

Ralph Hutchison
Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance
U.S.A.

Greetings from Oak Ridge, Tennessee. It is an honor to be invited to bring greetings and to tell you of activities here in the US.

Many of you will know the name of Oak Ridge as the place that enriched the uranium fuel for the Little Boy bomb that the United States used to destroy the city and people of Hiroshima in 1945. Today, Oak Ridge is still an active nuclear weapons production facility. The organization I work for is part of the resistance to that work. We have always said we use “every tool in the toolbox” to work nonviolently for an end to nuclear weapons—we educate, we demonstrate, we march, sometimes we are even arrested.

This January, we all received a new tool—the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force.

It is true that the Treaty does not have legal force in the US or in Japan or in any country that has not signed it.

But it is even more true that the Treaty makes the manufacture, possession, use or threat of use illegal under international law, and that these weapons have always been immoral—no person, no people, no nation has the right to threaten the existence of life on the planet.

So I see the Ban Treaty as a tool we can use to further stigmatize nuclear weapons. It is a lever that we will use to pry the nuclear states out of their long-standing positions, to force them to give up their weapons of mass destruction.

=====

That process began for us on January 22 when we had actions in more than 100 cities across the United States, many of them using the yellow banner declaring nuclear weapons to be illegal. It was a historic moment. People took the banner to nuclear weapons production sites, to military bases, to the corporate headquarters of the companies who are building bombs. They went to universities and banks and city halls. They were out in the cold, in the rain, in sunshine and snow. They had one message to deliver—nuclear weapons are illegal.

=====

The challenge facing us now is to turn that historic moment into an enduring movement.

In the United States, that will be difficult. We have a new President, but when it comes to nuclear weapons, in the long run, that does not matter so much. The Biden Administration has renewed the New START Treaty with Russia, which is a good thing. But it has also already indicated it will continue to spend billions of dollars to modernize the US nuclear stockpile. Where I live, a new bomb plant is being built to manufacture

thermonuclear secondaries from highly enriched uranium. And the government has announced plans to build a new bomb plant in South Carolina to make plutonium pits, and to double the size of the electronics plant in Kansas City where the non-nuclear parts of our weapons are made.

Over the next twenty-five years, the United States plans to spend two trillion dollars for “modernization”—for new bomb plants, new bombs, new nuclear submarines, and new missiles. Of course, with Russia and China trying to keep up, we now face a new global nuclear arms race. This just tells us that we cannot depend on our elected officials or our governments to disarm or to make us safe from nuclear war. It is up to us.

In the United States, we are expecting to work in solidarity with people around the world, including you, in Japan, to oppose nuclear weapons everywhere—we will confront the companies and universities that are making money building bombs; we will ask cities and towns to pass resolutions in support of the Ban Treaty—we have an opportunity now to use the Ban Treaty to educate and mobilize people.

And like you we will work to get our government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I know activists in Germany, The Netherlands, Britain, Belgium and France who are working to get their governments to sign the Treaty. Everyone in every country must do their part.

The message we have to deliver is simple and clear. It is the message of the *hibakusha* and downwinders around the world: Never Again! And of course, the only way to guarantee nuclear weapons are never again used to threaten human beings and all creation is to abolish them altogether.

Today we lay hold of the deepest truth, and we refuse to let the denial of nuclear armed states and their protectorates change the truth. Nuclear weapons are immoral. And now, like chemical weapons, biological weapons, cluster bombs, land mines, and poison gas—they are illegal.

Making the promise of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons a reality will require a sustained effort by all of us—but as Setsuko Thurlow said in a recent video, speaking to those who perished, “I promise you, we will do it.”