

2014 Citizens' Peace Declaration

August 6, 2014

On August 15, 1945, Japan officially surrendered to the Allied nations following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, which indiscriminately killed over 210 thousand people, mostly civilians, including 40 thousand Koreans. The US proudly claimed this a “victory of freedom and democracy” against Japanese militarism and fascism. At the same time, President Truman justified this genocide with the ironic excuse that it was “to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians,” and to end the long-lasting bloody war in the Asia-Pacific. In this way the US created a myth so as to evade responsibility for its grave war crime. On August 10, 1945, the Japanese government denounced the atrocity of using a nuclear weapon as a serious war crime. It was, however, the first and only protest that the Japanese government ever issued regarding the atomic bombing, and was not supported by any other nation. Thus, the justification of the use of nuclear weapons as an effective means to achieve a “victory of freedom and democracy” was widely accepted. As a consequence, the opportunity to thoroughly examine the criminality of nuclear weapons was lost.

In other words, the opportunity to expose the fact that the American motto “justice is power” had been reversed to mean “power (i.e. nuclear weapons) is justice” had been lost. This is the reason that the truly criminal nature of nuclear weapons has still not been clearly addressed, thereby preventing universal knowledge and recognition of this fact. The use of nuclear weapons in any form is a crime against humanity, and the possession of nuclear weapons or nuclear deterrents is a crime against peace, because it is preparation for committing a crime against humanity.

Failure to examine the criminality of the atomic bombing also led the Japanese government to deny the plight of A-bomb survivors. Even today, 69 years after the atomic bombing, many A-bomb survivors are still fighting court cases to gain official government recognition as victims who require proper health care services. At the same time, these sufferers are exploited politically and are seen as symbolic “victims of nuclear weapons.” This is the attitude of conservative politicians and scholars patronized by the government, who simply repeat the slogan “*ultimate* abolition of nuclear weapons” without questioning the criminality of these weapons. Omission to examine the criminality of the atomic bombing had other implications as well. It led the Japanese government to grossly underestimate the effects of radiation on people and the environment; to introduce and expand the use of nuclear energy for the purpose of maintaining the capability of producing nuclear weapons; and ultimately it led to the disastrous nuclear power accident in Fukushima three years ago, which exposed so many people to high levels of radiation.

There were other ramifications too. On August 15, 1945, Emperor Hirohito stated in his Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War that his government had decided to surrender because of the inhumane atomic bombs. By singling out the atomic bombings as the decisive factor in the decision to surrender, Hirohito was able to completely ignore the war crimes committed by the Japanese military across Asia and the Pacific, as well as the anti-Japanese resistance that was taking place throughout Asia. In addition, he exploited the A-bomb damage to indirectly justify the war as a “war to liberate Asia.” In this way, the atomic bombings became a means to conceal not only the war responsibility of the emperor himself and other wartime leaders, but also the responsibility of the Japanese people for a war in the name of the Japanese empire that took tens of millions of lives throughout the Asia-Pacific. Just as President Truman fabricated a myth to cover up the US government’s responsibility for its grave war crimes, so, too, did the Japanese government use the same A-Bomb attacks to conceal its war responsibilities.

Japan’s refusal to openly recognize the criminality of the many brutal acts it committed against other Asian peoples and its responsibility for those actions means that it has been denied the right to expose the illegality of similar crimes that the US perpetrated against Japanese people. This is the reason why Japan has willingly subordinated itself to US military control, although it has never been trusted by neighboring Asian nations, and cannot establish a peaceful relationship with them.

Indeed, it can be said that the current depressing political and social situation in Japan is closely related to the failure to carefully examine both the US responsibility for the indiscriminate mass killing caused by the atomic bombings and Japan’s responsibility for war crimes it committed against people throughout the Asia-Pacific. In particular, a recent series of undemocratic and anti-human rights policies that Abe Shinzo’s government has been introducing are a clear manifestation of problems that stem from this failure which have accumulated over the past 69 years. These are: the enactment of the Secret Information Protection Act; cabinet’s approval to exercise the right to collective self-defense; the virtual disapproval of the Kono Statement on comfort women, as well as the Murayama Statement on Japan’s war of aggression; and the plan to resume nuclear power plant operations.

Clearly, in order to achieve a long-term prospect for peace and wellbeing for our nation and its people, it is necessary to re-examine our history over the last 69 years from the perspective of the above-mentioned war responsibilities. Based on that exercise, we then need to destroy the myth of the value of nuclear power and nuclear deterrence, so as to establish a strong, anti-war solidarity between the citizens of Japan and our neighboring countries. The late Ishibashi Tanzan, one of a few truly admirable Japanese politicians, once stated “the best strategy for peace is to create harmony among the people.” The fraudulent policies Abe is now promoting all run against this philosophy, and are destroying harmonious relationships between people, both domestically and internationally. To transform this deadlocked situation, we must begin by overthrowing the Abe regime as quickly as possible.