

STATEMENT ON THE 80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

80 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki: *Let it never be said that we failed to listen*

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Eighty years ago, in the early morning of 6 August 1945, the people of Hiroshima were going about their daily lives. Children were walking to school, workers were reporting for duty, and families were gathered around breakfast tables. It was, in every sense, an ordinary morning.

But at 8:15 a.m., the ordinary turned into history. A single atomic bomb detonated 600 metres above the city, unleashing a fireball over a million degrees Celsius. Everything within a two-kilometre radius was obliterated in an instant. Three days later, Nagasaki faced the same fate.

Over 100,000 lives were lost in a flash. And that was only the beginning.

From momentary blasts to lasting destruction

The atomic bomb did not just kill; it redefined what it meant to suffer for those who survived. It altered the air, the soil, the water, and the human body. Survivors were burned, blinded, and buried under rubble. Then came the black rain, radioactive, and deadly. Many drank it, unaware of its poison.

The effects on the body were horrific. Skin sloughed off. Internal organs haemorrhaged. Children lost their hair in clumps. Pregnant women miscarried. Babies were born with severe deformities. Some people who seemed uninjured at first died weeks or months later from radiation-induced illnesses, such as leukaemia, cancers, and chronic infections.

Even today, there are survivors who continue to suffer from the long-term effects of radiation. The damage transcended generations, bringing not only chronic health problems, but also deep-rooted stigma and fear. These invisible scars continue to affect lives, decades after the blast.

The burden of Hibakusha

The **Hibakusha** — the survivors of the atomic bombing — bear not only physical scars but also deep emotional trauma. They lost entire families, communities, and futures. Many have lived with survivor's guilt: "*Why did I live, when my child, my spouse, my classmates did not?*"

They also faced systemic discrimination in post-war Japan. Some were denied jobs while others are discouraged from marrying because of fears that radiation exposure would be inherited or contagious. Their suffering was compounded not only by trauma, but by the stigma and social ostracism that forced many into silence.

The notion that nuclear weapons can be used in a strategic manner is a dangerous illusion. These are weapons of indiscriminate destruction, devastating human lives and entire ecosystems.

What the Hibakusha taught us

In the face of unimaginable destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the resilience of the survivors has shaped a remarkable legacy. The hibakusha never sought revenge. They sought remembrance. For decades, they shared their stories not out of hatred, but out of hope — that what happened to them would never happen again.

They have spoken in classrooms, in parliaments, and at the United Nations. Their voices carried calm dignity and unwavering resolve. **Terumi Tanaka** of **Nihon Hidankyo**, a non-government organisation founded by hibakusha and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year for their advocacy for the abolition of nuclear weapons, said the following in his acceptance speech:

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To everyone around the world, please create spaces in your countries where people can hear testimonies of the atomic bomb experience — so that the inhumanity of nuclear weapons can be truly felt on an emotional level. Above all, we hope that citizens of nuclear-armed states and their allies will come to deeply believe that nuclear weapons cannot and must not coexist with humanity, and that this belief will become a force to change their governments' nuclear policies.

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Their courage gives humanity a second chance. But that chance demands action. Most hibakusha are now in their 80s or 90s. As they grow older, we have a deep responsibility to honour their testimonies, preserve their stories, and carry forward their call for a world without nuclear weapons.

This 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing is not just a time to remember — it is a time to act.

Peace is a workers' issue

At ITUC-Asia Pacific, we believe that peace is not an abstract principle, but it is the foundation of workers' rights. Nuclear weapons threaten everything trade unions stand for: decent work, dignity, democracy, and justice.

The atomic bombs destroyed not just cities, but the future of workers. Among the dead were teachers, nurses, workers in small factories and on construction sites, clerks, public servants. These are people who formed the backbone of society. Their unions were shattered. Their dreams were shattered amid the destruction.

As the organisation representing over 60 million workers across Asia and the Pacific, we honour their memory by carrying forward their struggle. A world armed with nuclear weapons is a world that endangers human dignity, including the dignity of work. There can be no justice, whether in work or in life, in a world that lives under the threat of nuclear destruction.

Our appeal for a nuclear-free future

We call on all governments, especially those in Asia and the Pacific, to **ratify and implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**.

The TPNW is more than symbolic. It bans the development, testing, use, and threat of nuclear weapons. It acknowledges the suffering of victims and mandates support for them. It offers a path forward rooted in justice, peace, and humanity.

More than 70 countries have ratified the treaty. But most nuclear-armed states and their allies have not. To them, we say: *“Security based on the threat of mass death is not security. It is fear. True security lies in dialogue, equality, sustainability, and disarmament.”*

In writing this year’s Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Statement, I reflected on how to convey the horrors the atomic bombings and honour the survivors. I realised that no second-hand words can do justice to the survivors’ experiences. Rather than attempting to speak for them, I urge you to hear from them directly.

Visit the [Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum](#) and the [国立長崎原爆死没者追悼平和祈念館](#) (Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall) websites. Read the survivors’ testimonies. Watch the videos. Let their stories speak to your conscience and spark actions.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki must not be remembered as cities of distant tragedies, but as urgent lessons for a nuclear-free future.

Eighty years ago, the world was warned. Let it never be said that we failed to listen. For the dignity of the dead, the courage of the living, and the hope of generations yet to come: Let us be the generation that ends nuclear weapons.

**No more Hiroshimas.
No more Nagasakis.
No more nuclear weapons.**