

2019 World Conference - Nagasaki

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During Japan's forcible occupation of the Korean Peninsula, my father worked in Hiroshima for five years, then returned to his hometown in South Korea in 1939. After getting married there, he went back to Hiroshima with my mother. I was born in 1941 there, followed by my sister in 1943. My family's life was very hard. Then, at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, the U.S. forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

At the time of the bombing, my mother was doing laundry in the garden at our home. The upper half of her body was severely burned due to the exposure to the A-bomb. I and my sister only had minor injuries because we were inside the house at the time. My mother was unable to receive proper treatment due to the shortage of hospitals and her wounds became so infected that maggots swarmed over them. My father, who was 39 at the time, left home for work that morning. He has been missing for 74 years since then. How can I express the bitter frustration of being a son who was not even able to gather his father's ashes?

The day of liberation came on August 15, 1945, but my mother must have felt a void in her heart since she had to take her son and daughter back to her hometown without picking up the bones of her husband.

When we went back to my parents' hometown in South Korea in December 1945, our relatives were delighted to see us who they had thought were missing. However, having limited land and food, they eventually treated us as burdens. My heart still aches when I think about my mother. She had to go through tremendous hardships until her death trying to feed her little children.

This year marks the 74th anniversary since the dropping of the atomic bombs. Although our home country was liberated, we Hibakusha of Korea are still fighting with diseases due to aftereffects of the A-bombing. The second-generation Hibakusha also have experienced indescribable suffering because of genetic damage caused by radiation. However, we have not received a single word of apology from Japan, which started the war, or from the United States, which dropped the A-bombs. While being responsible for protecting its citizens, the South Korean government has not imposed any special measures to support Hibakusha.

Nuclear weapons, not even the name, should be allowed to exist on the earth. As long as they exist, we can never achieve peace. Until a day when we turn nuclear weapons into scrap iron, we the A-

bomb survivors continue to oppose the production of nuclear weapons, as well as to demand that the U.S. recognize its responsibility over the Hibakusha and apologize to and compensate them. The Japanese government also owes an apology and compensation to Korean Hibakusha.

The number of Hibakusha in South Korea is the second largest after Hibakusha in Japan. The total number of South Korean Hibakusha is 100,000, and 50,000 of them were instantly killed by the A-bombs (according to the damage prevention department of Japan's then Home Ministry). The spirits of the victims are still missing the hometowns to which they can never return and are therefore unable to rest in peace. The least the governments of Japan, the U.S., and South Korea can do is to build monuments in their hometowns so their spirits can finally rest in peace. This is the wish of a son who was unable to gather his father's ashes as well as of so many other bereaved family members.

I wish you peace.