

Nagasaki Day Rally

2021 World Conference against A & H Bombs – Nagasaki Day Rally

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My name is Tahara Chihiro. I am a third-grade high school student and a member of the Tokyo High School Students Peace Seminar.

In the peace seminar, high school students learn and share their thoughts about peace. For three years since January 2017, on 40 different occasions we collected signatures for the International Signature Campaign in Support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha. By February last year, we were able to collect 5,479 signatures, exceeding our target.

With the signatures we collected, we made representations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August last year. We directly conveyed our message to the ministry that as the only country that was attacked by atomic bombs during wartime and the country that knows the horror of nuclear weapons the most, Japan should ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We asked ministry officials five questions, including, “Shouldn’t the government join the TPNW in response to 70% of citizens who think Japan should do so?” and, “What concrete measures is the government taking for the abolition of nuclear weapons?”

In response, ministry officials said that although the Japanese government shares the TPNW’s goal for the abolition of nuclear weapons, Japan’s joining it would undermine U.S. nuclear deterrence.

After the representations, participants expressed their thoughts, such as, “Bearing in mind the government’s position, I want to deepen my opinions,” and, “I felt the contradiction of supporting nuclear deterrence while calling for nuclear abolition.”

Realizing that high school students’ actions, though small, can be a force to change current policies of the Japanese government, I was able to gain confidence.

On January 22, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came into force.

Hibakusha told us with tears, “I was able to see the treaty in my lifetime.”

However, it is regrettable that the Japanese government has not signed or ratified the TPNW. We in the peace seminar launched a campaign “Raise our voices! High school students’ signature campaign” calling on the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW.

I wanted to collect signatures as soon as possible, so together with my high school friends and residents in my community, we began our action. In front of a university gate and outside Kichijoji

station, we were able to collect about 100 signatures in three days.

Yesterday, we held a high school students' national peace rally online. We confirmed that peace seminars not only in Tokyo but also in Aichi, Osaka, and Hiroshima will jointly carry out this signature campaign.

By appealing to students from elementary schools to universities, we can tell them that issues of nuclear weapons must be solved by us in the young generation.

Since about 13,000 nuclear weapons still exist in the world, it is possible that we might be affected by radiation.

In addition, high school students will obtain the right to vote when we turn 18 years old.

Learning, thinking about, and raising our voices about social issues can encourage us to take a first step to become sovereign citizens.

With their belief that "nobody else should ever go through a similar experience," Hibakusha have built the history leading to the TPNW.

It is our turn now to build the history leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

It will not be an easy path to take, but we continue to act for a better future.