

Hiroshima Citizens' Statement on the 70th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing and End of the Asia-Pacific War

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 Korean people. 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. 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.

For its part, Japan had engaged in a war of aggression in the Asia-Pacific region for 15 long years, during which the lives of about 20 million Asians, more than 35 thousands Allied POWs as well as 3.1 million Japanese people were lost. 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 both the legal and moral responsibilities 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.

In Japan, we are currently confronting a depressing political and social situation with many grave problems, including racially motivated hate-speech, various types of sexual violence and oppressive educational policies. Indeed this undemocratic, social climate 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 introduced by Abe Shinzo’s government are a clear manifestation of problems that stem from this failure and which have accumulated over the past 70 years. These are: the enactment of the Secret Information Protection Act; the unconstitutional Security-related bills that are currently under review in the Diet; the construction of a new U.S. military base at Henoko in Okinawa; the virtual disapproval of both the Kono Statement on the so-called “comfort women” system, and the Murayama Statement on Japan’s war of aggression; and the plan to resume nuclear power plant operations.



As we Japanese have not thoroughly examined our own history from the viewpoint of concurrent war perpetrators and victims, we have failed to establish a democratic society firmly based upon profound historical wisdom. At the 70th anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, it is therefore our strong wish and determination to critically examine and pursue the war responsibilities of both Japan and the U.S., to stand up against Prime Minister Abe's undemocratic policies, and to launch our own plan for the future in order to truly reconcile and establish a peaceful relationship with our neighboring Asian countries. To this end, we intend to promote various civil movements, fully utilizing the sublime spirit of Japan's Constitution as a guide for our activities. The idea that every person in the world is entitled to the right to live peacefully will be strongly advocated. We think it is particularly important to work on the following issues.

- We demand that the Japanese government abolish its discriminatory treatment of A-bomb survivors living outside Japan, in particular Koreans, in its Support Program for Overseas A-Bomb Survivors. In particular, the Japanese government policy that underestimates the severity of illnesses suffered by overseas A-bomb survivors must be abolished. We also demand that both the Japanese and U.S. governments pay all the A-bomb survivors adequate reparations.
- We demand that the Japanese government fully admits its responsibility for war crimes committed against former Japanese military sex slaves, forced laborers, POWs and many other victims, and that it pays them adequate reparations as soon as possible.
- We request that the Japanese government steadily introduces progressive educational reforms and school text books, which will enable children to properly learn about the various atrocities Japan committed during the Asia-Pacific War as well as Japan's war responsibility. We believe such education is vital for children to gain a sound and independent knowledge of history and human rights.
- We believe that Japan's emperor system was one of the crucial factors that caused the Asia-Pacific War. At the same time we also think that this system is still functioning as an invisible factor that maintains and supports various types of social, sexual and racial discrimination and undemocratic ideas in Japan. For the true democratization of Japan, we believe it is necessary to abolish the emperor system and to emancipate all the members of the Japanese royal family and make them ordinary citizens. We intend to explore ways to achieve this goal.
- We endeavor to stop the construction of the U.S. military base at Henoko in Okinawa, and to force the withdrawal of all other U.S. military bases in Japan. Our final aim is to make Japan abolish the U.S.– Japan Security Treaty, which is one of the main causes of the political instability in Asia.
- We demand that the Japanese government immediately stops relying upon the strategy of the U.S. nuclear deterrent and makes a concerted effort to establish a Nuclear Weapons Convention in order to quickly abolish nuclear weapons. We also think it is important to make Northeast Asia a nuclear free zone. At the same time we demand that the Japanese government and electric power companies immediately decommission all the nuclear power stations. Currently radioactive contamination is seriously harming the health of many people in Japan. We are aware of the Japanese government's hidden motivation to continue to operate the nuclear power stations, so as to maintain the capability of producing nuclear weapons.
- We are determined to mobilize civil movements to abolish the Security-related bills, which are clearly in violation of Japan's Constitution. We will never allow Abe to change the Constitution. We will bring Abe down, for he is seriously destroying our democracy through his continued lies and deception, as well as his extremely distorted interpretation of the Constitution.

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