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THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The Nobel Lecture

given by

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2024

Nihon Hidankyo

Delivered by

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Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Excellencies,
Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

And friends around the world striving to abolish nuclear weapons,
Thank you for your introduction. I am Terumi TANAKA, one of the three Co-Chairpersons of Nihon Hidankyo. I am honored to speak on behalf of Nihon Hidankyo, the Nobel Peace laureate this year.

We established Nihon Hidankyo, the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, in August 1956. Having ourselves survived the inhumane impacts of the atomic bombings, damage unprecedented in history, we launched this movement to ensure such suffering would never be repeated, with two basic demands. The first demand is that the State which started and carried out the war should compensate victims for the damage caused by the atomic bombs, in opposition to the Japanese government's assertion that, "the sacrifice of war should be endured equally by the whole nation." The second is to demand the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons, as extremely inhumane weapons of mass killing, which must not be allowed to coexist with humanity.

Our movement has undoubtedly played a major role in creating the "nuclear taboo". However, there still remain 12,000 nuclear warheads on the Earth today, 4,000 of which are operationally deployed, ready for immediate launch. The nuclear superpower, Russia, threatens to use nuclear weapons in its war against Ukraine, and a cabinet member of Israel, in the midst of its unrelenting attacks on Gaza in Palestine, even spoke of the possible use of nuclear arms. In addition to the civilian casualties, I am infinitely saddened and angered that the "nuclear taboo" threatens to be broken.

I am one of the survivors of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. At the time, I was 13 years old, at home, around 3 kilometers east of ground zero.

It was August 9, 1945. I suddenly heard the buzzing sound of a bomber jet, and was soon after engulfed in a bright, white light. Surprised, I ran downstairs and got down on the floor, covering my eyes and ears with my hands. The next moment, an intense shock wave passed through our

entire house. I have no memory of that moment, but when I came to my senses, I found myself under a large, glass sliding door. It was a miracle that none of the glass was broken, and I was somehow spared injuries.

Three days later, I sought out the families of my two aunts who lived in the area near the hypocenter. It was then that I saw the full devastation of the bombing of Nagasaki. Walking with my mother, we went around a small mountain. Reaching a pass, we looked down in horror. Blackened ruins spread out as far as the port of Nagasaki, some three kilometers away. Urakami Cathedral, the largest brick church in the East, had collapsed to the ground, leaving no trace.

All the houses along the path, down to the foot of the mountain, were burnt to the ground and corpses lay scattered around them. Many people who were badly injured or burned, but still alive, were left unattended, with no help whatsoever. I became almost devoid of emotion, somehow closing off my sense of humanity, and simply headed intently for my destination.

I found the charred body of one aunt at the remains of her house, 400 meters from the hypocenter, along with the body of her grandson, a university student.

The other aunt's house had collapsed and become a pile of wood. My grandfather was crouched down, on the brink of death, with severe burns all over his body. My aunt had been severely burned, and died just before we arrived. We then cremated her remains with our own hands. My uncle, who was initially mostly unharmed, had left the area to seek help. Yet we later learned that he had collapsed at a rescue station, and died after suffering from a high fever for a week. Thus, one single atomic bomb transformed five of my relatives, so mercilessly, taking all of their lives in one fell swoop.

The deaths I witnessed at that time could hardly be described as human deaths. There were hundreds of people suffering in agony, unable to receive any kind of medical attention. I strongly felt that even in war, such killing and maiming must never be allowed to happen.

The Nagasaki bomb exploded 600 meters above the city. Fifty percent of the energy released caused shock waves that crushed houses. Thirty-five percent caused heat rays that severely burned people who were outside, and ignited fires throughout the collapsed houses. Many people were crushed and burned to death inside their homes. The remaining fifteen percent penetrated the human body as neutron and gamma rays, destroying it from the inside, leading to death and causing atomic bomb sickness.

By the end of that year, 1945, the death toll in the two cities is thought to have been approximately 140,000 in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki. 400,000 people are estimated to have been exposed to the atomic bombs, suffering injuries and surviving exposure to radiation.

The survivors, the Hibakusha, were forced into silence by the occupying forces for seven years. Furthermore, they were also abandoned by the Japanese government. Thus, they spent more than a decade after the bombings in isolation, suffering from illness and hardship in their lives, while also enduring prejudice and discrimination.

The United States hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954 resulted in the exposure of Japanese fishing boats to deadly radioactive fallout, or the "ashes of death." Among others, all 23 crew members of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru were exposed to radiation and developed acute radiation sickness, and the tuna they caught were discarded. This incident triggered a nationwide petition calling for a total ban on atomic and hydrogen bombs and tests, which spread like wildfire throughout Japan. This gained over 30 million signatures and in August 1955, the first World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Hiroshima, followed by the second in Nagasaki the following year. Encouraged by this movement, A-bomb survivors who participated in the World Conference formed the Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations, Nihon Hidankyo, on August 10, 1956 in Nagasaki.

In our founding declaration, Nihon Hidankyo expressed our determination to "save humanity from its crisis through the lessons learned from our experiences, while at the same time saving ourselves." We launched a movement demanding both "the abolition of nuclear weapons, and State compensation for the atomic bomb damage suffered."

