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Saintes, 6 August 2019: Homage to the victims of the atom bombs, and Appeal to the French Parliament



- Homepage - News - News Articles -
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On 6 August 2019, as happens every year, the city of Saintes and ACDN (Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire) together commemorated the victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945.

Over sixty people, including representatives of the City Hall and the War Veterans, a member of the European Parliament, and representatives of NGOs including a Japanese one, some artists, and citizens of Saintes and towns nearby or not so near, gathered around the Monument to the Fallen, in front of the Palais de Justice, to perform this duty of memory and also to express their will to preserve humankind and the planet from destruction.

Since 1999 Saintes has been a member of the world network of NGOs and cities "Abolition 2000", and since 2008 of "Mayors for Peace". ACDN has been part of Abolition 2000 since it was founded in 1996. These two networks and their national members fight together for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This objective was recalled by a banner placed on one side of the Monument to the Fallen, while a banner on the other side showed the faces of a few of the victims of 1945 - tens of thousands perished under the two atomic mushrooms of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



The president of ACDN introduced the ceremony by recalling that the two Japanese cities were not the first or only ones to suffer a holocaust during the Second World War, and they cannot in any case serve to exonerate the responsibilities and crimes of Japanese militarism during that period. But the deaths of their inhabitants and the tragedy of the survivors (the "hibakusha") must highlight for us the specificity of nuclear weapons: worse than war weapons, which are all intended to kill a presumed enemy, they are weapons of mass destruction, of massacre and extermination. By their nature they cannot distinguish between civilians and soldiers, they essentially target cities and populations, and they are nothing less than weapons for crimes against humanity. They were condemned as such by the UN General Assembly in a 1961 resolution. Their effects are particularly horrible and their impact is felt on future generations, particularly because they are radioactive. These characteristics make them

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totally unacceptable, although they do not make us forget or ignore all the atrocities that are due to wars in general.

In reality, the two bombs of August 1945, one a uranium bomb, the other a plutonium bomb, were used above all as scientific experiments. The potential target cities were chosen by US leaders in April 1945 (four cities, to be cut back to two depending on the weather on the day) and barred from any conventional bombing so that later damage could be attributed solely to the atom bombs.



A minute of silence, with flags lowered, is observed in memory of the victims.



The Nuclear Disarmament Flame, first lit in 2001, is re-lit for the 74th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As every year, it will burn until August 9. Before it is extinguished then at 11.02 am (the moment when the "Fat Man" bomb exploded over Nagasaki) a minute of silence will be observed, with flags lowered, for the duration of its fall.



White wreaths are placed on the foot of the Flame, on behalf of the City of Saintes and ACDN, along with a citizens' bouquet of wild flowers.

Reading of the message from **Mr Kazumi Matsui**, president of Mayors for Peace and mayor of Hiroshima. The message from **Mr Tomihisa Taue**, mayor of Nagasaki and vice-president of Mayors for Peace, will be read on August 9, when the flame is extinguished.

Danièle Comby, on behalf of the City of Saintes, explains the meaning of her presence at the ceremony and affirms the city's fidelity to its humanist commitment.



Pierre Pérochain, president of ULAAC (the local union of War Veterans which groups five NGOs in Saintes) and **Georges Mounier** explain how the war veterans wish for the end of all wars, and do not think that threatening to commit massacres is the way to prevent them from happening.

Benoît Biteau, a regional councillor for Nouvelle Aquitaine recently elected to the European Parliament, explains

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why he has long associated his struggle as a crop farmer for healthy food and non-chemical agriculture with the struggle for peace, disarmament and abandonment of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

Yuko Hirota, a noted pianist-composer, and founder of the "Piano-no-ki" association (the piano-tree), born in Tokyo but now resident in France, explains why her association every year welcomes children to France, to the countryside - children of Fukushima or Chernobyl who need to regain their health after exposure to radioactivity, and why nuclear weapons and nuclear power need to be abandoned.

Carole Le Kouddar reads a poem that she has called "One Day?"

"Can you feel the memories in which yesterday's catastrophes also tremble,
can you feel our footsteps which all together will one day disarm the world?"

Cathy Lucas brings the support of the Mouvement de la Paix.

Aline Bocenno invites all present to sing with her *Pete Seeger's* song "Where have all the flowers gone" in the French version of Marlène Dietrich, and "Hiroshima", by *Georges Moustaki*:

"Through all the trampled dreams,
through hope abandoned,
in Hiroshima or even further away,
perhaps tomorrow Peace will come."



To conclude the ceremony, Jean-Marie Matagne read "[The Appeal to the French Parliament](#) " launched from Saintes on 6 August by ACDN.

