

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

“Suddenly a rainbow-like flash of light burst from behind me. A blast of wind knocked me over, slamming me into the road. Touching my back, my clothes were gone and my skin was blistered and slimy, sticking to my fingers. I was in hospital for three years and seven months, hovering between life and death, and one year and nine months of my stay I spent lying on my stomach, my back covered with severe burns. My chest was covered in bedsores, the flesh rotting to the bone. Even now, my chest appears gouged so deeply you can see my heart beating through my ribs.”

This is the experience of TANIGUCHI Sumiteru, who sustained crimson-red burns all over his back in the atomic bombing at the age of 16.

The atomic bomb that exploded over Nagasaki at 11:02 on the morning of August 9, 1945, stole the lives of 74,000 people by the end of the year. The *hibakusha* who survived developed leukemia, cancer and other diseases years and decades after the bombing—battle with suffering and anxiety due to the effects of radiation even now.

Mr. Taniguchi passed away six years ago, but before his death he left a message that seemed to foresee the world today: “People appear to be gradually forgetting the suffering of the past. This forgetfulness terrifies me. I fear that forgetfulness will lead to the acceptance of further atomic bombings.”

As the invasion of Ukraine drags on, Russia continues to threaten use of nuclear weapons. Other nuclear states are accelerating moves to strengthen their dependence on nuclear weapons or enhance their nuclear capabilities, further increasing the risk of nuclear war.

What must we do right now?

We have to go back to the very beginning, to look again at “What happened to human beings underneath that mushroom cloud 78 years ago?” and address the fundamental question of “What would happen to the Earth and to humankind if a nuclear war were to begin right now?”

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May this year, the leaders of all the participating countries visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and met with a *hibakusha*, showing the world through their own actions the importance of knowing the reality of the atomic bombings. Furthermore, the G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament—one of the summit’s outcome documents—reaffirmed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” However, the Hiroshima Vision is predicated on “nuclear deterrence”—nations maintaining their safety by possessing nuclear weapons. Russia is not the only state representing the risk of nuclear deterrence. As long as states are dependent on nuclear deterrence, we cannot realize a world without nuclear weapons. Eliminating nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth is the only way to truly protect our safety.

I hereby appeal to the leaders of nuclear states and countries under the nuclear umbrella: Now is the time to show courage and make the decision to break free from dependence on nuclear deterrence. I ask that you move steadily along the path to abolishing nuclear weapons through dialogue, not confrontation, based on a concept of security centered on humanity.

I hereby appeal to the Government of Japan and members of the National Diet: The world is watching the actions of the only country to experience wartime atomic bombings. In order to clearly show Japan’s resolve to abolish nuclear weapons, please participate in the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as an observer, and sign and ratify the Treaty as quickly as possible. I also ask that, in addition to firmly maintaining the principle of peace stated in the Japanese Constitution, you engage in diplomatic efforts aimed at disarmament and alleviation of tensions in the region, such as denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone initiative.

I ask that everyone in the world stops for a moment and thinks:

Despite the pain caused by recalling their atomic bombing experiences, the *hibakusha* have continuously called on the world to recognize the inhumanity of nuclear weapons by recounting their personal ordeals. Surely it is their testimonies that have been a deterrent force preventing the use of nuclear weapons during the past 78 years.

This year, the average age of the *hibakusha* exceeded 85 years. As we near a time when there are no longer any *hibakusha* living, whether we are able to maintain this genuine deterrent force and whether we are able to abolish nuclear weapons are dependent on the actions of each and every individual.

Please visit the atomic bombing sites, see with your own eyes and sense the consequences of nuclear weapons. Please listen to the testimonies of *hibakusha*, a common inheritance of humankind that must continue to be talked about throughout the world.

Knowing the reality of the atomic bombings is the starting point for achieving a world without nuclear weapons, and could also be the driving force for changing the world.

I am a second-generation *hibakusha*; my parents are both *hibakusha*. To ensure that Nagasaki is the last place to suffer an atomic bombing, the next generation of *hibakusha*—including me—will firmly carry on the *hibakusha*’s mission, passing the baton of peace on to future generations.

I strongly call on the Government of Japan to further enhance support for the *hibakusha* as well as provide relief for those who have experienced an atomic bombing as quickly as possible.

In addition to expressing my deepest condolences to those whose lives were taken by the atomic bombs, I declare here that Nagasaki will continue to strive to disseminate a “Culture of Peace” throughout the world as well as realize the abolition of nuclear weapons and permanent world peace, working with not only Hiroshima, Okinawa, and Fukushima—which sustained radiation damage—but all people who desire peace.

SUZUKI Shiro
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 2023