



Japanese Women Today

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New Japan Women's
Association

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*70 Years after the End of War and the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
20 Years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action*

Together, We Can Make a Difference!

Women Say "No!" to Nukes and War, "Yes!" to Peace and Justice for All

Achieve Nuclear Weapons Convention Now!

While people's desire for the abolition of nuclear weapons is growing at home and internationally in the 70th year of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Ninth Review Conference of the State Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from April 27 to May 22, 2015. The Conference ended with State Parties not being able to agree on the final document and most Japanese media reported that the Conference "broke down" or "failed". But the truth was that a big change took place. The idea of introducing a convention banning nuclear weapons got into the discussion for the first time and an overwhelming majority of State Parties supported it, besieging and isolating some nuclear weapons states and their allies. The Conference made it clear that this growing trend cannot be held back.

The key factor that gave momentum to this development was the civil society's movement and the growing collective power. In response to the proposal for the New York Action from the Peace & Planet International Planning Group, led by the U.S. anti-nuclear peace movement, the Japan Council against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo) sent a delegation of 1058 people

Of those 1058 delegates of Gensuikyo, 251 were members of the New Japan Women's Association (Shinfujin) from 44 prefectures in Japan, and they played a key role by delivering women's voices of the A-bombed country and taking various unique actions in New York.



6.33 Million Signatures for a Total Ban on Nuclear Weapons Submitted to the U.N.

On April 26, the day before the opening of the NPT Review Conference, the international petition signatures calling for a "Nuclear Weapon-Free World" were piled up in the Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in front of the U.N. Headquarters in New York. Of the 6,336,205 representing the earnest wish of the A-bombed nation, 1.54 million had been collected by Shinfujin members. The Gensuikyo delegation members had brought signatures from Japan, packed in their suitcases. They continued to collect signatures on the streets of Manhattan, asking the local people to sign the petition, saying, "No Nukes. Sign, please" until the moment of signature submission to the U.N.



With a crowd of people watching over them, the U.N. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane and Ambassador Taous Feroukhi, President-designate of NPT Review Conference, took the platform to receive the petition and gave a speech. Both of them praised the efforts of civil society. Ambassador Feroukhi said, "Petitions from civil society groups really do matter in contributing to this common goal of nuclear disarmament. Petitions give each citizen a personal role to play in this larger process of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Disarmament is not an activity exclusively

limited to States”. She emphasized the importance of the petitions and expressed her resolve to press the nuclear weapons states. When she held the certificated signatures high, a big applause and cheers arose from the crowd gathered in the square.



In his message to the NPT Review Conference delivered at the opening plenary, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged all 189 State Parties to deepen engagement with civil society groups and said, “In the lead up to this Review Conference, the President of the 2015 NPT Review Conference and the UN have received several petitions from civil society groups calling for the successful conclusion of this session and the elimination of nuclear weapons...I pledge my full support for their principled commitment to this cause...I challenge anyone who doubts the urgency of nuclear disarmament to listen to their experiences...I urge this Conference to heed their warnings and deliver results”.

Shinfujin’s Effort to Broaden the Campaign Spotlighted

The focus of the 2015 NPT Review Conference was the implementation of the agreement reached in the previous Review Conference five years ago: abolition of nuclear weapons and establishment of a legal framework to achieve it. The Japanese delegation submitted signatures and made representations to government representatives calling for the implementation of the agreement. They also promoted solidarity and exchanges with anti-nuclear movements from all around the world. In New York, peace activists and those working on different issues in the U.S. jointly made planning for a series of events,

What is noteworthy was that they named the NPT-related activities “Peace & Planet” mobilization, with a view to create more issue-integrated movements, engaging the nuclear abolition activists with others committed to eradicating poverty, to stopping global warming, as well as to eliminating racial and gender discrimination.

In the International Peace & Planet Conference held two days before the Review Conference, Shinfujin Vice President Nishikawa Kyoko made a presentation on behalf of Gensuikyo, with which Shinfujin is affiliated. She spoke about Shinfujin’s “Going Out, Reaching Out Actions” to broaden cooperation for signature collecting and for organizing women’s “Red Actions” to knockout the Abe Administration attempting to make Japan a war-waging nation. The participants opened their eyes wide and listened attentively to each of the specific grassroots actions carried out by Shinfujin members. Shinfujin’s initiatives to engage with younger generations, identifying Hibakusha’s desire with their own resolve drew sympathy from the audience.

400 people participated in the “No Nukes! Women’s Forum in NY”. They gave a round of applause to the speeches by sisters from the U.S. and the Marshall Islands as well as by a Hibakusha from Japan. The applause also echoed though the hall to the speeches on the nuclear power plant disaster in Fukushima and on the struggle against the new U.S. military base construction in Okinawa. The Finale was young generations of the U.S. and Japan taking the stage together. The scene gave everyone in the hall a conviction in a peaceful future and in women’s power.



