

Greetings of the Hibakusha

Tanaka Shigemitsu

Co-Chairperson, Nihon Hidankyo

Dear participants in the Nagasaki Rally of the 2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs, it is my privilege to welcome you and extend my heartfelt greetings of welcome and solidarity to you on behalf of the Hibakusha all over Japan.

The 78th summer has come since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 9, 1945, I was 4 years and 10 months old. I was playing with my grandfather and my younger brother in the front yard of my house, located in Togitsu Village, about 6 kilometers from the hypocenter. I heard the noise of a flying plane and looked up at the sky. At that moment, an intense light flashed over Nagasaki. An explosion sound just like a thunderbolt came with storming strong blasts. Windowpanes were smashed and sliding doors made with paper and wood were all blown off. We were a family of six in the house at that moment, but luckily nobody was seriously injured.

Since the following day, my mother was called to work to take care of the injured people who were brought to the elementary school nearby. Most of them were heavily injured and not identifiable, even whether they were men or women. There was a strange smell in the air and she wondered if they were really human beings. Fly maggots soon began infesting the bodies of the injured and Mother and other women's routine task was to pick the maggots and small pieces of broken glass off their skin. People were dying in dozens every day and it was like hell on earth.

On the third day, mother, my elder and younger brothers entered the city passing through the hypocenter to look for some friends of mother's. They later suffered from the aftereffects of residual radiation. Father, on the order of the army, had to take part in collection of dead bodies and rescuing operation for the injured. 12 year later, he died of liver cancer. One of my grandchildren lacked a part of transverse diaphragm and his lung developed only 20% of the normal lung. He had a surgery to enlarge his reduced lung, but died on the 3rd day. His temperature did not even rise to 30 degrees centigrade.

The atomic bombs, by their heat rays, blast and radiation, totally destroyed the two cities in an instant. They took numerous human lives without distinction and brought about an unprecedented damage in human history. Those who barely survived suffered from the aftereffects, have lived fearing the permanent threat of death and their suffering and pain continue even today.

A month after the atomic bombing, U.S. army enforced a press code to cover up the inhumane consequences of the atomic bombing. The Japanese government followed and collaborated.

Survivors were merely abandoned and left to themselves without any assistance. Only diseases and poverty, added to prejudice and discrimination, awaited them. Atomic bomb does not allow you neither to live decently like humans nor to die in dignity like humans. Nuclear weapons are weapons of insanity designed to “annihilate”. They are weapons of devil, an absolute evil that no human being can accept. We cannot but eliminate them totally. There is no other alternative.

Thanks to the movement of the Hibakusha and of those committed to nuclear abolition, the TPNW entered into force in January 2021. It greatly inspired and encouraged the people who want to achieve peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, insinuating that it might use nuclear weapons if deemed necessary. The NATO block led by the U.S. is in turn strengthening its nuclear posture, claiming that it is necessary for “deterrence”. The risk of nuclear weapons being used has never been so high.

Kishida government has adopted the so-called “Three Security Documents” without letting the parliament examine and discuss them. In doing so, it scrapped its policy of “defensive defense” and made a step forward to the possession of “enemy base attack capability”. At the same time, it allocated a total amount of 43 billion yen for military budget to “fundamentally reinforce its defense capability within 5 years”, which would make Japan the third largest military power in the world. “Deterrence” through military force may increase tension in the Asia-Pacific region.

The preamble of Japan’s Constitution says: “(we are) resolved that never again shall we be visited by horrors of war through an act of the government”. Given what Kishida government is doing and its actions, is it worthy of a country that declared the renunciation to war?

No, what the Japanese government should be doing today is not to contribute to the war by following the U.S. On the contrary, it should implement peace diplomacy through dialogues and exchanges on the basis of the constitutional principles so as to build mutual confidence. And as an A-bombed nation, it should ratify the TPNW and make use of its leadership to achieve “a world without nuclear weapons”.

We Hibakusha call from the bottom of our hearts. A nuclear war will annihilate the entire human race. The only way to avoid it is to abolish all nuclear weapons. So, let us take action together now, to realize the elimination of these weapons.