

World Conference against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs–HIROSHIMA
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U.K.

Thank you so much to the Organizing Committee of the World Conference against A and H Bombs for inviting me to speak at this historic rally.

As somebody who has spent my life opposing nuclear weapons, I feel honoured to be here, and I want to emphasise my immense respect to all who organised this poignant, global commemoration.

Today, we remember every single person who was killed by an indefensible act of inhumanity – both on Hiroshima and on Nagasaki.

We also remember the hundreds of thousands of survivors – known as the *hibakusha*. They are the ones who endured the horror of what was left behind. They are the ones who have been campaigning to ensure the horrors of Hiroshima never happen again.

ME AND CND

When I was 14, in the 1960s, I joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, after following and being frightened by the Cuban Missile Crisis. My first ever demonstration of any sort was with CND – and I have been a campaigner against nuclear weapons ever since. It was at CND where I met Bruce Kent, a leading figure in CND in the 1980s. It was Bruce who said, “I want to be optimistic because I don’t think man is intrinsically violent.” He inspired in us a belief that peace was not just preferable, but possible.

Over the years I’ve got a lot of flak over the years for daring to say that I would not wish to use a nuclear bomb on human beings. For having the audacity to say that killing millions of people would make the world a safer place.

For those who are in any doubt over my position: I’m not interested in bombs. I’m interested in peace.

Nuclear weapons have one purpose, and one purpose only: to cause death and destruction on a colossal scale.

We shouldn't forget the impacts not just of nuclear war, but the programme of nuclear testing which began at the end of the Second World War. These programs caused widespread radioactive contamination and generational harm to the people of the Pacific region. It is estimated that more than 2 million people have died from cancer as a result of these nuclear test explosions.

Joseph Rotblat was a Polish physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project, before becoming a fierce critic of nuclear weaponry. I want to share two things he said. One, "There is no direct evidence that nuclear weapons prevented a world war." Two, "Above all remember your humanity."

RUSSIA / UKRAINE

Recently, UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the General Assembly last year and announced that the symbolic Doomsday Clock – which measures humanity's proximity to self-destruction - had moved to 90 seconds to midnight. Declaring that humanity was perilously close to catastrophe, Guterres named three perilous challenges. One, extreme poverty. Two, an accelerating climate crisis. And three, nuclear war.

Today, the global stockpile of nuclear weapons is accelerating as international relations are deteriorating. After a period of gradual decline that followed the end of the cold war, the number of operational nuclear weapons has risen again; there are now said to be more than 12,000 warheads around the world. 90% of these weapons are owned by Russia and the United States alone.

It's been more than three years since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. I want to take a moment to reflect on the hundreds of thousands of lives that have been lost in this ghastly war.

I also want to pay tribute to the thousands of peace campaigners in Russia who opposed this invasion, and have continued to call for a ceasefire. I also want to thank those global figures who have called for de-escalation and diplomacy. That includes the UN Secretary-General, global leaders such as President Lula and Ramaphosa, and of course the late Pope Francis.

Three years on, and hundreds of thousands of deaths later, I renew these calls for peace.

The longer the fighting goes on, the more lives will be lost, and the greater risk of nuclear escalation. Those who fuel escalation must know that, in the event of a nuclear war, nobody wins.

GAZA

Meanwhile, we have all watched with absolute horror at what is happening in Gaza.

Over the past 18 months, human beings have endured a level of horror and inhumanity that should haunt us forever. Entire families wiped out. Limbs strewn across the street. Mothers screaming for their children torn to pieces. Doctors performing amputations without anaesthesia. Home by home, hospital by hospital, generation by generation.

We have not been witnessing a war. We have been witnessing a genocide, livestreamed before the entire world.

We must remember that our governments could have stopped this genocide. Instead, they allowed Israel to act with impunity, igniting a much wider war between Israel, the United States and Iran – and putting the world on the brink of a nuclear conflict.

I echo the call made by the UN Secretary-General: “There is no military solution. The only path forward is diplomacy. The only hope is peace.”

ARMS RACE VS A BETTER WORLD

The world spends 100 million dollars every year on nuclear weapons – imagine if we spent that money on renewable energy, social housing, public healthcare, schools and lifting children out of poverty instead?

Think of what we could achieve if the money that was spent on items that can only destroy the planet, was instead directed to resources that protected it – and all life on earth.

Security is not the ability to threaten and destroy your neighbour. Real Security is getting on with your neighbour. It's when our children can be

confident of a habitable future. It's when human beings are not displaced by poverty, destitution and war. And it's when everybody has enough resources to live a happy and healthy life.

As Albert Einstein said, "In the shadow of the atomic bomb it has become even more apparent that all men are, indeed, brothers."

So today, we must remember those who were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We mourn the lives that were so needlessly lost. And we must listen to the *hibakusha* when they say: "humans must survive - in peace and prosperity." We will only honour their words – as well as the memory of those who perished on August 6th, 1945 – when we rid this planet of nuclear weapons once and for all.

We are all human beings on one planet. Surely that is enough to try and bring about a world of peace.