People’s Movement Making a Difference – Catchword is “Together”

Our catchword for achieving the abolition of

nuclear weapons is “Together”. It means the U.N., national governments and movements throughout the world working together with the movement in Japan and the Hibakusha. The key to making a nuclear-free world a reality is grassroots actions to corner the nuclear weapons states blocking the progress and the Japanese government clinging to the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The series of actions this time shed light to the power of the movement of the A-bombed Japan, and to the importance of World Conference against A and H bombs and the “No Nukes! Women’s Forum”. In every scene of the New York mobilization we saw activists like Joseph Gerson, a regular attendee at the World Conference and women activists who had been invited to Japan by the Women’s Peace Fund, playing an active role with devotion. The move toward banning nuclear weapons is unstoppable. To make this trend stronger and greater, Shinfujin, as women of the A-bombed country will carry on the signature campaign for nuclear abolition. We will also work harder to send 2,000

members including 400 young ones to this year’s World Conference, which commemorates the 70th year of the atomic bombing.



Shinfujin Received the Peace Shibori Quilt from Pittsburgh

At the Festival stage, representatives of the peace group based in Pittsburgh “Remembering Hiroshima, Imagining Peace” presented Peace Shibori Quilts to Shinfujin and the Chihiro Museum in Nagano, Japan. The quilts were made by children with the help of the Children’s Museum staff as their message of peace.

Women Say “No” to War Bills, “Yes” to Article 9

This year, 70th year from the end of the war, has a great significance to the Japanese women as it marks the 70th anniversary of their right to vote established and the 30th years of Japan’s ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At this historical juncture, Japan stands at a crossroads of war or peace.

“Scrap the War Bills!” Protest Actions Echoes across Japan

On July 16, the ruling Liberal Democratic and Komei Parties in the House of Representatives plenary session railroaded through the controversial war bills with their majority vote and sent the bills to the House of Councilors, while tens of thousands were protesting outside the Diet building and throughout Japan. The ruling coalition pushed ahead with this outrage to implement what Prime Minister Abe Shinzo had promised the U.S., that is, making it possible for Japan to send its Self-Defense Forces to wage war abroad by changing the constitutional interpretation maintained by



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his predecessors, who admitted that the Constitution’s Article 9 prohibits Japan’s exercise of the right to collective self-defense.

The war bills would, if enacted, send its Self-Defense Forces to any place on the globe at any time; to allow Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense with the U.S. even when Japan is not under attack; to be engaged in the Peace Keeping Operations

with the use of force; to provide military assistance in combat areas and logistic support; and to engage the SDFs in escort of the U.S. forces as well as in intelligence activities and joint military exercises including in time of peace. All these, under any excuse whatsoever, go against the Constitution with which Japan renounced war forever from the deep remorse over the war of aggression it waged against Asian nations taking the lives of 20,000 in those countries and of 3.1 Japanese. That is why more than 90 percent of the constitutional law experts including those advocating the constitutional amendment say the bills are unconstitutional. More than 11,000 scholars of different fields of study have endorsed the appeal opposing the war legislation. In every opinion poll, more than 50 percent consider the bills as unconstitutional, 60 percent oppose the voting in the current Diet session and 80 percent think the government's explanation has been insufficient. PM Abe's high-handed attitude with no intention to listen to objections has met strong criticism from the public voicing "Protect Democracy," "Down with Dictatorship," and "Scrap the War Bills!" Later in the evening on the day of the bill's forcible passage, 100,000 people surrounded the Diet building in protest and waves of actions are spreading at all-time speed and on an unprecedented scale throughout the country.

Mobilization of women and young people is particularly amazing. As mentioned earlier, in every opinion poll, a majority of people are against the war bills and the percentage of women opposing the legislation is bigger than men's. Deeply concerned about how the legislation would affect their loved ones, especially children, more and more women with no affiliation are coming to the protest in front of the Diet building or joining local actions in communities, carrying the placards saying "Never to Send Children to the Battlefield," "Never to Allow Anyone to Kill Others." Women are also starting to organize themselves. Almost every day, "Women for Peace Red Actions" organized by Shinfujin members are taking place in different communities. On July 26, around 2,000 mothers and their children marched in Tokyo's Shibuya district protesting the bills. Students and young people are saying, "We have the right to choose our own future."

Many youth groups are popping up holding seminars, demonstrations and various actions. The leading organization of the youth is SEALDs: Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy. The ones with war experience are also very active; they are speaking out what the war is all about from their personal experiences sending the powerful messages to young ones. Unity is expanding among people of all walks of life around one common cause: Stop PM Abe's attempt to make Japan a war-waging nation and to undermine democracy. After the steamrolling of the war bills in the House of Representatives, PM Abe's support rate fell nearly 10 points in different polls from some 50 percent to below 40, with disapproval rate exceeding 50 percent.

The ruling LDP holds a two-thirds majority in the Diet, but it was the result of the single-seat constituency system and does not mean a majority of the people support his policies. What is grave is that 15 of the 18 members of his Cabinet including PM himself, belong to the Nippon Kaigi (Japan Conference), a far-right nationalist group, which denies the historical facts of Japan's war of aggression including the issue of sexual slavery known as "comfort women" by the Japanese military. It aims to bring Japan back to what it was during the war. Two of the three female ministers and LDP women officials, the centerpiece of the party's "women-first policies," are also members. The Nippon Kaigi values the pre-war family system and regards the CEDAW Convention and Japan's Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society with hostility. It launched a signature campaign calling for the repeal of these instruments. It is clearly a backlash group against peace and gender equality and PM Abe Shinzo has been a leading advocate of the group's extreme-right policies. We cannot let those people to stay in power.



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