

Nuclear Weapons Violate Everyone's Human Rights

Remarks by Jacqueline Cabasso, North American Coordinator, Mayors for Peace
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Sí al Desarme, Sí a la Paz
Mexico City, Monumento a la Revolución

It is a great honor to be here with you on this United Nations International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. I bring warm greetings from Mayor Kazumi Matsui of Hiroshima, the President of Mayors for Peace.

Mayors for Peace is an international non-partisan organization with nearly 8,000 member cities in 163 countries, including 86 cities in Mexico. Mexico City joined in 2009 and subsequently has become a Vice-President.

Nuclear weapons are an absolute evil. On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped a single atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, reducing the city to ruins and taking the lives of 140,000 citizens by the end of that year. Three days later the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, killing an additional 70,000 people.

Even today, 74 years after the bombings, those who barely managed to survive are tormented by the long-term effects of radiation and constant anxiety about their health and the health of their children and grandchildren.

Despite having experienced such unbearable devastation and sorrow, the A-bomb survivors – known as “hibakusha”, whose average age is over 82, continue to passionately appeal for a world without nuclear weapons, based on their conviction that “no one shall ever again suffer as we have”.

Tragically, the indescribable devastation experienced by the hibakusha is not a thing of the past. Today, nearly 14,000 nuclear weapons, most 10 times more powerful than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and most in the hands of the U.S. and Russia, continue to pose an intolerable threat to humanity and our planet. And the dangers of wars among nuclear-armed states are growing. As long as nuclear weapons exist and national leaders threaten their use, nuclear war could erupt at any moment – by accident, miscalculation or design.

Mexico has a long and proud history of global leadership on nuclear disarmament. Recognizing the unacceptable dangers of nuclear weapons, Mexican Ambassador Alfonso García Robles was the driving force behind the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, signed in 1967 at Tlatelolco, which established the world's first nuclear weapon free zone. Ambassador García Robles received the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize for this tremendous accomplishment. OPANAL, the only regional body in the world devoted entirely to the achievement of nuclear disarmament, is based here in Mexico City.

More recently, seeking to make the entire world a nuclear weapon free zone, Mexico played a leading role in adoption by the United Nations in 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons. But the nuclear-armed nations are strongly opposing this treaty, and our work is far from done.

Nuclear weapons violate everyone's human rights. That's common sense. This simple but powerful point was recently made by the UN Human Rights Committee. In an October 2018 comment, the committee said that the "threat or use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, which are indiscriminate in effect and are of a nature to cause destruction of human life on a catastrophic scale is incompatible with respect for the right to life and may amount to a crime under international law."

We were very pleased to learn that the Mexico City Government decided to organize public activities related to its "*Sí al Desarme, Sí a la Paz*" program on the UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. We are happy to see that the urgent need for nuclear disarmament, in which Mexico and Mexico City have played such a prominent role internationally, is being acknowledged and linked with critical domestic small arms issues. Mayors for Peace has explicitly endorsed this connection by promoting "safe and resilient cities," along with nuclear disarmament, as essential measures to achieve lasting world peace.

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 2020, Mayors for Peace has set an ambitious goal of reaching 10,000 member cities by that date. Now that Mexico City has become a federal district encompassing 16 distinct cities, I'd like to thank Mexico City for its strong support of Mayors for Peace and invite each of the mayors of those 16 cities to join Mayors for Peace in their own right.