

Peace Message (2022 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony)

On this day, in marking the 77th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, on behalf of all people of Hiroshima Prefecture, I wish to offer my humble and sincere prayers for the souls of those who lost their lives in the atomic bombing.

I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and express my heartfelt sympathies to the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb survivors, who even today suffer from the aftereffects of the bomb.

“At that time, I saw many black doll-like people, who seemed to be junior high school students, lying on a riverbank under the burning-red sky. Their voices calling ‘Mother’ grew fainter and fainter until they died.”

An orphaned child says, “Even after surviving, I had to move from one home to another, but in any home I was unable to find a place I belonged to. I spread *furoshiki* in a corner of a hallway and changed my clothes there. Moreover, I had to endure discrimination since it was believed that the *hibakusha* carried an infectious disease.”

For the rest of their lives, the *hibakusha* have continued to appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons because they engrave the reality of the atomic bombing on their own bodies and minds. Once used, nuclear weapons never permit people either to die as human beings or to live as human beings.

Driven by the strong will of the *hibakusha*, the first meeting of states parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was held in June 2022. This was an epochal moment when the earnest desire of the *hibakusha* moved the world a step forward.

On the other hand, a war of aggression has broken out in Eastern Europe. Moreover, the invading nation openly threatens the world by implying the possible use of its nuclear weapons. In addition, even people in third-party countries have begun to state that they need nuclear weapons in order to protect themselves.

I believe many people have now interpreted the invading nation’s threatening remarks as a real risk of the use of nuclear weapons, rather than a false show of power. In other words, nuclear weapons are posing a real and immediate risk to us

at this very moment.

The world did not change suddenly with the invasion of Ukraine. Throughout the long march of human history, violent acts have been committed repeatedly, leading to unreasonable cases of mass murder. Sometimes they were even conducted under the cloak of justice. It is difficult to assert that the so-called democratic countries are completely immune from such violent acts.

From the conservative viewpoint that human rationality has limits, we must face up to these historical facts and assume that we cannot escape from this weakness of human nature.

However, the realists who believe that one must meet force with force uphold the theory of nuclear deterrence. It is strange that for some reason they believe state leaders will make rational decisions and will not use nuclear weapons. This assumption has no logical basis. The truth is, we must face the reality that as long as nuclear weapons exist, there will be leaders who would use the power that might lead to human annihilation.

To prepare for a possible case where a future leader commits a wrongful act driven by the unavoidable urges of human nature, we should discard the means that has the potential to lead to the destruction of not only humankind but also the entire planet. When we squarely face this reality, it would be the wisest measure we can take in advance.

In fact, Ukraine is, so to speak, a victim of the nuclear deterrence theory. To be prepared for future conflicts, we must take action before we see the collapse of the nuclear deterrence itself.

While it took 200 years for global warming and over two years for the present pandemic to threaten human sustainability, nuclear weapons can annihilate humankind in only 30 minutes, that is, if someone press a nuclear button.

Based on the firm belief that nuclear abolition is therefore the most pressing issue for ensuring human sustainability, I will continue to work, without rest, until the last nuclear warhead is dismantled and destroyed, and the world becomes completely free of nuclear weapons. With this vow, I would like to conclude my message of peace.

August 6, 2022

Hidehiko Yuzaki

Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture

*“At that time, I saw many black doll-like people, who seemed to be junior high school students, lying on a riverbank under the burning-red sky. Their voices calling ‘Mother’ grew fainter and fainter until they died.”

Source: cited and summarized from the *Hibaku Taiken-ki* (the Memories of Atomic Bomb Survivors), Taeko Miyoshi (Global Network, the National Peace Memorial Halls for Atomic Bomb Victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki <https://www.globalpeace.go.jp/taikenki/index.php>)

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Source: cited and summarized from the *Hibaku Taiken-ki* (the Memories of Atomic Bomb Survivors), *Ikiru—Hibakusha no Jibun-shi* (To Live—Personal History of a *Hibakusha*) Vol. 6, Sumiko Yamada, 2022, pp. 94, 98, published by the Genbaku Higaisha Sodan-in no Kai (Association of Advisers to *Hibakusha*), Hibakusha no Jibun-shi Henshu Iinkai (Committee on Compiling Personal Histories of the *Hibakusha*), Keisuisha Co., Ltd.

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