

## Let Hibakusha's Voice Heard Around the World

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I was 13 years old when I suffered the atomic bombing. I was a first grader in middle school. Since then, I have lived to be 91 years old today. As an A-bomb survivor, Hibakusha, I witnessed with my own eyes the catastrophic effects of the atomic bombing. I remember all that I saw at that moment, and I have been working as an eye-witness for denouncing nuclear weapons, saying that they are kind of weapons humans cannot coexist with. However, people who belong to my generation are dying out while nuclear weapons are still thriving.

We are very glad that we have achieved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. To be honest, we wanted a treaty that goes further that dictates the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Nevertheless the TPNW has established that these weapons are clearly illegal, we were really pleased. We were happy to see that our efforts bore fruit. However, to think it over, we must admit that nuclear weapons are still out there despite all our endeavors. As these weapons could be used again so long as they exist, the risk of them being used remains despite that the ban treaty is there. We are therefore convinced that we need to establish a treaty stipulating their complete abolition to totally remove the crisis of humanity.

I now wish to tell you my experience as a Hibakusha to make you understand what kind of weapons they actually have been, and why humans should never accept them.

When the bomb fell, I was about 1 kilometer from the hypocenter. The bomb exploded in the air over Urakami area in Nagasaki. Due to thick clouds, the pilot was unable to visually identify the planned target. He dropped the bomb on Urakami, a location he could barely spot from the sky as part of Nagasaki City.

Even one nuclear bomb has a huge destructive power. So it takes one single plane to carry and drop it to destroy a city. On our side, we had been trained to what to do when a plane flies in, but we had not at all been prepared for an air-bombing conducted by a single plane. In fact, Nagasaki City had gone through a large-scale bombing on August 1st. On that day,

about 60 bombers flew in, but they all targeted at industrial zones and succeeded in destroying them. We however were far from envisaging an air-bombing conducted by one plane carrying one single bomb.

I, too, had never imagined that there would be an air-attack, because the air-raid alert, issued earlier in that morning, was eased to a simple alarm alert. I thought that the alarm would be cleared soon. But then I heard the roaring sound of a bomber flying in when I was reading a book on the second floor of my house. I was thinking that the bomber would just fly over the city as it was the only aircraft in the sky. My expectation proved to be completely wrong. It suddenly turned white all around me. I could see nothing. It was the color of the flash emitted by the bomb when it exploded. Next moment, I sensed an imminent danger and ran down the stairs to the ground floor. I covered my eyes and ears with my hands. During those days, we had been trained to do so to protect our bodies from the effects of conventional bombing: preventing our eyes from coming out of their sockets and ears from tympana being torn. As soon as I lay down on my face on the floor, I lost consciousness. I guess that the blast and its sound followed then, but I do not remember having heard them. I did not even realize then that two big glass doors blown by the blast were covering my body.

Mother was safe from the damage because she had gotten out quickly from the fallen house right after the bombing. I came to myself when I heard her calling my name loud. I noticed that the two glass doors on my body were not broken. They were intact which seemed to me a miracle. The shock wave of nuclear bomb was known to be strong enough to break into pieces any window panes on buildings located within 3 or 2 kilometers radius. Despite this, the glass doors on my body withstood the shock and remained intact. Even today, I consider it as a true blessing and thanks to that miracle that I have been able to witness the aftermath and the effects of the atomic bombing on the survivors and share them with you today.

If I could witness in the smallest details the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons on survivors, it is thanks to two facts combined: the target of atomic bombing was changed due to weather and that I survived by miracle. And it also allowed me to continue to tell you about these consequences ever since.

At that time, Urakami district could not be seen from where I was because of the hills in between, but I saw the sky above the district turn black. The flames rising from the burning

city lighted the black smoke to color its large parts in red. When I saw that scene, I thought that a huge burning inferno was appearing under that smoke. What I could not imagine was that citizens in tens of thousands were being killed there. I could see the sun through the black screen of the smoke. It looked like a shining red ball.