Our initial campaign resulted in the enactment of the "A-Bomb Sufferers' Medical Care Law" in 1957. However, the content of the law was limited: besides issuing "Atomic Bomb Survivor Certificates" and providing free medical examinations, medical expenses would be paid only for illnesses recognized as atomic bomb-related by the Minister of Health and Welfare.

In 1968, the "Law Concerning Special Measures for A-Bomb Sufferers" was enacted, providing several types of benefits. However, this was only as part of the social security system, and demands for State compensation remained refused.

In 1985, Nihon Hidankyo conducted a nationwide Survey of Atomic Bomb Victims. This revealed that the damage inflicted on the A-bomb victims had impacted their lives, bodies, minds, and livelihoods. Their lives had been stolen, they had suffered physical and

psychological scars, and had struggled to work due to illness and prejudice. The results of the survey strongly supported the basic demands of the A-bomb survivors, reinforcing their determination that no one in the world should again be allowed to experience the horrific suffering they had gone through.

In December 1994, the "Law Concerning Relief to Atomic Bomb Survivors" (A-Bomb Survivors Relief Law) was enacted, combining the former two laws. However, no compensation was provided for the hundreds of thousands of deaths, and to this day the Japanese government has consistently refused to provide State compensation, limiting its measures to radiation damage only.

For many years, these laws did not apply to A-bomb survivors living abroad, regardless of their nationality. Korean Hibakusha who were exposed to the atomic bombings in Japan and returned to their home countries, as well as many Hibakusha who emigrated to the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and other countries after the war, suffered both from diseases unique to Hibakusha and from a lack of understanding by others of the damage caused by the A-bomb. Nihon Hidankyo worked in solidarity with the associations of A-bomb survivors formed in each country, and both in law courts and through joint actions, urged the government of Japan to act, which led to the provision of almost the same support for the A-bomb survivors abroad as those in Japan.

Our movement has continued to call for the immediate elimination of nuclear weapons, urging our own government, the nuclear weapon states, and all other states to take action.

In 1977, an international symposium on the "Damage and After-Effects of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" was held in Japan under the auspices of NGOs associated to the United Nations, clarifying the reality of the damage caused by the atomic bombings to human beings. Around this time, the threat of nuclear war was rising in Europe. Large rallies of hundreds of thousands of people took place in numerous countries, and Hibakusha were asked to give testimony at these rallies.

In 1978 and 1982, nearly 40 representatives of Nihon Hidankyo participated in the UN Special Sessions on Disarmament held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Our representatives spoke in the General Assembly Hall, and gave testimony at local schools and gatherings.

Representatives of Nihon Hidankyo have also secured opportunities to speak at the Review

Conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its Preparatory Committee meetings. During the Review Conferences, they held A-bomb Exhibitions in the main lobby of the UN General Assembly Hall, to great acclaim.

In 2012, at the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, the Norwegian government proposed holding a Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. Hibakusha testimonies given at the three Humanitarian Conferences, which started in 2013, were taken very seriously, and led to the negotiations toward the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In April 2016, A-bomb survivors around the world launched the "International Signature Campaign in Support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons," as proposed by Nihon Hidankyo. This campaign grew significantly, and over 13.7 million signatures were collected and submitted to the United Nations. We are overjoyed that on July 7, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted with the support of 122 countries.

It is the heartfelt desire of the Hibakusha that, rather than depending on the theory of nuclear deterrence, which assumes the possession and use of nuclear weapons, we must not allow the possession of a single nuclear weapon.

Please try to imagine -- there are 4,000 nuclear warheads, ready to be launched immediately. This means that damage hundreds or thousands of times greater than that which happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki could happen right away. Any one of you could become either a victim or a perpetrator, at any time. I therefore plead for everyone around the world to discuss together what we must do to eliminate nuclear weapons, and demand action from governments to achieve this goal.

The average age of the A-bomb survivors is now 85. Ten years from now, there may only be a handful of us able to give testimony as firsthand survivors. From now on, I hope that the next generation will find ways to build on our efforts and develop the movement even further.

One thing that will serve as a great resource is the existence of the "No More Hibakusha Project - Inheriting Memories of the A- and H-Bomb Sufferers." This non-profit organization has worked closely with Nihon Hidankyo to preserve records of the Hibakusha movement, the testimonies of A-bomb survivors, and the activities of Hibakusha organizations in various parts of Japan. For nearly 15 years, since its formation, this organization has endeavored persistently

to preserve and manage an archive of the grassroots movements of Hibakusha, their testimonies, and the activities of Hibakusha organizations in different localities. I hope that the association will take a major step forward in the movement to make use of these materials externally. I am hopeful that it will become an organization that takes action, devoting its efforts to the dissemination of the reality of the atomic bombings. Furthermore, I strongly hope that it will expand its activities not only within Japan, but also internationally.

To achieve further universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the formulation of an international convention which will abolish nuclear weapons, I urge everyone around the world to create opportunities in your own countries to listen to the testimonies of A-bomb survivors, and to feel, with deep sensitivity, the true inhumanity of nuclear weapons. Particularly, I hope that the belief that nuclear weapons cannot -- and must not -- coexist with humanity will take firm hold among citizens of the nuclear weapon states and their allies, and that this will become a force for change in the nuclear policies of their governments.

Let not humanity destroy itself with nuclear weapons!

Let us work together for a human society, in a world free of nuclear weapons and of wars!