclear weapons use is even greater today than at the end of the Cold War. But unlike the Cold War, today we face many more nuclear armed states, terrorists, and cyber warfare. All of this makes us less safe.

Modernization of nuclear arsenals are undergoing, increase of warheads, unravelling of arms control agreement. And this happens at the same time as a devastating pandemic and horrible impact of climate change is harming people all over the world. These weapons do not solve the security threats that people are actually facing today, they're relics from another time and only increase the risk of an existential threat that could eliminate us all.

But we have a reason to be optimistic: we are closer than ever to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In January this year, the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force, making nuclear weapons illegal under international law. This was a historic moment, and something that could not have been achieved without the tireless advocacy and campaigning by Hibakusha and Japanese people.

This Treaty gives us a framework to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely and it will now start building pressure and normative change so that we can once and for all solve one of the most pressing threats to humankind.

History shows that the prohibition of certain types of weapons is the first step towards their elimination.

Weapons that have been outlawed by international treaties are increasingly seen as illegitimate, losing their political status.

Arms companies find it more difficult to acquire funds for work on illegal weapons, and such work carries a significant reputational risk.

Banks, pension funds and other financial institutions divest from these producers.

With this treaty, we have the framework to create a new international norm that casts these weapons not as a symbol of power but as a symbol of shame.

They said banning chemical weapons was impossible. Biological weapons. Land mines and cluster munitions. But we banned them.

They always say something hard is impossible. But ICAN campaigners showed that it can be made a reality if there are enough of us all calling for change loud enough.

Governments answer to people, people know nuclear weapons no longer make sense, and they are demanding change.

That is where you all come in: there is one particular audience that needs to hear your message. One group of people that must be encouraged to share the values of people from Hiroshima — and that is your government in Tokyo.

The Japanese Government should know better than any other nation the consequences of nuclear weapons, yet Tokyo is happy to live under the umbrella of US nuclear protection, and has not joined the Treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

Is your government ok with repeating the evil that was done to Nagasaki and Hiroshima to other cities?

We must harness your voices to show your national government in Tokyo that it is unacceptable to be a willing participant in threatening to use nuclear weapons.

That Japan must be a leader in the global movement for nuclear disarmament.

That Japan must join this Treaty.

Encourage your politicians to take up your cause. Grow louder if they do not listen. Know that you have millions of people around the world who share your values and your cause.

Join with them to create an unstoppable force of democratic disarmament.

What happened to Hiroshima must not be forgotten. And that's why Japan has such an important part to play in this story.

Hiroshima has a unique place in history. Our challenge is to make sure Hiroshima and Nagasaki remains unique. That there are no more cities that join you in the list of nuclear bomb sites. That there are no more hibakusha.

So I want to end by thanking the Hibakusha for their tireless work. For sharing traumatic and painful memories over and over again only to protect others from experiencing the same.

The sacrifices made and courage that survivors have shown have been driving ICAN and our work to ban nuclear weapons. Through this work, the Hibakusha have gotten governments and the United Nations to outlaw this horrible, inhumane and immoral weapon and they have made this world safer. On behalf of the whole campaign, thank you. And ICAN will not stop until we've fulfilled the Hibakusha's wish for every single government to join this treaty and for every nuclear weapon to be disarmed.

Thank you.