

Congratulations to the Japan Council of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize!

Before the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings in 2025, it was announced that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024 would be awarded to the Japan Council of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo). The Nobel Peace Prize is a highly significant recognition of the activities of A-bomb survivors who have appealed that nuclear weapons must never be used again and that the world does not need nuclear weapons, and we would like to express our heartfelt respect and congratulations to the members of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations for their tireless efforts in this regard.

In 1954, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, a Japanese tuna fishing boat, was exposed to a hydrogen bomb test conducted by the United States at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, which triggered a nationwide outcry against nuclear tests and nuclear weapons. The Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations was formed in 1956 as a national organization of A-bomb survivors to convey the reality of the atomic bombings.

The horrific reality of the atomic bombings told by Hibakusha has revealed the inhumanity of nuclear weapons to the international community and has been the most powerful force preventing the use of nuclear weapons in war since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki until today. As the Norwegian Nobel Committee has stated, "Hibakusha have contributed greatly to the establishment of the nuclear taboo," and the role they have played is extremely important.

October 11, when the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize was announced, falls on the saint's day of Pope John XXIII. Pope John XXIII was instrumental in averting the Cuban Missile Crisis in the early 1960s during the Cold War, when the United States and the former Soviet Union were on the verge of a clash. In his encyclical "Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth" he wrote, "Hence justice, right reason, and the recognition of man's dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stockpiles of armaments that have been built up in various countries must be reduced all around and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control." (112). It also states "But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations

cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.” (113).

In the world today, the use of nuclear weapons has become even more realistic with the escalation of bombings in Ukraine, the Gaza Strip in Palestine, and neighboring countries, and repeated threats to use nuclear weapons by the parties to the conflict. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use will never disappear. The reality of the atomic bombings is the starting point for the Hibakusha to say, “We cannot allow anyone else to suffer the same fate as we did” and “Nuclear weapons and humanity cannot coexist”.

In the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis have visited the A-bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and strongly appealed for world peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. We, together with the Hibakusha, resolve to “strive for a world without nuclear weapons,” and we sincerely hope that the Nobel Peace Prize will be an opportunity for Japan, the A-bombed nation, and the nuclear weapon states in particular, to move toward the signature and ratification of a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

We offer our deepest condolences to the Hibakusha who have passed away, and hope that a system of adequate support and compensation will be established for those who are still suffering.

November 8, 2024

Chairman Bp. Wayne Berndt
Bishop in Charge Bp. Edgar Gactan
All the members of the Council