



Japanese Women Today

No.41
June 2017

New Japan Women's
Association

Address: 5-10-20, Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo JAPAN
Phone: +81-3-3814-9141, Fax: +81-3-3814-9441
E-mail: s-intl@shinfujin.gr.jp <http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp>

Heartily Welcoming the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons, Women of the Atomic Bombed Nation of Japan Gear up Actions to Achieve a "World without Nuclear Weapons"

History-Making Move to Outlaw Nuclear Weapons The Key Now is the Struggle in the Nuclear-Dependent Countries

The world is taking a step toward outlawing nuclear weapons for the first time in history. Women of Japan, the nation that suffered the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have long been calling and working for a convention to ban nuclear weapons. We wholeheartedly welcome the draft treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, which is about to be concluded. In order to make sure that the treaty will lead to the total elimination of these weapons to achieve a "world without nuclear weapons" at the earliest possible time, a global commitment agreed on by governments including of the nuclear weapons states, we strongly urge the countries possessing nuclear weapons and their allies, particularly the Government of Japan, to become parties to the treaty.

Facing ongoing terrorism and conflicts, as well as North Korea's nuclear and missile development issue, civil society throughout the world is heightening its call for peace. In this context, the ban treaty will be a significant step to bring about a political shift from nuclear threat to peaceful solutions and from spending money on nuclear armament to investing in poverty and environmental measures. It will open a door to a new world.

In its preamble, the draft treaty stresses the "role of public conscience in the furthering of the principles of humanity," making special mention of the efforts of non-governmental organizations and the Hibakusha. This has given an immense encouragement to civil society. Citizens'

activism in the nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-dependent states to press their governments to change their policies is essential more than ever. We, women of Japan, are resolved to strengthen our actions in solidarity with women all over the **world** fighting for common causes to drive the government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, who clings to the nuclear umbrella of the United States despite its role to play as the A-bombed nation, to resign and to establish a new government ready to work for a non-nuclear Japan.

The Root of the Women's Movement in Japan Working for Women's Rights and Peace at a Time

To free the world of nuclear weapons is a long-cherished desire of Japanese women and is also the root of women's movement in post-war Japan. Women of Japan recognize themselves as women of the perpetrator country that took the precious lives of more than 20 million in its war of aggression against and colonial rule of Asian nations, and imposed unspeakable damage by infringing human rights of these people, including those women who were forced into sexual slavery known as the Japanese military "comfort women." Japanese women also identify themselves as the only ones that suffered the use of atomic bombs in war. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US in 1945 for the first time in history killed almost 200,000 people instantly or by the end of that year, and destroyed the two cities entirely. As such, women of Japan started their movement with special resolve and responsibility for peace and have marched along all these years.

Many major women's groups in Japan have committed themselves to promoting gender equality and defending Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution which pledged Japan should "never wage war," stipulating the renunciation of war, non-possession of armed forces and denial of the right to wage war. They have also upheld the elimination of nuclear weapons. Based on their bitter experience in prewar period of having been denied all rights as women and mobilized



Hiroshima Shinfujin members collecting signatures

for war of aggression, women of Japan uphold women's rights and peace as two sides of the same coin and are working together under the banner of "No Equality Without Peace; No Peace Without Equality."

Shinfujin Taking Activism from Grass Roots to the UN, to Global

The New Japan Women's Association (Shinfujin) was founded in 1962, as an organization upholding the elimination of nuclear weapons as the first of its objectives. With 140,000 members today, it has grown to be the biggest individual-membership based women's group in Japan.

KUBO Mitsuko, who was Hibakusha and one of the founders of Shinfujin's Hiroshima Chapter, once said, "I hated America. Hatred begets hatred without end. I was so happy and my heart was leaping for joy because now that we had Shinfujin, we were able to work for eliminating nuclear weapons with women all over Japan. What the Hibakusha really want to do is to oppose war for any reason whatsoever and to campaign for the elimination of nuclear weapons." Her words represent noble sense of humanity of the Hibakusha, who, instead of calling for retaliation, stood up to say, "No one on this planet should experience the suffering of hell we had to go through," and "Humans cannot coexist with nuclear weapons." Kubo's words also show the resolve of women of the A-bombed nation.

Shinfujin Hiroshima Chapter has published a collection of Hibakusha's testimonies every year to the fiftieth edition. The collection is titled "Burnt Like Fallen Leaves," which expresses Hibakusha's chagrin and sorrow. In each collection, one finds stories of Hibakusha how their lives were devastated by the atomic bombs, losing family members and severely injured themselves. One wrote with pain that she was not able to bear children, and the other said that there would be no peace as long as the Hibakusha continue to suffer. With their testimonies, the Hibakusha warn about the inhumanity and atrocity of nuclear weapons. There are more than 170,000 surviving Hibakusha and their average age now exceeds 80. They are the ones that have paved the path

for a ban treaty, changing the discourse on nuclear weapons, from the one focusing on their role as security instruments, to the other focusing on morals, ethics and humanitarian perspectives for human survival.

Throughout Japan, Shinfujin members are organized in 9000 basic units called han, where they carry out their daily activities. They have been working on the ground for the abolition of nuclear weapons for these 55 years, taking to streets for signature drive on 6th and 9th days of every month, rain or shine. They have also held A-bomb exhibitions, taken part in the annual National Peace March, and petitioned local authorities to adopt nuclear-free declarations. Shinfujin members take part in the World Conference against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs and "No Nukes! Women's Forum" held every summer in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Inspired by the exchanges with activists from different countries, our members have sent A-bomb photo panels to many women's groups abroad. Together with the Japan Council against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo), Shinfujin has been strengthened its work at the United Nations' level. Of 60 million signatures presented to the UN in 2000 calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons, 10 million had been collected by Shinfujin members. We submitted 1.78 million signatures in 2010 and 1.64 million in 2015 to the UN for the NPT Review Conferences.

Involving Young Women and Children – Passing the Torch to the Next Generations

To hand over the peace movement to younger generations is our important task. The Abe Government's outrageous move to forcibly enact the War Laws in September 2015 gave rise to young mothers throughout the country who voiced against the legislation saying, "We will not let any one's child get killed," and they are becoming more and more aware of issues related to peace. To have more younger women including those raising children involved in the movement to eliminate nuclear weapons, Shinfujin is making conscious effort such as organizing peace learning, to holding gatherings with Hibakusha where mothers and children can listen to their stories together, and promoting



Kanagawa Shinfujin's young members taking part in the National Peace March as the march goes through their community

Gifu Shinfujin members sharing Hibakusha's stories with children

peace education at school. Local chapters and branches are trying to send more younger members to the World Conference against A & H Bombs, and some of them have succeeded in having younger members carrying their small children in strollers join in the Peace March, an annual nationwide mobilization of people walking together calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Invest Tax Money in Welfare and Education, Not in Nuclear Arms Race

The successive Liberal Democratic Party governments have remained under the US nuclear umbrella, reinforced the Japan-US military alliance and drastically increased military expenditure, while imposing burdens on the people with reduced social services. For 37 years since 1980, Shinfujin has carried out an annual campaign every fall under the slogan: “Cut Military Spending and Use Money for Welfare and Education.” Each member presents “my demand” and they collectively bring urgent demands, such as better and safer playground equipment in parks, road improvement and free medical care for children to municipalities and local governments and have many urgent demands realized.

United Citizens and Opposition Parties vs. Abe Government Bring Down the Abe Cabinet through Election and Establish a Non-Nuclear Government

Currently Japan is going through tremendous changes, entering a new era of showdown between Abe’s LDP-Komeito ruling coalition and the alliance of citizens and opposition parties. The shock of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011 and the subsequent accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant of Tokyo Electric Power Company, rapid growth of poverty and income inequality brought by neoliberal policies, and the advent of the Abe government have posed a fundamental question about how the Japanese society is being shaped.



“Unite for Change Action” in Tokyo, January 7, 2017, organized by the Citizens’ Alliance. 4 opposition party leaders addressed the 2,500 audience, saying “Unite!” and “Abe Government, Resign!”

The current government under Prime Minister Abe is worst of all in the post-war Japan, with no parallel among other conservative governments in the past. 19 of the 20 Cabinet members belong to Nippon Kaigi, an extreme right-wing group and other related organizations. The Abe Government is featured by its attempts to destroy constitutionalism and rule of law, authoritarian and fascist approach and behavior, and management of the state affairs for their own interests. While extending special favors to big businesses, it demolishes employment and social security. It also stands for anachronistic misogyny, and ignores norms and recommendations set out by the UN and other international organizations. All these indicate the long years of LDP’s US- and big business-first Politics have reached the end stage.

All these ignited anger and sense of urgency, which has rapidly spread among the Japanese public, and we see movements of different sections calling for peace and human dignity are converging on a common call to bring down the Abe Government. After the forcible enactment of war legislation by the Abe Cabinet in 2015, citizens’ voices calling for “unity of opposition parties” surrounded the Diet building. In the House of Councilors’ Election in July 2016, opposition parties were able to field joint candidates in all the 32 single-member constituencies and 11 of them won. In Okinawa, the candidate opposing the construction of a new base was elected to Governor, and then in the gubernatorial election in Niigata Prefecture, the people voted for the candidate voicing against the resumption of nuclear reactors. At present, actions are arising against the conspiracy bill now being discussed in the Diet, which will repress human rights if enacted, and move to form alliance of citizens and opposition parties is spreading throughout the country with a view to ousting the Abe Government in the next general election which will take place by the end of next year to have a new government in place.

This is where we find a vision for establishing a new government ready to join in the nuclear weapon ban treaty. Women of Japan are making their utmost efforts to collect as many signatures as possible in support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha, to press the Japanese Government to change its attitude, and finally to replace it with a new one.



On June 17, Orizuru Parade will be held in Tokyo, as part of the 2017 Peace Wave actions from June 15 to 18, launched by the Hibakusha International Signature Promotion Network. Throughout Japan, people will march in solidarity with the Women’s March to Ban the Bomb in NY. Orizuru means paper crane, symbol of peace and hope

May 24, 2017

Mr. ABE Shinzo, Prime Minister
Mr. KISHIDA Fumio, Foreign Minister

KASAI Kimiyo
President
New Japan Women's Association

We Urge the Government of Japan to Attend the Second Session of the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading to their Total Elimination, and Play an Active Role in the Conclusion of the Treaty

Upholding the protection of the lives of women and children from the danger of a nuclear war as its founding objective, the New Japan Women's Association (Shinfujin) has been working for these 55 years since its inauguration together with the Hibakusha to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to hand over the facts about the damage of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to younger generations. As a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Shinfujin has continued to call on the world to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Hibakusha and all of us hailed the long-awaited Conference to negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons that took place last March as a significant milestone. In the second session of the Conference in June and July, a historical step will be taken toward the adoption of a nuclear-weapon-ban treaty. To the Second Session, we will bring the signatures our members have collected all over Japan in the International Signature Campaign in support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha calling on all state governments to conclude a treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. We will also participate in the Women's March to Ban the Bomb in New York on June 17.

The Government of Japan has reiterated in the United Nations conferences and other disarmament talks its commitment "as the only country that has experienced the devastation of the war-time use of the nuclear weapons" to "taking the lead on efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons." However, it gave in to pressure from the United States to stay away from the Conference in March. This is nothing but a betrayal of the people of the A-bombed nation.

Once they are used, even by accident, nuclear weapons will bring the human race to the brink of extinction. 80 percent of the world's countries are referring to the inhumane effects of nuclear weapons as the reason why these weapons and the humans cannot coexist, and they are appealing for the need to prohibit and eliminate them. The situation regarding North Korea could increase the danger of the use of nuclear weapons, if the countries concerned resort to "military responses," and the consequences would be far too grave. It is apparent that the dependence on "nuclear umbrella" cannot defend peace.

We strongly urge the Government of Japan to seek solutions to conflicts by peaceful means, to end its dependence on nuclear weapons and strive for their prohibition and elimination instead, to change its diplomacy and security policy to ones based on the Japanese Constitution, and to participate in the Second Session of the nuclear ban treaty negotiations in June to play active role in the conclusion of the treaty.

The New Japan Women's Association (NJWA or Shinfujin) was founded on October 19, 1962. About 140,000 members are organized in some 9,000 groups in workplaces and communities all over the country. Shinfujin has a head office that unites chapters working in all the 47 prefectures and branches in 900 municipalities.

Under the five objectives, Shinfujin works to realize all kinds of women's demands concerning such issues as women's rights, equality with men, better working and living conditions, measures to support child-care, education, environmental protection, peace and abolition of nuclear weapons. The five objectives are:

- Protect the lives of women and children from the danger of nuclear war
- Oppose the adverse revision of the Constitution and the resurgence of militarism
- Work together for better living conditions, extended women's rights and children's well-being
- Win genuine national independence, democracy and emancipation of women
- Join hands with women around the world for building lasting peace



Shinfujin is opened to all women who agree with the above five objectives, irrespective of their thought, creed or political background. It publishes a weekly paper "Shinfujin Shimbun" with 220,000 readers, and a monthly magazine "Josei & Undo" ("Women & The Movement".)

Shinfujin is a member of the Japan Federation of Women's Organizations (Fudanren) and the International Women's Year Liaison Group (comprising 35 major Japanese women's organizations.) It holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.