

Second Meeting of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament  
Washington, D.C., February 14, 2009

**For a Peaceful Future without Nuclear Weapons and Wars**  
**-- On behalf of the A-Bomb Survivors in Japan --**

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I feel greatly privileged to be given an opportunity to participate in and to speak before the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, initiated by the governments of Japan and Australia. My name is Iwasa Mikiso, an atomic bomb survivor of Hiroshima, and I represent the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, called *Nihon Hidankyo* in short, which is a national organization of A-bomb survivors in Japan. The atomic bomb inflicted damage of unprecedented scale in human history. We, the *Hibakusha*, are victims of nuclear war, and we want no more victims of nuclear weapons. This is our pledge and our mission that I would like to proclaim at the beginning of my presentation.

The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6, 1945 and on August 9, 1945 respectively turned the two cities into rubble in instants through the enormous, combined destructive power of blast waves, heat rays, and radiation. The citizens there were thrown into infernos of fire and devastation contaminated with radioactivity.

At that time, I was a sixteen-year-old middle school student. As the factory at which I was drafted to work was closed on that day due to a power shortage, I did not go to work. I was in the yard of my house, which was located 1.2 kilometers from what would be ground zero. Soon after I heard the roar of planes flying over, I felt the impact of a strong blast, and my body was smashed to the ground. I was not particularly injured, as the ground was a soft soil. If I had stood about half a meter to the right, I might have been killed instantly, smashed on a garden rock. Miraculously, I suffered no burns, as I was in the shade of a neighbor's house standing opposite mine across the street. In the ominous silence, it suddenly dawned on me that my mother was under the collapsed house. I cried out, "Mom!" And I heard her reply, "I'm here," from under the fallen roof. I was relieved to know that she was alive, but my joy was short-lived. When I managed to lift the roof sheet and to thrust my head under, I saw the fragments of the collapsed support pillars scattered over the foundation of the house. Through narrow slits between them, I saw my mother lying on her back about a meter away. She was bleeding from her closed eyes. "I cannot get in from here. Can you move out from there?" I asked. She said, "I cannot move unless you remove the beam lying on my left shoulder." I tried to remove the debris, attacking it from another side, but I could not make my way any closer to her. I had no idea what was happening in Hiroshima beyond the confines of my collapsed house. After some

time, a fierce firestorm approached, and I worked desperately in a shower of falling sparks. There was no one to help me. Feeling powerless, I became nearly frantic and cried, "Mom, there's no way I can move it. The fire is coming. Can't you make it through somehow?" My mother must have been full of fear, not able to see anything around her, trapped under the fallen house. But she seemed to have accepted death and said to me, "Then you must escape quickly!" And she began to recite a Buddhist prayer. Hearing her prayer, I ran away. I left my mother to be burnt alive in raging flames.

At that time, all around me was a sea of fire. I struggled through and managed to reach the swimming pool of a junior high school located behind our house. I jumped into the water and eventually escaped from the fire. But I saw a man, who was also trying to flee from the fire, reach the edge of the schoolyard a little later. He was enveloped in flames and burnt to death. Like him, many people were burnt to death after narrowly escaping their fallen houses. Losing their way in firestorms, they swarmed to a small water tank and died altogether. Similar dreadful scenes were seen everywhere in Hiroshima and Nagasaki right after the atomic bombings. It was literally a hell on earth.

A couple of days later, I dug out what looked like my mother's body from the ruins of our house. It was a greasy and slimy object, like a mannequin painted with coal tar and burned. I could not believe that it was my mother's body. She was killed mercilessly, not as a human being but as an object. The deaths of A-bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki could not possibly be described as human deaths.

My younger sister, then a first grader in a girls' middle school, had been mobilized by the military and was working near ground zero when the bomb was dropped. To date, she is still missing, and we do not know where or how she died. As my father had died from an illness in May that year, I became an A-bomb orphan. Looking for my sister around the city center, I fell ill, suffering the acute symptoms of radiation poisoning. Scarlet spots developed all over my body. I could not swallow due to a sore throat. I bled from my nose and from my gums. I lost my hair. Thanks to the devoted care of my aunt, who lost her husband to the A-bomb, I survived. But since then, I have suffered many different illnesses and health conditions related to radiation poisoning. Recently, I developed cancer caused by the delayed effects of A-bomb radiation. I continue my *Hibakusha* activities while battling my cancer. And please remember that my experience is only one of the several hundred thousand victims who went through the A-bombings.

Not all of the *Hibakusha* were under the mushroom cloud. Many more people who later came into the city looking for their families or engaging in rescue work were also exposed to residual radiation, inhaling radioactive dust and air and drinking or eating contaminated water and food, irradiated not only externally but also internally.

Many of the *Hibakusha* have had chronic health problems, have lost family members, have experienced family break-ups, and have not been able to rebuild their lives, facing various kinds

of social discrimination, giving up thoughts of marriage and children. In the cases of those who were exposed to the A-bombs *in utero* and were born with microcephaly, their parents continue to suffer not only as *Hibakusha* themselves but as parents of *Hibakusha*. While we know of many cases of second-generation A-bomb victims who have died from leukemia or cancers, the mechanism of the genetic effects of the A-bombs remains unstudied. Moreover, the harmful effects of nuclear weapons are not limited to the damage done to the bodies of their victims. Survivors continue to suffer from psychological wounds that never heal. In such an extremely hellish situation, we were unable to act as human beings. Fires forced us to run for our lives, abandoning those who were crying for water and asking for help and trampling down the dead and dying. Such cruel experiences stay in our minds as survivors, and these traumatic memories continue to torment us. The analysis and understanding of our psychological trauma has just begun. Thus, the A-bombs continue to inflict serious damage on the survivors to the extent that they are not allowed to die as human beings nor live as human beings. We, the *Hibakusha*, are living witnesses of one of the worst human disasters in history.

Even after sixty-four years, many *Hibakusha* still suffer from the abysmal consequences of the A-bombs, many worse off than I, but they still struggle to survive. We want to make sure that we stop repeating such atrocities. No one should have to experience such atrocities. This is why we have never called for retaliation. The A-bomb damage was too grave and too destructive to consider retaliation. Instead, we have promoted our movement to ensure that such tragedies should stop being repeated. We have worked to prevent nuclear war and to abolish nuclear weapons. We have also worked to achieve state compensation for the A-bomb damage. We speak on our A-bomb experiences both in Japan and internationally, helping shape international opinion. We are confident that our activities have contributed to preventing the outbreak of nuclear war in a number of crises.

Now, we are at a very important juncture in our history. On January 20 began the new U.S. administration led by President Obama. This is the first administration to pledge to achieve the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, the ratification of the CTBT, and the cessation of the development of new nuclear weapons. Feeling a new breeze blowing toward a future free from the threat of nuclear weapons, we welcome the new administration and hold up hope with the people of the U.S. At the same time, we are aware of an important role that we should play in realizing our shared goal. Overcoming a number of difficulties and challenges from 1945 to the present day, we have continued to appeal to the world, 'No More *Hibakusha!*' Please listen to the voices of the *Hibakusha* now more than ever.

And at the next NPT Review Conference of 2010, we want to see a concrete path laid out, leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons. We ardently desire to achieve this goal without any further delay, and we pledge to work together with you.