

4 October 2021

Mr Kishida Fumio,

Congratulations on your appointment as the 100th Prime Minister of Japan. I am heartened that you, a representative of Hiroshima, have become the leader of Japan.

I clearly remember meeting you and exchanging views on the abolition of nuclear weapons with you in December 2018, in the Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chair office. The year prior, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) had been adopted at the United Nations, and I had delivered the Nobel Lecture in acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). In light of this, I expressed my hope that Japan would take steps toward signing and ratifying the TPNW.

In response, you stated that you understood that the Hibakusha were dissatisfied with the government's current stance, that what they were saying was legitimate, and that you would like to continue to hear their views. While many politicians and officials simply repeat the official stance of the Japanese Government that we cannot be part of this treaty, I was greatly pleased by your stance of willingness to listen to the voices of the Hibakusha, and to take steps forward.

We Hibakusha have been calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, always remembering each and every person whose life was cruelly taken by the US atomic bombings in August 1945.

With one bomb, the city of Hiroshima was obliterated. People were incinerated, vaporized, carbonized – among them, members of my own family and 351 of my schoolmates.

As I said during the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo City Hall, whenever I remember Hiroshima, the first image that comes to mind is of my four-year-old nephew, Kishida Eiji – his little body transformed into an unrecognizable melted chunk of flesh. He kept begging for water in a faint voice until his death released him from agony.

We must ensure that his death, and the deaths of so many others like him, were not in vain. That is why we, the Hibakusha, have continued to warn the world. I am sure that you, as a representative of Hiroshima, fully understand this significance.

Mr Kishida Fumio, if it is indeed true that your life's work is to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, then now is the time to act on it.

I am aware that there are various international legal systems in place today, and international efforts for nuclear disarmament. Yet, the most important thing we can do today is to join the TPNW. How can Japan, the only country to have experienced atomic bombings during wartime, turn its back on this treaty, which bans nuclear weapons outright as inhumane and unacceptable weapons in all circumstances? Japan joining this treaty would have an enormous ripple effect across the globe,

even moving the nuclear powers. If the Prime Minister who represents Hiroshima does not make this decision, who will?

As Prime Minister, please pledge that the abolition of nuclear weapons is Japan's top priority, and that Japan will aim to sign and ratify the TPNW. In addition, I implore you to declare that Japan will participate in the Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in Vienna next spring, at the very least as an observer.

Although the COVID-19 situation is still continuing, if conditions allow I plan to attend the Meeting of the States Parties of the TPNW. I sincerely hope to see you in Vienna.

I am certain that as you develop Japan's nuclear disarmament diplomacy, you will always keep in mind the dialogue with the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I hope that you will also listen to the voices of nuclear survivors from around the world, as you take determined policy steps forward.

I sincerely wish you all success in your role as Prime Minister.

Setsuko Thurlow

(Translated from the original Japanese.)