

New Japan Women's Association



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**Letter from Women of the Atomic Bombed Japan:
Let Us Work Together to Achieve a "World Free of Nuclear Weapons"
We Call upon the President of the United States to Visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

May 19, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

The New Japan Women's Association is the biggest individual membership-based women's organization in Japan that works for five objectives including peace, better living conditions, welfare of children, and advancement of women. It is a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations. Founded in 1962, NJWA has upheld "protecting the lives of women and children from the danger of nuclear war" as the organization's first and foremost objective. Sympathizing with the Hibakusha, Atomic bombing survivors, in their agonies, and learning the horrible nature of atomic bombs together with our children who live life in the future, we have been dedicating our effort to achieve the goal of a "world without nuclear weapons." On behalf of the women's organization of the A-bombed country, we send this letter to you, President of the United States of America.

We were deeply impressed by your speech in which you said, "as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act," and referred to "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." We heartily welcome these words of yours as declarations of historic significance.

In August 64 years ago, a single atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and another on Nagasaki burned out children, women and the elderly in an instant with heat rays of the temperature thousands times higher than that of the sun. Nuclear radiation struck people, and the blast pressure blew away towns and houses. By the end of that year, 140,000 people of Hiroshima and 70,000 of Nagasaki died. Those Hibakusha who barely survived continue to endure the pains from aftereffects even today.

Through their own experiences, the Hibakusha know nuclear weapons produce disastrous consequences and tragedies beyond words. This is the reason why they act with the plea that a nuclear bomb must not be dropped on anyone in any country on this planet. A Hibakusha said, "Once convinced that speaking or writing my painful story of the A-bombing could awaken intellect of women who long for peace, and serve as a source of energy for the effort to abolish nuclear weapons, I became a Hibakusha who can speak out. Elimination of nuclear weapons, weapons of brutality, is an enormous challenge for humanity to undertake on their own responsibility."

It is the earnest desire of women of A-bombed Japan to make a sure path toward the elimination of nuclear weapons before time runs out for the aging Hibakusha, and finally to free our planet of nuclear weapons at the earliest possible date. Together with other women's groups, NJWA holds "No Nukes! Women's Forum" every summer alternately in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. NJWA Hiroshima Chapter has been circulating since 1964 a yearly publication called "Burnt like Fallen Leaves," which is a collection of Hibakusha's personal stories. In 2000, Japanese NGOs submitted to the United Nations General Assembly 60 million signatures in support of the Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Of those signatures, 10 million were collected by NJWA members. At present, our members throughout the country are taking active part in the international signature campaign in support of the petition: "Toward the 2010 NPT Review Conference-Appeal for a Nuclear Weapon-Free World."

If the United States, the biggest nuclear-weapon state in the world, demonstrates its political will to eliminate its nuclear arsenal, it will push without doubt the whole international community to take a substantial step forward towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. We hope that you at once take the initiative in concluding an international treaty, nuclear weapons convention, to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We sincerely call upon you to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to hear the voices of Hibakusha. And through their stories, please learn what happened on those days under the mushroom clouds, and the agonies the Hibakusha have gone through and continue to suffer.

Let us act together. To achieve a "world free of nuclear weapons." To hand over the blue earth to our children.

Sincerely yours,

Kimiko Takada
President of the New Japan Women's Association

Toshiko Hayashi
President of Hiroshima Chapter, New Japan Women's Association

Yasuko Maeda
President of Nagasaki Chapter, New Japan Women's Association