

Message from the Hibakusha

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Hello to everyone participating in the 2025 World Conference against A and H Bombs from overseas and across Japan. On behalf of the Hibakusha, I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome and solidarity to you all.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 9, 1945, I was four years and ten months old. At the time, I was playing with my grandfather and younger brother under a persimmon tree in the garden of our home in Togitsu Village, approximately 6 kilometers from the hypocenter.

As we heard the sound of an aircraft, we looked up at the sky, and at that instant, the sky over Nagasaki flashed brightly, followed by an explosion like a massive thunderclap and a devastating blast of wind. Glass shattered, and sliding doors and screens were blown away. But fortunately, all six members of my family were unharmed.

The next day, my mother was mobilized to help nurse people who had been injured by the atomic bomb and brought to the nearby primary school. Most of them were seriously injured, with skin peeling off, and it was difficult to distinguish between men and women. An unusual odor lingered in the air, and she wondered if they were even human.

Maggots were swarming on their bodies, and my mother's main job was to remove the maggots and glass shards embedded in their bodies. She said that dozens of people died every day, and it was like hell.

On the third day, my mother, my elder and younger brothers entered the city and walked through the ground zero area to search for my mother's friend. They were affected by the residual radiation and have suffered from aftereffects. My father was conscripted by military order, worked on retrieving bodies and treating the wounded near the blast center. He died of liver cancer 12 years later, leaving our family in dire poverty.

My granddaughter (my daughter's child) was born with a diaphragmatic defect, causing her lungs to develop to only about 20% of normal size. She underwent surgery to expand her lungs, but her body temperature never rose above 30 degrees Celsius, and she died on the third day. My daughter later divorced.

The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki reduced both cities to rubble in an instant. Heat rays of tens of thousands of degrees vaporized and incinerated people, while radiation tore their bodies apart. Over 600,000 people were exposed to radiation, and by the end of 1945, 140,000 had died in Hiroshima and 74,000 in Nagasaki. Among them, the remains of more than 70,000 victims in Hiroshima and nearly 20,000 victims in Nagasaki have not been claimed by their families or relatives yet to this day.

The atomic bomb denied humans the right to live or die. The GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Forces) rejected the International Red Cross's request for medical assistance, imposed a press code to conceal the horrors of the atomic bombings, and established the ABCC (Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission). The ABCC used the Hibakusha as guinea pigs, conducting research on them without providing any medical treatment. The Japanese government followed suit, leaving the survivors facing illness, poverty and discrimination but providing no support for 12 years.

Inspired by the anti-nuclear movement sparked by the 1954 Bikini Atoll hydrogen bomb test, on August 10, 1956, the Hibakusha gathered in Nagasaki and formed the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo).

They vowed to “save humanity from its crisis through the lessons learned from our experiences, while at the same time saving ourselves” and stood up to demand “the abolition of nuclear weapons and State compensation for atomic bomb damage.”

Domestically, three laws were enacted before the current law for the assistance to the Hibakusha was established in 1994, but the government has continued to reject our demand for State compensation to this day.

Meanwhile, in January 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force. So far 94 countries have signed and 73 ratified it. But the Japanese

government continues to turn its back on this treaty.

Last year, Nihon Hidankyo was awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. The award recognized the organization's 68-year effort to share the realities of the atomic bombings, conduct grassroots campaigns, and advocate through testimonies that nuclear weapons must never be used. Such activities have helped establish the norm that the use of nuclear weapons should never be used, known as the “nuclear taboo,” preventing their actual use for 80 years.

However, in 2022, in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, President Putin repeatedly threatened the use of nuclear weapons, Israel launched series of massacre attacks on the Gaza Strip in Palestine, and some Israeli minister threatened the use of nuclear weapons, while conducting airstrikes on Iran and Syria, escalating the conflicts. The United States is backing Israel and has bombed Iran's nuclear facilities.

Amid the crisis where the “nuclear taboo” is being shattered, the Nobel Committee has stated, “It is necessary to recognize once again what nuclear weapons are at this moment in human history.”

We the Hibakusha, despite our old age, are appealing with our last remaining strength: Nuclear weapons are devilish weapons designed solely for extinction. They cannot coexist with humanity. Let us shift from nuclear deterrence-based security to a human security policy based on mutual trust, and achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons.

To prevent another generation from becoming A-bomb victims, we appeal to the young people who will be the bearers of future. Late Chieko Watanabe, who was exposed to the atomic bomb in Nagasaki at the age of 16, became partially paralyzed, yet she continued to travel around the world advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Let me share her message to young people. “The future belongs to the young. Creating a world without nuclear weapons depends on the decisions and actions of those of us living today.”

Let us all, as citizens of the Earth, embrace this as our own responsibility and work together to create a world free of nuclear weapons and war, so that humanity does not destroy itself with nuclear weapons.