

## **Hibakusha Statement: “Humans Cannot Coexist with Nuclear Weapons”**

drafted and delivered by TANIGUCHI Sumiteru, Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo)

Chairperson, distinguished delegates and dear friends,

I am Taniguchi Sumiteru, a Nagasaki Hibakusha. Thank you very much for giving me the honor of speaking before you on behalf of the 230,000 Japanese A-bomb survivors, and peace-loving NGOs of the world.

In 1945, I was 16 years old. On the morning of August 9, I was riding my bicycle 1.8 kilometers north of what was to become the epicenter of the explosion of the atomic bomb. When the bomb exploded, I was burned on my entire back by the intense heat rays of 3,000 to 4,000 degrees Celsius, and also exposed to invisible radiation. The next moment, together with my bike I was blown about 4 meters and smashed to the ground by the bomb blast.

When the blast ended, I looked up and found that the buildings around me had been smashed down and those children who had been playing around me were blown away and scattered here and there. I was struck by the fear of death, thinking that a big bomb had been dropped nearby. But I kept telling myself that I must not die like this.

When the commotion seemed to be over, I raised myself and found my entire left arm had been burnt with the skin hanging from it like a tattered rag. I reached for my back and found that it too had been burnt. Something slimy and black stuck on my fingers.

My bike was bent and twisted completely out of shape - the body, the wheels and all. Houses were all flattened. Fires were breaking out from these houses and from the trees on the hillside. The children that had been blown away were all dead: some were burnt black, while others seemed uninjured.

There was a woman whose hair was all burned and lost. Her face was so swollen that she could not open her eyes. She was injured from head to toe and groaning in pain. I still recall the scene as if I saw it only yesterday. I deeply regret even today that I could not do anything for those who were suffering and desperately calling for help. Many Hibakusha were severely burnt and died calling for water.

I wandered around like a sleepwalker and reached a nearby factory set up in a hillside tunnel. I asked a woman to tear off the burnt skin dangling from my arms. She tore a piece of cloth out of what was left of my shirt, put machine oil to it and wiped my arms. Together with other people, I was told to evacuate somewhere else from the tunnel before another possible strike. I tried with all my strength but I couldn't even get up, let alone walk. A man carried me on his back to the top of a mountain and laid me down under a tree. Many people around me, before they breathed their last, asked other people there to remember their names and home addresses to their family members. They died one after another, crying, “Water, give me water...”. When the night came, U.S. aircraft flew over and attacked us. Some stray bullets hit the rock next to me and fell on the grass.

At night there was a drizzling rain. I sucked the water dripping from the leaves and spent the night. When the morning came, I found all who were around me were already dead. I spent another night there and in the morning of the third day was rescued and taken to the neighboring city 27 kilometers

from Nagasaki. By that time, the city's hospitals were all full of victims, so I was taken to an elementary school, which had been turned into a makeshift clinic.

Three days later (the 6th day from the bombing) my wounds started to bleed heavily and with it, gradually I started to feel the pain. For more than a month I could not receive any proper medical treatment. All they could do to me was to burn newspapers, blend their ash with oil and apply it to my wound. In early September the Nagasaki University hospital managed to restart its operation at an elementary school in Nagasaki City, though the school building had no windows due to the bomb blast. I was sent there and for the first time I received what could be called medical treatment. First, doctors tried to give me a blood transfusion. But the blood wouldn't go into my vessels, probably because my internal organs were badly damaged. I suffered serious anemia and the burnt flesh started to rot. The rotten flesh would drain out of my body and puddle underneath. Nurses placed rugs underneath my body to collect the filthy discharges and replaced them many times a day.

Generally those Hibakusha who suffered burns or injuries were infested with maggots on their flesh. Those tiny worms got into their bodies from the wounds and ate their flesh. But for me this did not happen until one year later. It was so unbearably painful when they bit my wounds.

I could not stir an inch. Helplessly lying on my stomach in excruciating pain and agony I was crying, "Kill me!" No one believed that I would survive another day. Every morning, I would hear doctors and nurses whisper at my bedside, "He's still alive." Later I learned that my family was all prepared for my funeral.

Because I could not move myself, my chest suffered severe bedsores even to the bones. As a result my chest now looks like it has been deeply scooped, and even today you can clearly see my heart beating against the skin between the ribs.

It took one year and 9 months before I was finally able to move, and after 3 years and 7 months I was discharged from the hospital, though I was not completely cured. I went in and out of the hospital many times and continued having treatment until 1960. Around 1982 tumors started to develop on the keloid scars on my back and they had to be removed by surgery. Since then a rock-hard tumor was formed again and again, the cause of which even doctors are unable to explain.

More than half a century has passed since that day. The painful experiences of the past seem to be lost from people's memory. But I fear the oblivion. I fear that forgotten memories might lead us to a renewed affirmation of atomic bombs.

There is a color film on the atomic bombings that contains the footage of myself as one of numerous victims. Whenever I see it I relive the pain and feel the hatred for war growing inside me again.

I am not a guinea pig nor am I an exhibit. But those of you who are here today, please don't turn your eyes away from me. Please look at me again. I have survived miraculously, but for me, to "live" was to "endure the agony." The atomic bomb survivors, who reached the maximum number of 380,000 at one time, have now decreased to 230,000. Bearing the cursed scars of the atomic bomb all over our bodies, we the Hibakusha continue to live in pain.

Nuclear weapons are weapons of extinction that cannot coexist with humans. They should never, ever

be used for any reason whatsoever. Possession of nuclear weapons, or even an intention to acquire them, is against humanity. Having gone through the first hell of nuclear war in August 65 years ago, we learned the horror of nuclear weapons instinctively. There is no defense against nuclear attacks, and there can be no “retaliation” against them. If a nuclear weapon is to be used for the third time, it would immediately lead to the annihilation of human beings and the end of all life on planet earth. Humans must survive - in peace and prosperity.

So friends, let all of us unite and gather our strength to create a world without nuclear weapons. For humans to live as humans, not even one nuclear weapon should be allowed to exist on earth.

I cannot die in peace until I witness the last nuclear warhead eliminated from this world.

Nagasaki must remain the last victim city of the atomic bomb.

And let me be the last victim of the atomic bomb.

Let us spread our call for the abolition of nuclear weapons all over the world.

No More Hiroshimas! No More Nagasakis!

No More Hibakusha!