

Hell on Earth: Testimonies from Hibakusha

The following are testimonies by hibakusha describing hell on earth. They demonstrate how nuclear weapons lead humanity to annihilation and reveal catastrophic humanitarian consequences, which are recognized by most countries.

Let us take this shared recognition as our base camp. From there, citizens around the world can stand in solidarity and move toward our common summit: the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Damage caused by intense heat rays

“(Immediately after being exposed to the bombing near the hypocenter,) I left and tried to escape to the military drill ground, but the entire field was a sea of fire—truly a sea of fire! The temple behind the office was also destroyed and burning.”
(Ms. Takakura)



Burning Streetcar
Painted by Yoshio Takahara
From the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Collection



A line of fleeing hibakusha
Testimony of Akihiro Takahashi
From the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Collection

“On my way (while evacuating), I saw many hibakusha fleeing in a line. Everyone had their arms stretched out in front of them, with skin hanging down in strips, and their clothes in tatters, leaving some practically naked. Among them were a man with shards of glass embedded in his body, another man whose skin was peeling away, a woman whose eyeball had been forced out, and another woman whose body was covered in blood. There were dead bodies lying around, their internal organs spilled out. The mother and her baby, both with severe burns, were also lying on the side of the road. I heard the baby wailing, and I can still hear the cries in my ears. There is an expression ‘hell on earth’, and what we experienced after the bombing was exactly ‘hell on earth.’” (Mr. Takahashi)



**Ms. Yoshiko
Kajimoto**

“From the hypocenter came people who looked like ghosts with their arms stretched forward, their burned skin hung down from their fingertips like rags. Their clothes were either blown away or burned off, leaving them completely naked. Their faces were swollen like balloons, their lips turned up, and blood was flowing from their heads and other parts of their bodies. Staggering in a line, they looked like a procession of ghosts. Among them was a junior high school boy holding his severed arm, who collapsed and died right in front of me. His terrified, sorrowful face remains in my memory. A mother cradled a dead baby wandering around in madness, screaming incoherently. These wretched figures kept

coming. None of them looked human. The city was littered with corpses. Despite trying not to step on them, I remember vividly the slippery sensation of stepping on dangling skin. On the streets were people with their eyes protruding, others with their entrails spilling out, pieces of flesh scattered around, and the smell of blood—it was hell on earth itself” (Ms. Kajimoto)



Are You Really Dad?
Painted by Minami Ogawa
From the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Collection

“When I saw my father lying on the wooden board, I couldn’t believe he was alive. His face was swollen and his clothes were burned, leaving his entire body shining black. It was only when I heard his voice that I realized he was my father. We had no medicine, so we grated cucumber and potato, and used them as compresses. His body was burned and hot, so they dried quickly. When we touched the blackened areas, they peeled off, revealing red skin underneath. His burns were not only on the surface but deep inside as well. My father passed away on the night of August 8, deeply worried about my missing mother and us, his young children.” (Ms. Kasaoka)



**Ms. Sadae
Kasaoka**

Damage caused by tremendous blast wind

“We were all looking up at the sky (in the junior high school playground) and pointing, watching the plane go by. That’s when it happened. There was a tremendous roar, and everything was plunged into darkness. It was so dark that we couldn’t even see our hand in front of our face. I had been blown off by the blast. After it got light, I realized that I had been blown about 10 meters backwards. All my friends had also been blown away, lying all over the schoolyard. The school and the neighboring houses were destroyed, and when I looked off into the distance, it seemed like the whole city of Hiroshima had disappeared.” (Mr. Takahashi)

“(When I finally managed to get out from under the col-lapsed building,) I found the city of Hiroshima flattened. The scorching sun that had been shining so brightly was gone. It was dark and eerily quiet, and there was a strange smell like rotten fish. Five or six friends made it out from under the collapsed building. Their hair was standing on end, their bodies completely blackened, some

were bleeding from their heads, some had their flesh torn off their arms so that their skin was hanging, and some had their flesh torn off their legs so that their bones were visible. Their white uniforms were soaked in blood. Everybody was half-mad. One friend who had been pinned under the debris was the worst injured. Her arm was dangling, barely attached by a single piece of skin, making the bone visible. It was so pitiful and scary to look at.” (Ms. Kajimoto)

