**Online World Conference -- Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Resist and Reverse the Climate Crisis, For Social and Economic Justice**

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**Testimony and Appeal of a Hibakusha**

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 On the 75th anniversary year of the atomic bombings, I feel very honored and grateful for this opportunity to speak before you in this first Online World Conference against A and H Bombs. I am WADA Masako of Nihon Hidankyo. Nagasaki was devastated by the atomic bomb when I was 1 year and 10 months old, so I am one of the youngest Hibakusha. On that day, I was at my house located 2.9 kilometers away from the blast center. Thanks to the mountains surrounding the central part of Nagasaki City, which shielded my house from the direct impact of the bomb, I suffered no burns or injuries and have survived to this day.

 As I was only a baby then, I do not remember anything about that time myself. But as I grew up, my mother related the story of her experience over and over again.

 With the A-bomb explosion, window panes, clay walls and sliding doors of our house were all blown to pieces by the blast. A pile of mud and dust over 30 centimeters thick was left on the floor. On the road along the mountain surface which had turned brown, my mother saw a file of people escaping from fires, like ants moving down over the mountain, toward our community. Numerous maggots as big as your thumb were swarming on the burns and wounds of the victims who were laid all over the floor of a college auditorium. Dead bodies scattered in the streets were collected and thrown onto garbage carts. They were piled up like dolls with their arms and legs sticking out of the heaps. They were carried to the empty lot next to our house and incinerated and cremated day after day. My mother soon became numb even to the stench from burning bodies, losing the sense of their humanity. What is human dignity? Humans are not created to be treated like this, incinerated like garbage.

 After the atomic bombing, under the occupation of the United States, press reports about the atomic bombing were strictly suppressed. Hibakusha were not informed about the cause of their suffering, both physically and mentally or their economic difficulties. They were left abandoned without any help either from the Japanese or U.S. government for 10 years and hid themselves from society in forced silence. Most victims who were unable to receive any relief measures were recorded simply as statistics. By the end of December 1945, about 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki had died as a result of the bombings. Most of them were civilians, including the elderly, women and children, and the number of deaths continued to increase in ensuing years.

 Now, those who have managed to survive have grown old. Our average age is 83 years old. The Hibakusha’s deep sufferings continued for a long period, even to this day -- the loss of their loved ones; survivors’ guilt; the scenes, sounds and smells of the day burnt into their memories; diseases of unknown causes; economic difficulties; prejudice and discrimination in society; and many buried dreams. Those who were under the mushroom cloud, irrespective of their race, nationality, age or sex, were forced to die or to continue to live as Hibakusha. The A-bomb impact on people’s physical and mental health is seen even among those who were in mother’s utero on those days and also among the second generation of the Hibakusha.

 For the last 64 years, since the founding of Nihon Hidankyo in 1956 as the only national organization of the Hibakusha, we the Hibakusha have maintained our pledge to “save humanity from its crisis through the lessons learned from our experiences, while at the same time saving ourselves” as stated in our founding declaration. With this commitment, we have persevered our work to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world by giving testimonies about our experiences across the world. Under no circumstances, should these anti-human weapons ever be used again. This is the ardent and sincere desire of all the Hibakusha.

 There are those who have created the atomic bombs and those who used them. And there are also those who were pleased by their destructive power and consequences. These people are absolutely unpardonable, but we Hibakusha have never wished to take vengeance on them. We know that if a nuclear weapon is to be used for the third time, there would be no one who would survive and rejoice about its devastation. In an atomic desert where nothing is left, who can be proud of the might of national power, status or prestige? Nuclear weapons, which continue to be created on the pretexts of deterrence and not for actual use, are nothing but a negative human legacy. Power dictated via nuclear weapons is not justice.

 In April 2016, we started the International Hibakusha Appeal Signature Campaign urging the elimination of nuclear weapons. So far, we have submitted more than 10 million signatures on this petition to the United Nations, which generated big momentum for achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. When the Treaty was adopted in the U.N. negotiation conference in July 2017, Hibakusha were overwhelmed with joy, thinking that our survival had been rewarded. A heavy and rusty door seemed to be opening, and we were finally seeing a ray of light illuminating a path to achieve our goal. Whether we can actually widely open this door depends on decisions by national governments as well as by the actions of citizens urging that decision on their governments.

To achieve the entry into force of the Treaty, and to progress further toward the goal of establishing a world without nuclear weapons, we the Hibakusha, though our days are numbered, pledge to use all our remaining strength to work together with you.

 Thank you for your attention.