

Peace Message (2024 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony)

On this day, in marking the 79th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, on behalf of all people of Hiroshima Prefecture, I wish to offer my humble and sincere prayers for the souls of those who lost their lives in the atomic bombing. I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and express my heartfelt sympathies to the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb survivors, who even today suffer from the aftereffects of the bomb.

The atomic bombing brought about unparalleled devastation. This historic fact pierces our hearts deeply because of the testimonies of the *hibakusha* about the hellish anguish they had experienced. Even though it was unbearable for them to recall such memories, they have continued to describe the misery, driven by a strong aspiration that no one else should suffer it. At present, 79 years after the bombing, we are losing *hibakusha* one by one. To pass on their last words to the next generation, we take various initiatives.

The other day, I had the opportunity to visit the Aoyakamijichi site in Tottori Prefecture, an archaeological site where a great many remains of people in the Yayoi period in Japan's prehistoric age have been excavated. There, I saw arrowheads stuck deep in skulls and hipbones, all vividly illustrating the cruelty of battles. These wound marks made me ponder about the life of the people living in those days, which were not always peaceful.

At present, we still see wars in various parts of the world. The strong defeat the weak. The weak are trampled down. In contemporary wars, men and women, young and old, are shot by bullets or torn into pieces by missiles, rather than by arrowheads and swords. Great powers, which are expected to protect the international order established by the United Nations, overtly attempt to invade other countries by violating international laws and change the status quo by force. This is a reality that humans have continued to see since the prehistoric age.

In this context, so-called realists suggest a policy of “force for force” and “a nuclear weapon for a nuclear weapon.” When they suggest this policy, however, they deliberately ignore another piece of reality or the fact that once people invented a weapon, they used it without exception. Chemical weapons, for example, have continued to be used even though their use is banned. As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will surely be used again someday.

We must become genuine realists. Nuclear weapons abolition is not an ideal to achieve far in the future. Instead, it is a pressing and real issue that we should desperately engage in at this moment since nuclear problems involve an imminent risk to human survival.

Despite this fact, only limited resources are invested in initiatives of nuclear weapons abolition, including intellectual, human, and financial resources. On the other hand, in the single year of 2023, more than 14 trillion yen was invested in maintaining and increasing nuclear weapons and building related strategies. Moreover, tens of thousands of people were involved in such programs serving as consultants, members of military forces and governments, scientists, and engineers.

To all in the world who can face reality, what we must do is to allocate much more resources to related initiatives in order to truly realize the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Please imagine. If we invest just 10% of the budget for maintaining and increasing nuclear weapons, that is, 1.4 trillion yen and thousands of specialists, in the total elimination of nuclear weapons, this will surely make a major advancement toward nuclear weapons abolition.

I would now like to introduce the words of a researcher in Okinawa.* She mentioned her own experience of burning her fingers by mistake. She got a terrible blister, which almost deformed her fingers. While writhing in pain, she thought of the exceptional pain of the people who had been exposed to the radiation of the bombing and wondered if she had understood the magnitude of their pain correctly. Some *hibakusha* had blisters on their faces that made it impossible for them to be identified, and others wandered about with their eyeballs and guts popped out. Even when we severely burn our own fingers, can we truly imagine the pain of the *hibakusha*?

I cannot bear losing any more *hibakusha*, who have tried to pass on their memories of pain and suffering to us, while humanity has remained unconcerned and silent about the existence of nuclear weapons.

On this day, we must remember once again the following pledge: “For we shall not repeat the evil.”

August 6, 2024

Hidehiko Yuzaki
Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture

*: *Ronko 2024 Dareka no itami wo bokyaku shinai* (Discussion 2024: Never forget the pain of someone else) by Yoko Uema (pedagogue and professor at the University of the Ryukyus) quoted in the Chugoku Shimbun newspaper, issued on Tuesday, June 18, 2024