Shortly after, a big fire broke out near where I was. It quickly spread and came close to threaten me. If I let it develop, I would burn my house. As we were afraid that our house would be destroyed by fire, we went to see the house. At that point, the fire somehow stopped spreading because the wind changed its direction. Our house was damaged but spared to be burned down.

However, in the auditorium hall of my elementary school we stopped at on the way back, we saw nearly a hundred injured people who were carried there. Most of them were severely injured or burned. Those who seemed not so badly injured were moaning that they were in pain and suffering. About 4 or 5 women were looking after them. They were not doctors, not even nurses. These professionals were not able to come to the first aid station from outside, as they themselves were killed or severely injured. Those assigned to the tasks usually done by nurses, had to manage to come to the station on foot and tried to give care to the injured with makeshift materials such as sheets of cloth soaked in oil in buckets which they put on the burns on the back of people. With time, people began to die one after another crying "it hurts" or calling their mother.

Those people who died in the auditorium were taken out to the school yard. Their bodies were piled up and incinerated there at the end of the day. I think most of the people in the auditorium died there. Mass incineration was conducted every day using the school yard as crematorium. This is why for a week or two, "smell of death" hung in the air all around the town.

Looking at Urakami area in tempest of flames, we thought about the families of my two aunts who lived there. So, with Mother, I went to Urakami district to find out what had happened to them. As there was no access to Urakami district from the city, we had to make a big detour through the forests on foot of the mountains and eventually entered Urakami three days later. The scene I first saw there made me feel the emptiness, the feeling that everything had disappeared from Urakami. As we began walking down the mountains, we found charred black human bodies lying around on the ground unattended. In shady places, heavily injured people in hundreds, were also lying or sitting on the ground,

most of them barely capable of groaning. We had to walk in the middle of these people to reach my aunts' houses to find out that their families had died. The family members of one aunt were all burned black and left lying under the burned-down house. The house of another aunt was an isolated house and had fallen flat on the ground, but some of her family had miraculously survived. Aunt herself had been severely burned and had died shortly before we reached there. We put a sheet of iron on the grass in a field, placed her body on it and covered it with pieces of wood to cremate. We collected some bones from the ashes and put them in a pot for storing miso as there was nothing else there to serve as a cinerary urn.

My grandfather was also heavily burned but was still alive when we found him. However, he was so weak that he could not even understand that I was his grandson. He nevertheless sensed a human presence near him. He moved his lips to say he wanted water. Generally, injured people wanted water. As he was severely wounded, he was not an exception. On his desperate request, I soaked my handkerchief with water and applied it on his lips. It was the ending care that I could give to my grandfather.

A single bomb explosion, in the space of an instant, took the lives of five family members of mine. After going through such a brutal attack, it was natural for any human being to be convinced that such a weapon should never be used in war. This is why I want that those who continue to say that nuclear weapons should be eliminated to try to experience for themselves what we the survivors actually endured. We should not reduce their experiences to just the word "inhumane" but capture the reality of what nuclear weapons brought about to humans, of what kind of destruction or damage to them. I think this will be a source of powerful action, much more powerful than we have today and it will take us closer to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

There still are many nuclear weapons on earth. And the president of the superpower Russia is threatening to use these weapons in invading Ukraine. Such a threat must not become a reality. However, the war continues. This war must be stopped by negotiations as soon as possible so that these weapons will never be used again.

In closing, I want to say that we, people and the government of Japan must be the ones that should take the lead towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Kishida has characterized Japan as "the only country to be A-bombed in war." If so, he must be the one to lead a global effort for the nuclear abolition. What he did instead was to

declare at the G7 Meeting in last May that nuclear deterrence is so important and therefore it should be fostered. What an aberration! We cannot let him do what he wants. We must unite and radically change the nuclear policy of the present government. We must not wait for somebody to do that. Who can make the change we want then? Those who have come here to gather, for sure, but we need a lot more people like me and you, who are resolved to work together for changing the government, putting huge pressure on it to make it sign and ratify the TPNW and fighting on the frontline for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Let us work together!!