

December 20, 2004

Dr. Geir Lundestad, Director  
Norwegian Nobel Committee  
The Norwegian Nobel Institute  
Drammensveien 19, NO-0255  
Oslo, Norway

Dear Dr. Lundestad:

The Board of Directors of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is pleased to nominate Nihon Hidankyo, the Japanese nation-wide organization of A- and H-bomb survivors (Hibakusha) of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and the Bikini H-bomb test, for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize. As the 60th anniversary of the tragic bombings approaches in 2005, their witness continues as a challenge to a world faced with nuclear proliferation, possible renewal of nuclear testing, and repeated threats to initiate nuclear war.

**Nihon Hidankyo:** Founded in 1956, Nihon Hidankyo has worked for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the care and compensation of Hibakusha by the Japanese government. It has member organizations in all 47 Japanese prefectures, thus representing almost all organized Hibakusha. Its officers and members are all Hibakusha. There are several thousands more Hibakusha living in Korea and other parts of the world outside Japan who have worked in association with Hidankyo, as have representatives of the millions of Russians, Kazakhs, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and U. S. Americans who are the victims of nuclear weapons production and testing.

**Nihon Hidankyo activities for peace:** Over the years, the organization has sent delegates to many countries to help build the world-wide nuclear abolition movement, and it has testified at United Nations sessions on nuclear test bans, non-proliferation, and disarmament. Nihon Hidankyo has been active in the preparatory meetings for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and will have a forceful presence at the United Nations conference in 2005 when progress in the implementation of the NPT will be reviewed. Should the conference fail to receive serious commitments from the nuclear powers, led by the United States, finally to implement their Article VI commitments to negotiate the elimination of their nuclear arsenals, further proliferation may well be the result.

In recent years, Nihon Hidankyo has worked with a range of Japanese and other NGOs to organize citizens' conferences focusing attention on the consequences of nuclear war and advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is planning an unprecedented International Citizens Conference in Japan in August, 2005, to underscore the dangers of nuclear weapons and to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 2003, Hidankyo petitioned the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum as the museum prepared to open an exhibition of the restored B29 bomber "Enola Gay," which dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The petition expressed "deep astonishment and anger" over the exhibition, which Hidankyo saw as celebrating the advancement of technology while concealing and

effectively denying the bombing's horror. It asked that the exhibit include photographs and materials showing the calamity caused by Enola Gay's bomb-devastation of the city, enormous loss of life, and ongoing human suffering. Members of Hidankyo traveled to Washington to participate in events protesting the exhibition opening, which took place without the public discussion about the use of nuclear weapons that they had requested. The impact of their presence was reflected in the front-page article in *The New York Times* the following day featuring the solemn protest and a photograph of a Hidankyo leader standing in front of the Enola Gay.

**The AFSC, Quakers, and Nihon Hidankyo:** The American Friends Service Committee has over the years worked closely with Nihon Hidankyo on peace issues. The support for this nomination by Quakers both here and in Japan as well as by AFSC staff who have first-hand knowledge of the organization and its leaders has been critical in our decision.

- Takashi Mizuno, a Friend from New Jersey, offers an additional justification for the nomination: "I think that it will be significantly meaningful for the AFSC to choose the Hidankyo as a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize next year, given the current rapid militarization of the Japanese society by the Japanese and the U.S. governments. It will certainly encourage and give hope to the people who have been working for justice and peace not only in Japan but also in the world." He relates how his family has hosted Hibakusha from Hidankyo in their "traveling ministry" over the past few summers. Many of us have been profoundly moved by personal interactions with Hibakusha, in Japan or in this country when they were on tour or receiving treatment, including the Hiroshima Maidens brought by Norman Cousins.
- An early source of inspiration for the nomination came from AFSC staff member Joseph Gerson, author of *With Hiroshima Eyes* and long-time champion of the cause of the Hibakusha. He has helped arrange numerous speaking tours here in the U.S. and has organized "Global Hibakusha" delegations to the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference (1999), the United Nations NGO Millennium Forum (2000), and the World Social Forum (2004.) In his foreword to *Burnt Yet Undaunted*, the autobiography of Senji Yamaguchi, founder and still a leader of Nihon Hidankyo, Joseph Gerson urges us to learn all that we can from the Hibakusha, since illness and age are taking their toll.
- Karin Lee, former Quaker East Asian International Affairs Representative who lived for a time at the Tokyo Friends Meeting, reminds us of the Bush Administration's efforts -- currently blocked by Congress -- to fund research for "usable" nuclear weapons such as the "bunker buster" or so-called "mini-nukes." At this time, she says, "it is even more important to recognize the survivors of the last and hopefully only use of nuclear weapons."

**International Peace Bureau and Nihon Hidankyo:** Having nominated Nihon Hidankyo three times for the Nobel Peace Prize, the International Peace Bureau awarded it the Sean MacBride Peace Prize on August 7, 2003. In her statement on this occasion, Kate Dewes, vice-president of the IPB, summarized the contributions of the Hibakusha:

Despite your pain and grief you have taken your stories to the United Nations, to peace conferences, mayors and city councillors, and politicians all over the world. You have spoken

through your own voices, and through photographs, paintings, stories, poetry, music, films, videos, museum displays, and the Internet. Your organization has produced high quality educational material which has gone to libraries, schools, peace groups and decision makers internationally. Your leadership continues to give inspiration to many people everywhere to join you in your struggle to prevent humankind from suffering what you have endured.

We join the International Peace Bureau, itself a Nobel awardee, as was Sean MacBride, in honoring Nihon Hidankyo and the Hibakusha. We bring this nomination forward not just as a remembrance of those who have turned despair to hope in the past, but as a call to continuing witness and action for the future of humanity. In his new book, *The Unconquerable World*, Jonathan Schell defines this historical moment in stark terms: "Fifty-eight years after Hiroshima, the world has to decide whether to continue on the path of cataclysmic violence charted in the twentieth century and now resumed in the twenty-first or whether to embark on a new, cooperative political path."

Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba of Hiroshima identifies three major contributions of the Hibakusha: first, "they were able to transcend the infernal pain and despair that the bombings sowed and to opt for life;" second, by telling their story they have "effectively prevented a third use of nuclear weapons;" and third, "they have rejected the path of revenge and animosity that lead to extinction for all humankind" and have, instead, worked to create a future of hope.

In its Hibakusha Declaration for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Nihon Hidankyo reminds us that we enter this new century with some 30,000 nuclear weapons spread across the world. On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings and in the year of the critical Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference, we must try to look with the eyes of the Hibakusha as we work on the most urgent issue of our day. **Only with that vision might we overcome our denial of the atrocity of nuclear weapons and demand that governments eliminate rather than develop and spread them.**

The American Friends Service Committee believes that awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo would be an important contribution to the struggle for peace and for sanity in the management and perhaps the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ellen McNish  
General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee