

Peace Message

On behalf of the people of Hiroshima Prefecture, I pray for the souls of those who lost their lives in the atomic bombing as I offer my condolences to the bereaved families and express my deepest sympathies to *hibakusha* who even today still suffer from the after-effects of the bomb.

Once again, August 6th has come; this is the 72nd summer since the day of the atomic bombing. I understand that August 6 reminds many *hibakusha* of their past memories.

There was one woman that day who was 1.4 kilometers distant from the hypocenter. Her skin was burnt except for the parts covered by her summer clothing. Because of the pain, she was unable to sleep for the next 50 days.

She wrote: "I hate to hear the term *atomic bomb* or to talk about it. The term reminds me of the moment of terror, the moment I felt as if I had been pressed with a hot iron plate."

On every anniversary of the atomic bombing, many *hibakusha* recall the pain of being pressed with a hot iron plate. They have repeated the recalling of that pain at least 72 times.

Recently, increasing numbers of *hibakusha* have begun to testify their own experiences by breaking a tight seal from their past memories.

As they age, they feel the urge to tell their experiences to someone. They know that otherwise they would lose the opportunity to share their experiences. At the same time, it seems to me that they are driven by their frustration that the path to nuclear abolition still remains invisible even after 72 years of the first bombing.

There is no advantage whatsoever for *hibakusha* to talk about their firsthand experiences, which they never like to recall. Yet, they have begun to talk, driven by their inner desire that no one should ever have to suffer what they went through.

How much do we understand the reality of the atomic bombing described by *hibakusha*?

They feel that they must convey the facts even though this involves great pain. This means that the hell caused by the atomic bombing was so tremendous that it drives *hibakusha* to speak out. The hell, the annihilation of human lives, and their determination that no one should ever have to suffer what they went through. Nuclear policy, which deals with the ultimate inhumane weapon, must be based on full recognition of this reality.

It is wrong to believe that the use of nuclear weapons should not be ruled out in an extreme situation. Such a misguided view reflects ignorance of the reality that use of nuclear weapons can create. We must firmly stand on the premise that we shall never use them.

Last year, President Obama gave a speech here in Hiroshima, saying, “That is the future we can choose, a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening.”

How much progress did we make after this speech was delivered?

Last month, 122 countries voted to approve the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which refers to the suffering of *hibakusha*. On the other hand, some nuclear states not only refused to sign the treaty, but actively opposed it, arguing that they will actually modernize their nuclear weaponry to reinforce its power. Moreover, North Korea shows no intention to stop its nuclear development.

In this situation, the variance between nuclear states and non-nuclear states has widened and nuclear proliferation is advancing concurrently. This means we are not approaching a “moral awakening,” but receding from it.

Because of the present severe international security environment, we

must recognize the reality that any use of nuclear weapons would create a hell, and utilize the collective wisdom of people of the world to promote total nuclear abolition, which is the only means to guarantee nonuse of nuclear weaponry.

In this regard, I ask the Japanese government to exert leadership in this initiative, as it represents the one nation on earth that has suffered the hell created by the atomic bomb. I ask the government to advocate and carry out concrete measures to resolve the variance between nuclear and non-nuclear states, and to advance along the path toward total nuclear abolition, involving all countries in the world.

As suggested by President Obama, we must abandon the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which comprises a theory of terror that is nothing but a myth. We must turn to reality, and pursue a peaceful world without nuclear weapons.

In line with the Hiroshima for Global Peace Plan, Hiroshima Prefecture will continue to pursue nuclear abolition. To this end, we will take all possible actions, including gathering wisdom from around the world and encouraging world leaders to visit the sites of the atomic bombings.

I would like to conclude my peace message by vowing here today, as my duty to all *hibakusha*, to work together with the people of the world to abolish nuclear weapons and leave for future generations a peaceful world where everyone can lead an enriched and happy life. I also pledge to do my best to enhance our support for the aging *hibakusha* living both within and outside Japan.

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