

PEACE DECLARATION

August 6, 2007

That fateful summer, 8:15. The roar of a B-29 breaks the morning calm. A parachute opens in the blue sky. Then suddenly, a flash, an enormous blast — silence — hell on Earth.

The eyes of young girls watching the parachute were melted. Their faces became giant charred blisters. The skin of people seeking help dangled from their fingernails. Their hair stood on end. Their clothes were ripped to shreds. People trapped in houses toppled by the blast were burned alive. Others died when their eyeballs and internal organs burst from their bodies—Hiroshima was a hell where those who somehow survived envied the dead.

Within the year, 140,000 had died. Many who escaped death initially are still suffering from leukemia, thyroid cancer, and a vast array of other afflictions.

But there was more. Sneered at for their keloid scars, discriminated against in employment and marriage, unable to find understanding for profound emotional wounds, survivors suffered and struggled day after day, questioning the meaning of life.

And yet, the message born of that agony is a beam of light now shining the way for the human family. To ensure that “no one else ever suffers as we did,” the *hibakusha* have continuously spoken of experiences they would rather forget, and we must never forget their accomplishments in preventing a third use of nuclear weapons.

Despite their best efforts, vast arsenals of nuclear weapons remain in high states of readiness—deployed or easily available. Proliferation is gaining momentum, and the human family still faces the peril of extinction. This is because a handful of old-fashioned leaders, clinging to an early 20th century worldview in thrall to the rule of brute strength, are rejecting global democracy, turning their backs on the reality of the atomic bombings and the message of the *hibakusha*.

However, here in the 21st century the time has come when these problems can actually be solved through the power of the people. Former colonies have become independent. Democratic governments have taken root. Learning the lessons of history, people have created international rules prohibiting attacks on non-combatants and the use of inhumane weapons. They have worked hard to make the United Nations an instrument for the resolution of international disputes. And now city governments, entities that have always walked with and shared in the tragedy and pain of their citizens, are rising up. In the light of human wisdom, they are leveraging the voices of their citizens to lift international politics.

Because “Cities suffer most from war,” Mayors for Peace, with 1,698 city members around the world, is actively campaigning to eliminate all nuclear weapons by 2020.

In Hiroshima, we are continuing our effort to communicate the A-bomb experience by holding A-bomb exhibitions in 101 cities in the US and facilitating establishment of *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Courses* in universities around the world. American mayors have taken the lead in our *Cities Are Not Targets* project. Mayors in the Czech Republic are opposing the deployment of a missile defense system. The mayor of Guernica-Lumo is calling for a resurgence of morality in international politics. The mayor of Ypres is providing an international secretariat for Mayors for Peace, while other Belgian mayors are contributing funds, and many more mayors around the world are working with their citizens on pioneering initiatives. In October this year, at the World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments, which represents the majority of our planet’s population, cities will express the will of humanity as we call for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The government of Japan, the world’s only A-bombed nation, is duty-bound to humbly learn the philosophy of the *hibakusha* along with the facts of the atomic bombings and to spread this knowledge through the world. At the same time, to abide by international law and fulfill its good-faith obligation to press for nuclear weapons abolition, the Japanese government should take pride in and protect, as is, the Peace Constitution, while clearly saying “No,” to obsolete and mistaken US policies. We further demand, on behalf of the *hibakusha* whose average age now exceeds 74, improved and appropriate assistance, to be extended also to those living overseas or exposed in “black rain areas.”

Sixty-two years after the atomic bombing, we offer today our heartfelt prayers for the peaceful repose of all its victims and of Ichiro Itoh, the mayor of Nagasaki shot down on his way toward nuclear weapons abolition. Let us pledge here and now to take all actions required to bequeath to future generations a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Tadatoshi Akiba
Mayor
The City of Hiroshima