"Mesdames, Messieurs MPs and Senators.

"Today you have a very great responsibility. We ask you to assess it correctly.

"Since January 2018, we have been only two minutes away from the Apocalypse, according to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, who see in the deterioration of the earth's climate an extra factor for catastrophe, leading to a nuclear war. And in fact the world's political climate continues to deteriorate - it has not stopped deteriorating." (...) [Read more](#)

MESSAGES DES MAIRES DES DEUX VILLES BOMBARDEES

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Message from the president of Mayors for Peace, Mr Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima, to ACDN and the City of Saintes:

"It is an honor and a pleasure to send this message on the occasion of the Commemoration ceremonies of the Hiroshima & Nagasaki bombings, August 6 & 9, 1945.

"At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, absolute evil, an atomic bomb, exploded in the sky over Hiroshima. Under the roiling mushroom cloud, the lives of many innocent civilians were taken, and the city of Hiroshima was reduced to ashes. The scenes of hell burnt into their memory and the radiation eating away at their minds and bodies are even now sources of pain for those who managed to survive.

"After 74 years, there remains about 14,000 nuclear warheads in the world, and the likelihood is growing that what we saw in Hiroshima after the explosion that day will return, by intent or accident, plunging people into agony. Furthermore, certain countries are blatantly proclaiming self-centered nationalism and modernizing their nuclear arsenals, rekindling tensions that had eased with the end of the Cold War. If the human family forgets history or stops confronting it, we could again commit a terrible error. That is precisely why we must continue talking about Hiroshima, and efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons must continue based on intelligent actions by leaders around the world.

"Two years ago, the Nobel Peace Prize went to ICAN, an organization that contributed to the formation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Thus, the spirit of the hibakusha is spreading throughout the world. With the importance of learning the reality of the atomic bombings and working for a world without nuclear weapons having been recognized once again, world leaders must negotiate in good faith the elimination of nuclear arsenals, which is a legal obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Furthermore, they must strive to make the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons a milestone along the path to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

"For leaders to focus their reason and insight on abolishing nuclear weapons, civil society must respect diversity, build mutual trust, and make nuclear abolition a value shared by all humankind. In this context, it is truly significant that you have come together and organized the Commemoration ceremonies of the Hiroshima & Nagasaki bombings, August 6 & 9, 1945 to call for a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons and I extend to you my deepest respect.

"Mayors for Peace, composed of over 7,700 member cities from 163 countries and regions, intends to create an environment to encourage world leaders to take such actions. I would like to ask all of you to continue to strive with us to eliminate the absolute evil that is nuclear weapons and to realize a peaceful world.

"In closing, I extend my best wishes for the great success of this event as well as the good health and happiness of all in attendance."

August 6th, 2019

MATSUI Kazumi
President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor of Hiroshima



Message from Mr Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki and Vice-President of Mayors for Peace, to the inhabitants of Saintes:

"On behalf of the citizens of Nagasaki, I would like to extend this message to the "Flame for Nuclear Disarmament."

"At 11:02 a.m., August 9, 1945, Nagasaki instantly took devastating amounts of damage from a single atomic bomb. 74,000 precious lives were lost, and a further 75,000 were injured. Even today, those who narrowly survived carry deep mental and physical wounds that will never heal and continue to suffer from the aftereffects from the exposure to the radiation.

"Those survivors, the hibakusha, and the citizens of Nagasaki have been determined to make sure that no one else in the world ever experiences the tragedy of an atomic bombing, and with the heartfelt wish of "making Nagasaki the last place on earth to suffer nuclear devastation," they have continued to appeal for the realization of "a world without nuclear weapons."

"Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the bombing. However, there currently exists approximately 14,000 nuclear warheads across the world. The state of international affairs in regard to nuclear weapons is turning into a critical situation. Now more than ever, for the realization of a world without nuclear weapons as soon as possible, the civil society must join forces and raise their voices on this matter.

"For the sake of peace, there are many things that each and every one of us can do. Everyone's individual and invaluable efforts will become a tremendous driving force that will lead us to peace. As powerful and important allies, we will continue to walk down this path aiming for a world without nuclear weapons, and together we will further spread peace to the world.

"Through the "Flame for Nuclear Disarmament," I hope that you will share our wish for peace and spread the voices calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

TAUE Tomihisa
Mayor of Nagasaki

Intervenors



Benoît Biteau

J-M Matagne, Danièle Comby, Benoît Biteau



Carole Le Kouddar



Yuko Hirota



Aline Bocenno



Jean-Marie Matagne

