

Peace Message (2019 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony)

On behalf of the people of Hiroshima Prefecture, I pray for the souls of those who lost their lives in the atomic bombing. I would also like to offer my condolences to the bereaved families and express my deepest sympathies to the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb survivors, who even today suffer from the aftereffects of the bomb.

Seventy-four years ago, everything here in Hiroshima was completely destroyed by the atomic bomb and so were the people living here.

Immediately after the bombing, however, the people of Hiroshima rose up from the ashes and debris of nuclear destruction. They quickly restored water supply facilities and streetcar tracks and built barracks with whatever materials remained in areas swept by the flames. As a result of residents' untiring efforts and support from both inside and outside Japan, Hiroshima came back to life just like a phoenix. Today, many tourists visit this thriving city from around the world. The views of the revived city inspire many visitors, particularly young people from regions suffering armed conflicts, giving them hope for post-conflict reconstruction.

However, we must not overlook what lies beneath this thriving city. Underneath the lush greenery here in Peace Memorial Park, and below the riverbed, lie the bones of many innocent people whose bodies were burned away in a moment and whose souls are grieving forever. Even those who managed to survive the bombing had to endure extreme hardships that are beyond description. Many were orphaned when their parents and siblings were killed in the bombing, were forced to leave their homes under the city's reconstruction programs, or suffered discrimination, which indeed rubbed salt into their wounds. Even today, they suffer from the lingering effects of radiation, most notably in the form of various diseases. If not for the atomic bombing, these people would have been free from such adversities. Even after 74 years, the atomic bombing continues to torment these *hibakusha*.

While thinking these thoughts, a simple question came up in my mind.

Why are some countries allowed to possess nuclear weapons that can inflict a trauma that remains incurable for 74 years or more? Why are they allowed to threaten other countries to use their nuclear arsenals?

Use of a nuclear weapon would result in another calamity like the ones that happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A calamity in which people were killed indiscriminately, including babies, women, and young people. Is it really permissible to cause such a catastrophe?

A former U.S. Secretary of Defense once testified that simply possessing nuclear weapons was dangerous since there had been many incidents involving mishandling of the weapons. Today, we face yet another risk: possible cyberattacks on nuclear systems. If we believe that states that possess nuclear weapons are the winners, it would be extremely difficult to stop nuclear proliferation.

In face of this obvious peril, some people still say that this is the reality of today's international society. Although these people use the term "reality," which makes their remarks sound intelligent, in fact they are only escaping from true reality.

The only means to absolutely ensure that nuclear weapons are never used is nuclear abolition. There are no other options. To realize nuclear abolition, however, we need sufficient energy. Moreover, we need great courage to take concrete and responsible actions to change the reality of global powers possessing nuclear

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weapons.

I do believe that we Japanese, as the people in the only country to have suffered the catastrophe of wartime nuclear bombing, have that energy and courage. I also believe that realizing nuclear abolition is our duty to all victims and *hibakusha*. It is the duty of our generation to work together to abolish nuclear weapons and leave for future generations a peaceful world where everyone can lead a happy and spiritually enriched life. With this in mind, Hiroshima Prefecture will take concrete actions toward next year's 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing.

I would like to conclude my message of peace by pledging here today to do my best to enhance our support for the aging *hibakusha* living both inside and outside Japan, who are still suffering from the aftereffects of the bombing so long ago.

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Hidehiko Yuzaki
Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture