

2022 World Conference against A & H Bombs – Opening Plenary

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My name is Mimaki Toshiyuki. I am a hibakusha living in Hiroshima.

I wonder what was in the minds of those in the Japanese Army when they decided to launch a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941. Without the awareness of the Japanese people, a handful of politicians and military officials drove Japan into a war. Many people lost their lives and properties in a war that continued until August 15, 1945. The decisive blow that brutally ended that war, which had been initiated by the State leadership, was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today, as we look back, we realize the massive extent and immeasurable gravity of the crimes the Japanese military committed.

Little children and infants, whose birth was celebrated by their families, could only enjoy two or three years of life before they were killed. As for those so-called “A-bomb orphans”, I can hardly imagine how they managed to survive in the harsh postwar world without their parents’ protection. Under the militarist ideology that prevailed 80 years ago, precious human lives were sacrificed without any hesitation.

For those of us living in Hiroshima, to look at the A-bomb Dome and bow our heads before the cenotaph became part of our daily routine. The US B-29 Bomber, Enola Gay, dropped the atomic bomb Little Boy slightly to the east of the A-Bomb Dome at 8:15 in the morning of August 6, 1945. The bomb exploded in mid-air, around 600 meters above the ground. Heat rays of 3,000 degrees, blasts of several hundred thousand atmospheric pressures, and fires assaulted people and buildings. People were killed instantly or burnt to death under the collapsed buildings. When it exploded, the bomb emitted intense heat rays and radiation in all directions and produced ultrahigh atmospheric pressure. The air around the bomb expanded to form the blast. The combined effects of these three factors were tremendous and caused catastrophic damage. Many people died in the following few days. In fact, after the bombing, many people who went into Hiroshima from the suburbs for rescue operations were exposed to invisible radiation. By the end of that year, 140,000 people had died in Hiroshima. With their chromosome structures destroyed by radioactive rays, those who barely escaped instantaneous death passed away during the months that followed. Today, seventy-seven years later, many people are still hospitalized suffering from aftereffects of the A-bomb radiation. The use of nuclear weapons is cruel and has tragic consequences. It produces nothing good. It only produces unspeakable anger in people’s hearts.

It can be said with no exaggeration that 1945 was the year Japan committed another in a succession of blunders over its long history since ancient times. The US Great Air Raid

Campaign on Tokyo on March 10, 1945 is said to have killed 100,000 people within one single night. At the time, I was living in Tokyo's Itabashi Ward with my parents. We were safe because we were away from the air raid area. If the Japanese generals and politicians had decided to accept surrender at that point, there would have been no air raids on other major cities and no ground battles would have taken place in Okinawa, like those that took the lives of 200,000 people of all ages, accounting for one-fourth of the Okinawan population. War is cruel and tragic, and we gain nothing from anger or outrage.

In order not to repeat these mistakes, we Hibakusha must pass on to future generations our stories about the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the average age of the Hibakusha now exceeds 84 years.

In 2017, the United Nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and it came into force last year.

Conscientious efforts must be made to prevent the memories of the A-bombing from fading away. To that end, I hope that all politicians of each country in the world draw lessons from the tragedies that took place in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 77 years ago. The events are not "old stories" or "folkloric tales."

Right now, about 13,000 nuclear weapons exist in the world. The preamble of the TPNW refers to Hibakusha in the following terms: "Mindful of the unacceptable suffering of and harm caused to the victims of the use of nuclear weapons (hibakusha)." The TPNW is a ground-breaking treaty because it prohibits the development, the possession, the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons. More than 60 countries have ratified the treaty, but nuclear weapon states and their non-nuclear allies under their nuclear umbrella, including Japan, have not signed or ratified it.

Friends around the world, please imagine what would have happened to you if you had been in Hiroshima on August 6, 77 years ago. If we want the human race to last indefinitely, nuclear weapons, the most dangerous threat to our survival, should be totally eradicated from the earth. There is no other way.

If those who died could be brought back to life, I would wish for every single person who died in the A-bombing to be revived and come back to Hiroshima. The love between parents and children, the love between husband and wife, opportunities for children to learn, and family bonds were mercilessly taken away. When I think about it, I am filled with so much pain and sadness that I cannot help crying.

Friends around the world, for the sake of humanity, let us continue to cry out loud the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons.