

No More *Hibakusha*
For a nuclear-free world

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Humanity and nuclear arms cannot coexist

"No More Hibakusha" is a message from the hibakusha to all of humanity. They are calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons as witnesses of history who themselves experienced the devastating effects of nuclear arms.

We cannot discuss our present or future without knowing what nuclear arms have done. We must lend our ears to the testimony of hibakusha. And we must remember those who have lost their chances to speak.

I believe that the use of nuclear arms violates international law and is incompatible with the principles of humanity and justice that are at the foundation of the law. This is because when one knows the reality of what atomic bombs do, one believes that nuclear arms and humanity cannot coexist and that law does not allow for nuclear arms.

I want to eliminate nuclear arms, and I believe that this is possible.

The reason I want to eliminate them is because nuclear weapons are an absolute evil, and they could annihilate human society. If used, they would most likely lead directly to human annihilation. Even unused, they are useless, dangerous, require enormous amounts of money, and lead to a gradual demise.

Elimination of nuclear arms is possible

I believe it is possible to eliminate nuclear arms because they are man-made and are tools of government policy.

Earthquakes and tsunami are natural phenomena, but humans make nuclear weapons. Without human will and action, nuclear weapons would not exist. The dismantling of existing nuclear weapons is possible. Though issues of how to handle nuclear materials remain unresolved, ensuring that these materials cannot be used for weapons is not so difficult.

In addition, wars are the violent realization of a nation's political will. When government is structured so that the government's will is a reflection of the will of the people, control by the people is possible. The fact that nuclear weapons have not been used since Nagasaki is proof of this. It is possible for nuclear weapons to be eliminated by the will of the people.

Our task, therefore, is first to understand how inhumane nuclear arms are, to oppose the values and logic of nuclear arms proponents, and to build political will towards elimination of nuclear weapons. Here, the inhumanity of nuclear weapons is not in question, so I will examine the logic of those who rely on nuclear weapons.

Reasons for the atomic bombing

US President Truman issued a press release immediately after the atomic bombing in which he said, "Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima...the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare. ... The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. ...The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosened against those who brought war to the Far East. ...It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum."

Truman had a precise understanding of the characteristics of nuclear energy when he chose to say, "repaid" for Pearl Harbor, "loosened against those who brought war to the Far East," and "spare the Japanese people from utter destruction."

And it continues to be argued in the US that to occupy Japan would have required the sacrifice of one million more American lives and twice the number of Japanese, and that the atomic bomb ended the war and saved those lives.

Reasons given for the atomic bombing are, 1) immediate end to the war, 2) immediate liberation from occupation and colonization, 3) repayment for Pearl Harbor.

Do the reasons for the atomic bombing justify the suffering of the hibakusha?

Do the above reasons legitimize the indiscriminate, large-scale, cruel massacre and devastation, and the continuing suffering of the hibakusha brought about by the atomic bombing? This is what is in question. Even if it was for the militaristic rationale of winning, humanity and justice demand that certain methods and means of combat are unacceptable, and this is the reason we have international humanitarian law.

Let me introduce two facts related to this.

On 10 August 1945, the Japanese Imperial Government issued its "Protest against the Attack of a New-Type Bomb by American Airplane." This Protest points out that the indiscriminate and cruel nature of the atomic bomb violates international law, and it condemns the US government in the name of all of

humanity and civilization.

In the "Atomic Bomb Case" of 1963, the Tokyo District Court ruled that the US nuclear bombings violated international law.

Both the Japanese government and court have thus taken the view that the use of nuclear arms is a violation of international law, humanity and civilization. One is reminded here that even the US had argued for the elimination of nuclear weapons right after World War II.

Arguments for nuclear weapons

As the only country to have suffered atomic bombing, the Japanese government is calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This abolitionist position, however, cannot be taken at face value, because the Japanese government relies on US nuclear deterrence for national security.

Essentially, the logic behind the nuclear deterrence theory is that the threat, "we will annihilate your country with nuclear retaliation if you try to attack our country" would "deter" the military action of the other country. Japan is a very close ally of the US, which possesses nuclear arms, and Japan wants to deter other countries' military actions by staying under this "nuclear umbrella."

As long as countries use this nuclear deterrence logic and try to secure their safety with nuclear weapons, they will never take initiative to eradicate nuclear weapons of their own accord. This is because as long as national security depends on military strength, it would go against reason to give up nuclear arms, which are the most powerful weapons in existence. As long as a nation's safety is secured by military strength, nuclear weapons will not be eliminated.

Because nuclear deterrence proponents know very well how effective nuclear weapons are, they want to keep their own nuclear arms but prevent other countries from having them. This is the "non-proliferation" logic. When it comes to non-proliferation, these unfair and self-serving nuclear deterrence proponents work with zeal, but when it comes to nuclear arms reduction, no one could be more indolent. This is why nuclear-weapons states tend to neglect their responsibilities under Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Nuclear deterrence theory accepts the need and utility of nuclear weapons and is contradictory to nuclear arms elimination.

President Obama's proposal for a "world without nuclear weapons"

President Obama's "world without nuclear weapons" is, aside from the rhetoric, a proposal to prevent a nuclear attack on the US should nuclear weapons fall into

the hands of terrorists. According to Obama, the radical policy to prevent nuclear attack is to eliminate nuclear weapons. His proposal is practical and logical, but is not informed by the catastrophe brought about by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is clear from his statement that the US and its allies should retain their nuclear arms until their countries' security can be ensured. His logic is the newest version of the nuclear deterrence theory.

In addition, in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Obama endorsed the concept of "a just war." He is still under the spell of the nuclear deterrence theory and has not let go of wars for justice. As long as he is particular to this set of values and logic, President Obama may escape assassination, but will never be able to realize "a world without nuclear weapons" in his lifetime.

Obama's failed logic

Why not in his lifetime? Because if other states or non-states adopt Obama's logic, the US can never let go of its nuclear arms. In actuality, North Korea thinks they need nuclear arsenal to prepare for US use of military force. North Korea will most likely retain its nuclear weapons as long as it feels the US is a threat, and as long as North Korea does not dismantle its nuclear arms, the Japanese government will stick to its position that it needs the US "nuclear umbrella." This puts the US, Japan and North Korea all on the same level, making nuclear weapons a requirement for their nations' independence and security.

To say that the US's nuclear weapons are necessary but North Korea's are impermissible is an unconvincing and self-righteous claim. Here too, the contradictions in entrusting a nation's security to nuclear arms are evident. Nuclear weapons are a threat to everyone. The logic that one party may possess these weapons of terror but others cannot is incompatible with "trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world" (Japanese Constitution Preamble).

Eliminating nuclear weapons and abolishing war

In 1955, Bertrand Russel and Albert Einstein issued a manifesto declaring, "whatever agreements not to use H-bombs had been reached in time of peace, they would no longer be considered binding in time of war, and both sides would set to work to manufacture H-bombs as soon as war broke out, for if one side manufactured the bombs and the other did not, the side that manufactured them would inevitably be victorious." Though written in the Cold War era, the incisiveness of this widely endorsed manifesto in describing the characteristics of nuclear weapons endures to this day.

As long as the goal is to win war, having nuclear weapons is extremely effective because there is no way to counter them. If used, however, they threaten the survival of the human race.

This manifesto also warns that an agreement made in times of peace to prohibit use of nuclear weapons would be trampled upon in times of war. This is why it is necessary to go beyond prohibiting use of nuclear arms and to aspire to their complete elimination.

In addition, the manifesto points out that as long as a system of war remains, there will always be the threat of nuclear retaliation and human extinction. This suggests that those who aspire to the eradication of nuclear arms also need to aspire to abolish war.

As long as we try to resolve things through military might and war, it will be impossible to let go of the "ultimate weapon", and if used, there will be no conquerors and no conquered. If we are to wish for a nuclear-free world, coupling it with a call for the abolition of war would be powerfully effective.

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution does not stop at the renunciation of war and use of force, but renounces war potential and the state's right of belligerency. Our task is to call for both elimination of nuclear weapons and internationalization of the Japanese Constitution.

Countering the real crisis

The real crises that humanity faces is that in spite of having 20-some thousand nuclear warheads, Nuclear Weapons Convention negotiations have not begun.

In today's international community, not enough is shared about how inhumane nuclear arms are, and nuclear arms proponents dominate the political scene.

We must change the government's position of reliance on nuclear weapons, and we must counter the forces that disregard human life and that put profit before people.

To be free from fear and want, and to live in peace, we must continue this fight. We will surely be victorious.