

## Governor's Greeting at 2025 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony

On this day, which marks the 80th year after 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 are suffering even today.

Shortly after the atomic bombing, it was said that not a single grass or tree would grow in Hiroshima for 75 years. Five years have already passed since that milestone, and Hiroshima has undergone dramatic transformation, marked by the opening of a new station building - now the third generation since the bombing. Many tourists are visiting the city from around the world, and we see Hiroshima has become a peaceful, thriving city. At the same time, however, we are aware that the prosperity we are enjoying today is fragile, as the international situation shifts from one based on the rule of law and diplomacy to a world ruled by overt violence.

Given this situation, some people argue that the importance of nuclear deterrence is growing. Is this really so? Certainly, the concept of deterrence may be necessary to prevent the outbreak of wars but there are limitations. Since the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece, deterrence supported by the balance of power has been broken repeatedly. This is because it is ultimately a psychological construct or an idea that exists only in our minds. Unlike universal laws such as law of universal gravitation, deterrence is not an undeniable truth but a fiction.

Deterrence has been broken by over-confident leaders, extreme egoism, pressure from an agitated populace, and widespread misunderstandings or misconceptions. As Japan started the Pacific War despite its overwhelming disadvantage in the balance of power, human beings do not always make rational decisions, which is a fundamental assumption of deterrence theory, especially nuclear deterrence theory.

In fact, nuclear deterrence has not been safely sustained over the past 80 years, but has, at times, been on the brink of collapse. Historical records reveal several instances where the risk of nuclear catastrophe was averted only because of intentional breaches of protocol and the refusal to launch a nuclear missile.

An ancient Chinese poet once wrote, "Ruined is the nation; remain the mountains and rivers." In the past, the foundation for reconstruction remained even after a nation was ruined by the breakdown of deterrence.

"Remains the nation; ruined are the mountains and rivers."

Should nuclear deterrence fail someday, as suggested by historical evidence, and should nuclear war occur, it would be impossible to save the human race and the earth from unrecoverable devastation.

What is the meaning of national security if it protects only the concept of a nation but has possibility to lead unrecoverable end for its land and people?

Deterrence does not simply refer to a balance of military power, but it also encompasses broader elements such as soft power and diplomacy. To ensure the sustainability of humanity even if deterrence fails, we must eliminate nuclear weapons as a component of deterrence. Reportedly, more than 14 trillion yen is spent annually to maintain nuclear deterrence. What we must do now is to invest just one tenth of this amount into resources and knowledge to build a new security system without nuclear weapons.

Nuclear abolition is not a far-off lodestar shining in the sky. As a *hibakusha*, who was pinned under a collapsed building, crawled towards a ray of light little by little in the darkness and ultimately escaped the rubble with her life, we must pursue the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is a tangible, realistic goal within our reach, the failure of which could mean death.

"Don't give up! Keep pushing! See the light? Crawl towards it."\*

Many *hibakusha* who were unable to escape the rubble died in darkness and agony. To honor their memory, we must never give up, and continue to crawl persistently towards the light of nuclear abolition, ensuring the lives and security of the human race and the earth.

Lastly, Hiroshima Prefecture will never stop its efforts towards nuclear abolition. With this vow, I would like to conclude my message of peace.

August 6, 2025

Hidehiko Yuzaki

Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture

The part marked with an asterisk (\*) in the Governor's speech is a quotation from the speech delivered by Ms. Setsuko Thurlow at the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony on December 10, 2017.

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