

Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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Imagining a world without nuclear weapons

Prayer for Peace - Paris September 22-24, 2024

Welcome.

Welcome to this panel on “Remembering the victims - Imagining a world without nuclear weapons.” We are grateful to the panelists you have their bios and can find much more online about each of them: Jean-Marie Collin, Directeur International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) - France; Emmanuel Dupuy, President, Institute for European Perspective and Security Studies (IPSE), Ivana Nikolic Hughes, President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAP); Anna Ikeda, Program Coordinator for Disarmament, Soka Gakkai International (SGI); Izumi Nakamitsu (video message) Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs United Nations (UN); Nobuhiro Masahiro Nemoto, Rissho Kosei-kai; John C. Wester (video message and/or survivor’s testimony) Archbishop of Santa Fe.

I will ask them to speak in the order presented in the program that I hope will highlight the delicate and urgent responsibility of “Remembering the victims - Imagining a world without nuclear weapons.” We are approaching this conversation as an urgent task, a duty for us here tonight and humanity as a whole.

Remembering is difficult. Memory is fallacious and fragile but the memory of traumas is dramatically alive in those who went through them. As we approach the 80th memorial of the two atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki we know that the call to remember is at the same time stronger and weaker. Weaker because the survivors of those two explosions are fewer and older; stronger because many are remembering those moments and exploring ways to remember better and more.

The responsibility to remember calls forth the awareness of how far we are from those two days in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. None of us were there at that time and in that space. Yet, we are asked to be there and to remember, to make those

moments our moments and to remember, to experience the explosions and the sufferings, and the pain and the anguish and to remember.

Our title is in this sense an invitation to remember the victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the company of the countless others killed by human violence, human choices, human planning, human ingenuity, human control of natural energy, human desire to win, human insistence on “us” and “them”, human defiance, human stubbornness, misconstrued heroism. I do not think that it is a downblending atomic death. I think that it is the proper way to acknowledge that the sufferings, and the pain and the anguish of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been repeated over and over again in nuclear testing and conflicts around the world until now.

After the two bombs were used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki humans built more than 70,000 nuclear weapons and performed more than 2,000 tests. Still today we have more than 12,500 of them with power greatly superior to the two used in August 1945.

To recognize the victims is to choose a starting point. In front of me is a person, a human person, another me. Same body, same face, same need to breathe and drink, same ... I could be her. I could be him. If someone decides that Paris must be bombed today we all be “them”. Victims do not make themselves so. Victims are made by others. The violent enemy takes the life from the victims and makes them bodies and ashes. To recognize the victims is to open ourselves to the horror that moves in the direction of a “No”, a resounding “NO!”, a life-long, committed an obstinate “NO, no, no millions of times no”

This is why we are here. Starting from remembering the victims, saying no one by one, we ask ourselves to help each other and humanity on the way to imagine what cannot be imagined and yet cannot but be imagined: a world without nuclear weapons.

The first step of this world has been the product of chance and choice: only those two times almost 80 years were nuclear weapons used intentionally, destructively, lethally against human beings. So many have lived under the illusion that nuclear weapons are there but not really there. They are sort of a movie, a film, a part of reality that is not real, at least not for me. This is - once

again - why it is essential to start for the victims not in general but personally. Would it be ok if you and all who you know could go would be incinerated as thousands were?

We all know well the myth of the self-made-man (a bit less frequent is the self-made-woman variation.) It is a myth because no one is made by himself and herself. We are all made in conversation and when a nuclear bomb is dropped a few very powerful and convinced to be "in control" make many (hundreds of thousands in Hiroshima and Nagasaki) ashes and smoke, bodies and winds, memories of a violent past. None of the victims of August 1945 was a self-made-victims. They were all made by others. Who gave the power to the powerful few? Their commitment to enmity, their desire to win, their fears and threats. Power was accumulated through the science and the technical solution that built the bond, that delivered the bomb, that used the bomb to make multitudes, ashes and smoke, bodies and winds, memories of a violent past. Was this the only choice? Of course not. As human beings we can move from the myth of the self-made-man to the reality of liberating cooperation.

Henry Dunant found himself in Solferino after the battle in which thousands were killed and they were killed not by a bomb dropped from afar by another soldier, many with a bajonett. Dunant started helping the wounded, the survivors irrespective of their side. There was no more "us" and "them", "friends" and "foes", no more enemies. That helping on the ground one victim at the time led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions.

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki many said "no", a responding, creative "no". They imagined another way. We have been blessed with many who have said no, no a million times, creating movements and treatis, awareness and choices that might invite all to the learning that we are indeed no enemies and that the only reasonable insight to learn from the conception and use of nuclear weapons is to say no, no a billion times. From Josph Rotblat to Dorothy Day, from Pugwash to ICAN many already said no! For all of them, recognizing that the memory of the victims count, that remembering is key to imagining a world without nuclear weapons. Let's engage with them.

We will first listen to our two French speakers who will help us locate the debate in this particular context first Emmanuel Dupuy, President, Institute for European Perspective and Security Studies (IPSE), and then Jean-Marie Collin, Directeur International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) - France; Emmanuel Dupuy, President, Institute for European Perspective and Security Studies (IPSE),

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Thank you. Emmanuel and Jean-Marie.

We will now welcome two video messages that help us locate this panel in the larger UN and Catholic context. We will hear from Izumi Nakamitsu (video message) Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs United Nations (UN); and then John C. Wester (video message and/or survivor's testimony) Archbishop of Santa Fe.

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We are now entering the final session of the panel and we will hear in the order Ivana Nikolic Hughes, President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAP); and Anna Ikeda, Program Coordinator for Disarmament, Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

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Q&A

... at the end

We are getting ready to close the panel and we are posting the image of the Vigil for Peace that the Community of Sant'Egidio started three years ago in New York City to remember the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Starting at 8:15 AM Japan time when the first bomb was launched August 6, 1945 until 11:05 AM of August 9 when the second bomb was dropped, we keep a space open for prayer in a chapel in New York. Everyone can participate digitally and send prayers that are read live from the chapel. It is an occasion to remember, to honor the victims of all wars, to seek peace and pursue it.

Also, we would like to offer a gift, the gift of a name that might help us, one by one, to strengthen the commitment to Remembering the victims and Imagining a world without nuclear weapons. It is a name, the name of a person who was killed in Hiroshima or Nagasaki in August 1945. They were alive before the bomb was dropped. They were made of ashes and smoke. Every human being will be made ashes and smoke by a nuclear bomb. We want to honor them through their name, knowing that when we die we will all be names and memories. I hope that you do not mind my asking to share these names, receiving them first but then the one that you received to a person close to you this evening. This way we will all receive and give a memory, accept a commitment, encounter another, unexpectedly. It is not the power that makes us ashes and smoke but the invitation that encourages the hope that we will truly live in a world without nuclear weapons

Thanks