Damage caused by radiation

“I was bedridden throughout the rest of August. I had no appetite, with a high fever and profuse bleeding gums. The wound on my arm had festered. It was crawling with mag-gots. My grandmother, crying as she did so, picked them out one by one with chopsticks. My father was exposed at home, 2.5 kilometers from the hypocenter. Although he suffered neither burns nor other injuries at the time, about a year and a half later, he began vomiting blood and died shortly thereafter. I believe it was because he was exposed to residual radiation from walking through the burnt ruins for three days, turning over corpses in his search for me. Later, in 1999, I underwent surgery to remove two-thirds of my stomach due to stomach cancer. Many of my friends also died of cancer. Even now, 80 years later, I continue to develop new diseases, suffering from anemia and brain tu-mors.” (Ms. Kajimoto)



Mr. Shunichiro Arai

“Actually, I’m currently suffering from my sixth cancer. The first time I was diagnosed with cancer was in 1984, when I was in my 50s. That first cancer was found in my right kidney and I later developed cancer in various parts of my body, and lived on the verge of death. My doctor told me that I was a typical patient with multiple cancers caused by radiation. Now I have another kidney cancer, and there is nothing that can be done about it. And it is at stage 4. This is my destiny. That is to say, the impact of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima did not end 80 years ago. It is still affecting all hibakusha, just as shown by myself. I will continue to testify about that as a living witness.” (Mr. Arai)

Devastation of downtown Hiroshima

“The moment I got off the train on the platform at Yaga Station, I was hit by an awful stench, like the smell of burnt animals or rotting flesh. It stung my eyes and nose, and made it hard to breathe. I finally got used to it and opened my eyes. I was shocked. I found no trace of the city of Hiroshima or the houses that had stood there until the last day. Smoke was still smoldering here and there.” (Ms. Kono)

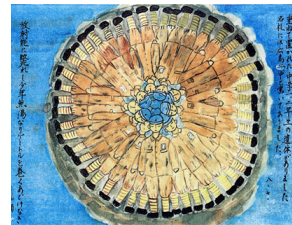


Ms. Kiyomi Kono

“When I entered the city, I found dead bodies scattered everywhere. The bodies exposed to the heat rays had

turned dark brown and swollen. I couldn’t tell if they were men or women. There were people whose eyes were flowing and jelly-like; others whose tongues were triangular and sticking out like horns; and still others whose internal organs had ruptured and turned a dark yellow in color. Brains had also flowed out. It was the scariest memory of my entire life.” (Ms. Kono)

“The Japanese Red Cross Hospital was in a terrible state, with all the windows blown out by the blast. I saw many bloodied people being carried in from all directions. They were laid in rows at the entrance, and in the hallways. They were crying: ‘It hurts! It hurts!’ ‘Help me!’ ‘Give me water!’ or ‘Mom!’ An old woman in a *yukata* robe said: ‘I’m already old, so just end my life quickly.’ The cries echoed off the concrete walls of the hospital, growing into a loud, wailing roar. There was also a shortage of doctors and nurses, as many of them were injured. There was a large round flower bed at the driveway at the



Corpses on a Flowerbed at Japanese Red Cross Hospital From the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Collection

hospital. I had always seen it, lush and green, but that day the bodies of boys were carelessly piled up like logs. I thought they were exposed to the atomic bomb while working together to demolish buildings around there. Even through they were first-year junior high school boys, they had the physique of fifth graders due to the lack of nutrition. They had an innocent look on their faces and looked like they were asleep. They must have wanted to go home and see their mothers, but not a single one was able to be with their parents, and they were all cremated together.” (Ms. Kono)

“Looking down at the river from Miyuki-bashi Bridge, I saw many pure white corpses floating, some facing up and some facing down. Near the hypocenter, I happened to look at a streetcar and saw something black hanging inside.



Arms Holding onto Straps Painted by Kiyomi Kono Courtesy of Kiyomi Kono

Wondering what they were, I looked closer and found that they were arms holding the straps, torn off from bodies. They were charred like coal. This terrified me as well, because there was no human figure left. Soldiers were crouching in front of the Fukuya Department Store. These soldiers were not bleeding and their clothes were not dirty. It was strange, but in hindsight, I think they had died from exposure to radiation.” (Ms. Kono)

To Understand the Inhumane and Dehumanizing Nature of Nuclear Weapons: Hibakusha Testimonies (19-minute video)

