

## **Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemoration**

The annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki commemoration held in Ghent is an initiative by Vredesoverleg Ghent to commemorate the hundreds of thousands victims of nuclear weapons and to strive for nuclear disarmament. After the peace concert with De 2de Adem in the Saint-Nicholas church the commemoration was continued with a lot of interested spectators at the Korenlei. There the audience listened to two short speeches and witnessed 69 paper lanterns being let into the water of the Leie, they symbolised each year that has passed since the nuclear bombs were dropped onto the thriving cities and to commemorate the deceased of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The modest ceremony was accompanied with music by the Japanese soprano Kyoko Ishida and the harpist Lakshmi Mathieu from on a wooden gondola provided by Viadagio vzw.

On behalf of the city council alderman and acting mayor Elke Decruynaere thanked Vredesoverleg Ghent, because they keep drawing attention to the nuclear horror and the impact it has on future generations. Elke Decruynaere wants the nuclear weapons to disappear because the threat they propose remains. Instead of investing in lethal technology we should invest in diplomacy and consultation. She did a double appeal: let this gathering be more than a commemoration but also an appeal to ban nuclear weapons.

Pieter Teirlinck pointed on behalf of Vredesoverleg Ghent that there are still 16 000 nuclear weapons in the world. There are 20 American nuclear weapons in Belgium, each of them 10 times more powerful than the bomb on Hiroshima. However 44 years ago Belgium signed the so called non-proliferation treaty. In that treaty the nuclear states promised to disarm and the non-nuclear states promised to not buy nuclear weapons. Furthermore according to the treaty there should've been negotiations to ban nuclear weapons. Belgium's efforts were null, they did not cooperate with and sometimes even opposed the treaty. Belgium is now preparing the acquisition of the F-35, they are able to "deliver" the modernised nuclear bombs. Pieter Teirlinck appealed to the present municipal councillors and members of parliament to see to that the future federal government engages the future federal parliament to think about a nuclear convention. The new government also has to make arrangements to get their nuclear weapons out of our country. Pieter Teirlinck also appealed to the small and medium-sized enterprises and organisations to say no to the F-35





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