
Speech by the Spokesperson of the CTBTO

Dr. Annika Thunborg

**at the "Genbaku No Hi 2012" event
to commemorate the victims of the atomic bombings**

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During my stay in Hiroshima two years ago, I tried to imagine the unimaginable, what it must have been on that fateful day in August 1945. We know that the skies were clear and that it was hot as it is in Japan in August. At 8 o'clock in the morning, men and women were going to work, children were going to school, by street car or on foot; the shopping district in the centre of town already bustling. Suddenly, at 8.15, the city turned into a living hell on earth. The bomb exploded 600 metres above ground. Radiation and heat waves of between 3,000 and 4,000 degrees centigrade scorched the ground, obliterating the hospital just below, and the entire inner city consisting mainly of traditional Japanese wooden houses. Areas up to 3 kilometres away from the epicenter were affected: by radiation, by fire, by the black rain, which is the radioactive dust and particles that fell over the city.

It is estimated that 350,000 people were in Hiroshima on that day. 140,000 of them died, instantly, or from jumping into the rivers since their burns were unbearable, or from their injuries in the months to come.

The survivors, the Hibakushas, and the Japanese peace movement have played a crucial role in keeping the stories alive and in renouncing war – all war – and

promoting peace. The museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki bear witness to their efforts. No one can walk away unaffected by what you learn there, about the war, about the bombings, about the tens of thousands of human tragedies in their wake.

“Never again”, the Hibakushas say.

“Never again”, CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth said when he visited Hiroshima on Monday and laid a wreath to commemorate the victims. “Never again should any people, anywhere, at any time, have to suffer what the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had to suffer. Never again. We must do everything in our power.”

It goes without saying that nuclear weapons are inherently inhumane weapons. Still, it has been difficult for the international community to agree on this. So it was a major achievement when the over 190 States Parties to the NPT agreed at the RC in 2010 that the consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic. They also acknowledged the role of International Humanitarian Law in this regard.

I personally hope that one of the next steps would be to declare that any nuclear explosion – whether it takes place in wartime or in peace time – violates universal human rights.

Between 1945 and 1996, which was the year when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty opened for signature, over 2000 nuclear tests were carried out in over 60 different locations worldwide. Many of these locations were inhabited by indigenous peoples or minorities, who were evacuated because of the tests but often not far enough. The majority of the bombs that were exploded were much bigger than those dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The so-called Czar Bomb, which was tested by the Soviet Union in Novaya Zemlya close to the Arctic Ocean in 1961, was 4000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Radioactive fall-out and contamination from nuclear tests have had dire consequences for human health, animal life and the environment at the nuclear test sites and their vicinities.

That the 500 atmospheric tests left whole populations affected are better known than that the 1500 underground tests also caused the destruction of livelihood for local populations. Those tests left the soil contaminated and the ground water threatened for the next 24,400 years which is the time it takes for half of the atoms in plutonium to decay.

Indigenous peoples and minorities were displaced as a result of testing. Cultural ties were broken, traditional way of life violently interrupted, social and cultural rights violated. The land as a source of livelihood ceased to exist, violating economic security.

A Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in force would end this threat to human rights once and for all. All nuclear explosions are banned under the Treaty, for anyone, anywhere.

We are nearly there – the Treaty has created an almost universal norm that most countries would feel ashamed to violate. Still, as long as the eight ratifications necessary for entry into force are missing, the world is not safe, and we cannot, should not, rest.

Tomorrow, Tibor Tóth will lay a wreath to commemorate the victims of Nagasaki. “Never again”, he will say. Let us all work tirelessly to ensure that nuclear weapons are never exploded again, not in wartime, not in peace time. Not in violation of international humanitarian law. Not in violation of human rights law.

Never again.