

2025 World Conference against A and H Bombs

The Reality of the Nagasaki Atomic Bombing and the Current Status and Issues of the Hibakusha Movement in Nagasaki

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Introduction

On December 10, 2024, Nagasaki City hosted a public viewing of the Nobel Peace Prize awarding ceremony for the Japan Council of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo). The venue at the City Hall was packed with some 160 people, many of whom were holding the photos of the Hibakusha who had deceased and could not be there. The viewing began at 7:30 p.m., On behalf of the sponsor, the Mayor of Nagasaki City and the Chairperson of the Nagasaki City Council greeted the citizens, and as a cosponsor, the Governor of Nagasaki Prefecture and the Chairman of the Nagasaki Prefectural Assembly made addresses. Mr. Masaru Mizoura, Vice-President of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivors Council said, "We have been spreading the call for the ban on nuclear weapons with the belief that each of us may be small but not powerless. We A-bomb survivors will continue to do our best together with all of you, using the Nobel Peace Prize as our strength". When the medals and the certificate were presented to the three representatives of Nihon Hidankyo, the audience erupted in applause. The participants were impressed and moved by Mr. Terumi Tanaka's speech. Feeling proud of the achievements of the Hibakusha movement, they pledged themselves to be united in their efforts to realize the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Here, I will report on the real damage of the Nagasaki A-bombing, the current situation of Hibakusha, the current status and challenges of the Hibakusha movement in Nagasaki, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and support for victims of nuclear weapons.

1. Real Damage of Nagasaki Atomic Bombing and Actual Situation of Hibakusha

The atomic bomb, dropped on Nagasaki by the U.S. military, exploded at 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945, 503 meters above the town of Matsuyama, about 3 km north of the center of Nagasaki City. In an instant, it turned into a gigantic fireball of tens of millions of degrees whose surface temperature reached approximately 7,000 degrees Celsius 0.1 second later. Due to the massive heat rays, the ground temperature at the hypocenter rose as high as 3,000 to 4,000 degrees Celsius. Around the hypocenter, humans were instantly carbonized.

The shock wave and blast generated at hypocenter had a speed of 440 meters per second, and at 2 kilometers from the hypocenter, the speed was 60 meters per second. They swept and destroyed most of the city within about 10 seconds. The destructive power of the Nagasaki bomb was about 21 kilotons in TNT equivalent, or 1.3 times that of Hiroshima bomb. The total area burned by the fires caused by the heat rays was about 6.7 square kilometers wide. By the end of 1945, the death toll had risen to about 74,000.

The main cause of death most often seen in the immediate and early periods after the bombing included crushing under collapsed buildings, whole body injuries, burnt to death due to fire, and whole body burns by heat rays. Among survivors within 1 km from the hypocenter, 96.7% of those with burns and 96.9% of those with injuries died while 94.1% of uninjured survivors also died. Many of those exposed to high-level radiation developed acute radiation symptoms, including general fatigue and vomiting; they got weak and died within about 10 days due to high fever, diarrhea, vomiting of blood, etc. Ninety percent of the acute deaths occurred during this period. After 1946, post-exposure disorders such as leukemia, cancer, and cataracts began to appear, and this tendency continues to this day.

Survivors suffered discrimination in social life because of physical aftereffects and poor health. In addition, they had to pay high medical costs and lead economically difficult lives. Social resources such as families, local communities and medical facilities had been destroyed, causing the loss of the foundations of their livelihood and various

hardships to them.

2. Current Status and Challenges of the Nagasaki A-Bomb Survivor Movement

In April 2016, the "International Hibakusha Signature Campaign for the Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" was launched at the initiative of 9 hibakusha from Japan and abroad. On September 26, the International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, 5 Nagasaki hibakusha organizations and citizens' groups formed the Nagasaki Prefectural Citizens Association to Promote the International Hibakusha Signatures campaign, and elected as co-chairs Mr. Sumiteru Taniguchi, campaign initiator, and Mr. Masao Tomonaga, head of the Organizing Committee of the Nagasaki Rally for Global Citizens to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons. On September 9, 2020, a press conference was held to announce that the number of signatures collected had exceeded the goal of 500,000.

While the TPNW entered into force on January 22, 2021, the situation over nuclear weapons was destabilized by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On May 28, 2022, the "Nagasaki Association for TPNW" was established with 4 Nagasaki hibakusha organizations and 5 citizen groups as supporting organizations to make widely known the significance of the TPNW and to encourage non-member countries to join the treaty. The purpose of the association is "to inform as many people as possible of the inhumanity and risks of nuclear weapons and to work together with peace-loving people around the world to have all governments of the world, including that of A-bombed Japan, join the TPNW in order to ensure human survival and global environment and to prevent the creation of another hibakusha.

On December 20, 2024, following the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo, the Nagasaki Prefectural Assembly unanimously passed at the final plenary session of its regular session, a resolution "calling on the national government to sign and ratify the TPNW ". And Nagasaki Prefectural Governor Oishi Kengo sent a message of support to this World Conference. The number of local assemblies' resolutions to the

same effect has reached 726 nationwide (as of July 11, 2025), accounting for 41% of the total of 1,788 assemblies. Those adopted such resolutions in Nagasaki Prefecture have reached 82%, with only 4 remaining. The challenge now is to achieve 100% of adoption.

3. TPNW and Support for Nuclear Weapons Victims

The TPNW recognizes the "unacceptable suffering and damage" (Preamble) of Hibakusha and victims of nuclear tests, and make it obligatory to provide assistance to them and environmental restoration (Article 6) as well as international cooperation to support them (Article 7). In this year marking the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing, we renew our determination to realize state compensation for the Hibakusha and provide Hibakusha Health Certificates to so-called "Hibaku-taikensha" (those who were affected by the A-bombing, but were not admitted as the Hibakusha) as soon as possible. Standing on the ruling of the 2021 Hiroshima High Court that "those whose effects of A-bomb radiation cannot be denied, they deserve relief," we must not allow the underestimation of the A-bomb damage in Nagasaki, make clear real damage and effects of the A-bombing at space and time-wise, and provide adequate relief to all A-bomb victims including those who were within 12 kilometers from the hypocenter.

We will make known hibakusha's stories in Japan and across the world and let the "Peace philosophy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" spread all over the world. Also, let's get the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW without delay. It will contribute to preventing military conflicts in East Asia. Let's work to avoid Japanese people getting involved in these conflicts and turn this region of confrontation to that of dialogue and cooperation. I want to call on the Hibakusha, young people and all of you to work together to tackle these tasks, building on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo. The recent joint appeal issued by Nihon Hidankyo, Gensuikyo and Gensuikin will also provide tailwind for our efforts.