

Corazon Fabros

Nuclear-Free Philippines Coalition

MABUHAY from the Philippines!

Peace and Solidarity from the International Peace Bureau!

I am deeply honored to join you today on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a remarkable time of courage and remembrance. At no other time in the history of our common struggle for a nuclear-free and bases-free world have I witnessed so much longing for peace, clean environment, justice for the marginalized, and hopeful solidarity for a genuine security.

As we gather today, let us not forget the important legacy of our ancestors, those who have gone before us, who fought for our freedoms, our life, our land and seas, those who nurtured our common struggles – our global Hibakushas, our martyrs and heroes. They are the reason why we are here today – they are the driving force why we continue to stand together. We invite them to be with us.

I am deeply privileged (my gratitude to Gensuikyo!) for being given the opportunity to have a deep insight into the strength and dynamism of the grassroots movement in Japan during many visits since the early 90's. I felt the strength and power of the peace movement from Misawa in the North to Takae in the South, places where the security and peaceful environment of the people have been most violated and challenged. These are the base communities where land, sea, life, limb, and honor are often trampled upon or even forcibly taken away; where women and children are abused or worse, raped; where the environment is destroyed; the waters are poisoned and the poor and marginalized are denied of decent living because their own government has prioritized military and defense spending over health care, education, and social services for the people. Total Global Military spending has reached 1.9 TRILLION DOLLARS IN 2019 with the U.S. getting the biggest slice of the global military expenditures, being both the biggest manufacturer and exporter of arms and weapons in the world today. (See SIPRI and GCOMS-IPB docs)

Japan's defense budget is a record 5.31 trillion yen (\$48.56 billion) one of the world's biggest military spenders, despite its Constitution that forbids the possession of offensive weapons, spurred on by neighboring China modernizing its military and North Korea developing nuclear weapons and missiles that could deliver them anywhere in Japan. (Jim Kelly, Reuters)

We see this situation in many parts of the world – in Japan, Australia and in the Islands of Okinawa, Jeju, Guam, Hawaii, Diego Garcia, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and many more! And right at the heartland of the waning empire, the United States.

In the Philippines – we are faced with many challenges. The suspension of the government decision to cancel the Visiting Forces Agreement gives way to regular joint military exercises, war games, entry of US troops war ships and military hardware. There is also a negotiation for the return of the US Navy together with Australia into Subic. In the midst of Covid-19, our government is spending more than 2 Billion dollars' worth of attack helicopters, surveillance, military equipments, bullets and ammunitions. And on top of these, a new Anti-Terrorism Law was railroaded in the Senate and House of Representatives, the provisions of which expand authoritarian rule and violation of civil and political rights guaranteed in the Philippine constitution.

Having said this, I find hope in the people in affected communities where courage is palpable, unities for non-violent resistance are strong, and solidarity is genuine and heartfelt. It is also here where people have deep understanding of the inter-relatedness of nuclear weapons, military bases, climate change, military spending, and human rights issues. And why removing and closing military bases is an important dimension of our campaign for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Military bases function as hubs, centers of operation, stations, and training areas, which comprise an important component of the U.S. military infrastructure and war machine. Military bases make war and invasion possible!

What warms my heart is the growing number of young and not-so-young people who dare to speak truth to power, making peace work and peace building their lifelong mission. This path is not easy but realizing our contribution to building that critical mass for the elimination of nuclear weapons and military bases should count as a privilege and a badge of

honor. We must always remember that “The line of fire is always a place of honor,” as former Filipino activist and martyr Lean Alejandro once said.

Let us build on our reflections of the successes as well as failures of our decades-long struggles and make the 75th Anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki not only a commemoration of that tragic moment in our history but more importantly, let us take this opportunity to strengthen our movement, as we learn from the past and surge forward, seeking new directions, adopting new strategies, forging unities and alliances to make our voices and actions strong and powerful. In this way, our Hibakushas (living and those who have passed on) have not died in vain.

To our American friends, listen to the voices of the people in Asia and the Pacific. Listen with your heart and do what you can to dismantle the structures that allow the militarization in Asia and the Pacific. That is the genuine solidarity that we ask for.

Let me thank all of you for this opportunity to speak during this extraordinary moment in our history. Let us continue to be strong, to resist, and to be hopeful. Let us take to heart the inspiring words of the late Okinawa Governor Onaga: **THE ONLY WAY TO WIN IS TO NEVER GIVE UP!!!** Long live international solidarity!

Corazon Valdez Fabros
for the Special Session on Solidarity with Okinawa and Dismantling of
Foreign Military Bases
August 4 at 10:00am-12:00 Nn Japan (9:00–11:00 am Manila) ONLINE
2020 World Conference Against A & H Bombs