

February 26, 2010

To the President of the United States, the Japanese government and leaders of other countries,

An Appeal from the Bishops of Nuclear Bombsites, Hiroshima and Nagasaki

**Take An Courageous Step Toward
The Total Abolition Of Nuclear Weapons**

We, as the bishops of the Catholic Church of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which is the only country in the world to have suffered nuclear attacks, demand that the President of the United States, the Japanese government and the leaders of other countries make utmost efforts to abolish nuclear weapons, while we share the intention of our Pope, the supreme leader of the Catholic Church.

The nuclear weapons deprived over one hundred thousand people's lives in an instant at the end of the previous world war. And the bomb survivors continue to suffer physically and spiritually even now. Since the test of a thermonuclear bomb with the kill rate several thousand times as deadly as a nuclear bomb, these formidable nuclear bombs have been produced massively in various forms after being improved for actual warfare. How sad and foolish it is to abuse the progress that humanity has made in the fields of science and technology, in order to destroy lives as massively and swiftly as possible, and to earn more profit by producing weapons! A clear example of such foolishness appeared in a condensed manner in the atomic bombings. However, the responsibility of the sin should be born not only by the United States which actually dropped the atomic bombs, but also the other countries including Japan which have kept on waging wars throughout their history. In this sense, while reflecting on our past conduct, we wish to advance together toward the common aims for the future, which are the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of a world without wars.

Currently there are over 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world.

Under such circumstance, in addition to holding up an ideal to realize a world free of nuclear weapons, it is essential that we reduce such weapons practically. That is because the abolition of these weapons will never be achieved without accumulating such efforts. In the Nuclear Security Summit in April and the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May, we sincerely hope that the world leaders will reach an agreement to take a secure step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, beyond their own interests.

To the President of the United States of America:

We request you to make a courageous decision and take initiative this March in the US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the guideline for the U.S. nuclear policy. That is to say, we would like to ask you to settle on the “Sole Purpose”, which is to limit the purpose of retaining nuclear weapons to deterring others from using such weapons only, at least as a first step toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. If this decision is made, nuclear weapons will be reduced accordingly, and the NPT will be greatly influenced.

To the Japanese government:

As many people have already indicated, although such argument to limit the role of nuclear weapons arose in the United States, the Japanese government seems to have an extremely passive attitude to the nuclear arms reduction policies, not to mention the abolition of such arms. That is because the Japanese government has adhered to the security policy under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. However, Foreign Minister Okada clearly said on January 29 in his speech about fundamental diplomatic policy that he would pay attention to and support the “Sole Purpose” of the United States as a first step toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Although this can be evaluated as a certain progress, this statement only expresses that Japan supports the nuclear arms reduction policies of the United States. It is needless to say that Japan should demonstrate and implement what Japan itself will do toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

To the world leaders:

It is clear that the goal to abolish nuclear weapons is the challenge of all countries regardless of whether each country possesses nuclear weapons or not. A huge amount of expense is needed to produce and maintain nuclear weapons. Although the nuclear deterrence is a first step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, it will not be able to bring about true peace because it will merely escalate the causes of wars. If a country or group somewhere uses these weapons, its impact will affect the whole earth. What everyone desires is not to live in the world full of struggles surrounded by weapons, but to realize a world where everyone can live a humane life filled with love and trust while cooperating with each other. Humanity can wage wars, but at the same time it can also make the choice not to, and is expected to play a role in this decision. All of you who have been elected as the leader of your country are in the position capable of making great contributions to peace.

We request you once again to take a courageous step toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of a world without wars.

Archbishop Mitsuaki Takami, Nagasaki Archdiocese of the Catholic Church

Bishop Atsumi Misue, Hiroshima Diocese of the Catholic Church