

2023 World Conference against A & H Bombs
International Meeting -- Session 1

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News videos about Ukrainian children running away from Russia's bomb attacks makes my heart ache as those scenes overlap with what happened in July 1945.

In late July 1945, American B-29 bombers frequently flew over Nagasaki to drop bombs. Each time, my family and I would hide in an air-raid shelter dug under the floor of our house with our neighbors, holding our breath. Once the bombing subsided, we moved to a larger bomb shelter in the town. Along the way, the B-29s continued bombing without mercy. I had just turned four years, but I still can vividly remember the experience.

To escape the horrific bombing, my two older sisters and I were evacuated by our grandparents to the countryside. My parents and my younger sister, who was 16 months old, remained at home. Soon after, an atomic bomb was dropped.

My house was located 4 kilometers from the hypocenter. When my mother learned that B-29 bombers were coming, she was about to dress my younger sister, who was playing naked in the front yard. She felt a blinding flash of light as she called out to my younger sister "Ricchan!" from the house. Immediately she put her own body over my sister. It became pitch dark all around, and what looked like gold dust was falling. Inside the house, she saw all the drawers of the wardrobe fall out. She also saw tatami mats floating and windowpanes shattering and getting stuck in the walls.

My father was at Fuchi National Elementary School, 1.2 kilometers away from the hypocenter. He was blown away from the school building, over the playground and down the cliff.

My mother immediately went out to look for my father, carrying my little sister on her back. But beyond the station she saw the red flames from the telephone poles and other objects, and could not reach where he was.

Only on the fourth day, she found him in an air-raid shelter. His eyes were swollen

purple. His face was bleeding and his lips peeling. He had severe burns to his entire body, which was also bloated. His clothes were bloodstained. He looked almost unworldly. My mother and sister stayed in the air-raid shelter with my father until the war's end on August 15.

Inside the shelter, water was dripping from the ceiling, and there were only thin straw mats on the floor. Underneath was a soggy mess of vomit of other victims, dirt, and maggots that seeped through to the top of the mats. My mother could not lay my sister down to rest.

My father had something stuck in his eye when he was blown away. He lost sight in his right eye, but his life was saved. However, even though he recovered enough to work, we often saw him crouching at the front-door, unable to leave home for work in the morning. That was because he suffered the A-bomb bura-bura disease (extreme tiredness). He also later suffered from the aftereffects of the broken hip he sustained when he was blown off by the blast, liver disease, and a thyroid gland that caused his neck to swell to twice its size, making it difficult to move even a little. He was repeatedly hospitalized.

My little sister got hoarse and her throat was wheezing and hissing. She complained of pain and cried continually. At age 5, she underwent surgery on her vocal cords at Nagasaki University Hospital, which had been treating patients at Shinkozen Elementary School.

After the surgery, her voice was reduced to just a muffled whisper. After that, she was repeatedly hospitalized and entered junior high school three years late. She was only able to attend junior high school for one semester of first year. She was forced to live in hospital until she died at the age of 44. Before her death, she lost sight in both eyes and asked me from the darkness, "What handicaps am I suffering? What do I get punished for?" I could not say anything.

Had it not been for the war, or for the atomic bombing, my sister could have enjoyed a beautiful life. Whenever I remember her, I get sad, frustrated, and angry at the war and atomic bombs.

Nine days after the bombing, my grandmother took me back to Nagasaki from our evacuation home. All around us was a burnt field and an indescribable feeling of fear surrounded us, as if we had entered a "dead town". I grabbed my grandmother's *mom'pe* (working pants women wore during-the war) tightly and asked her, "Where

am I? Where am I?" I still clearly remember walking a little and asking, "Where am I?"

My youngest sister, who was born three years after the atomic bombing, developed purpura when she entered elementary school. We witnessed many people who died shortly after developing purple spots on their body, after exposed to radiation from the atomic bombing. I was terrified to see such spots appearing on my little sister's body. Fortunately, she survived but even she, who was born after the atomic bombing, was threatened by the aftereffects of the atomic bombing.

In our family, someone was always hospitalized. My mother always took care of them. She died of stomach cancer at the age of 64 in 1972. And three years later, my father died of lung cancer.

My eldest sister, who had come back to Nagasaki with grandfather immediately after the bombing, died of leukemia. My second elder sister suffered various cancers, starting with skin cancer. She eventually died of bile duct cancer.

If only the atomic bomb had not been dropped, my family would have lived a healthy and happy life. Every day we were haunted by sickness and worries of the aftereffects. The atomic bomb continues to torment us until we die.

Those A-bomb survivors, or Hibakusha, are also undergoing unspeakable suffering.

Russia is now threatening to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. This reminds Hibakusha vividly of what happened to them on that day and the suffering we have undergone. It brings great suffering and sorrow to us.

Nuclear weapons would bring unimaginable hell on earth. They should never be used for whatever reasons. The only way to completely prevent the use of nuclear weapons should be for all the countries to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I hoped that the G7 Summit held in Hiroshima would be of some significance. But the world seems to be moving in the opposite direction of "a peaceful world without nuclear weapons". Six years have passed since the TPNW was adopted, the government of Japan, the only country to have been attacked with nuclear weapons, has not even signed it. I had hoped that the Hiroshima summit would give the Japanese government an opportunity to sign the treaty. I never expected to see a summit statement that recognizes the role of nuclear weapons.

The Hibakusha are approaching the time limit of their lives. I strongly hope that while they are still alive, we must set a course for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

I will join forces with all global citizens to exert my last strength to eliminate all nuclear weapons from the earth as soon as possible.

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