**Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki – Fact Sheet**

**THE A-BOMBINGS:** Hiroshima was destroyed by the first A-bomb used against humans on August 6, 1945, with Nagasaki similarly devastated three days later. Tens of thousands of people were immediately killed, with those closest to the epicenter vaporized by the heat and power of the explosions. Others died more slowly. By year’s end more than 210,000 people had died. To this day Hibakusha continue to die from A-bomb related diseases.

The Hiroshima A-bomb detonated above the Shima hospital in a busy commercial district of the city. Due to cloud cover, the Nagasaki A-bomb missed its target and exploded over the Urakami Cathedral, the largest Christian church in Asia. The Hiroshima A-bomb’s fireball, 750 feet across, had the heat of the sun. In the first second, it released a deadly radioactive wave across a two mile radius. This was followed by a powerful blast wave that destroyed nearly every building within the two mile radius, and then a heat wave that ignited fires across the city. Debris that rose with the mushroom cloud returned to earth in the form of radioactive black rain. Much the same happened in Nagasaki three days later. Because that bomb detonated a mile for its target, portions of the city survived as hills limited the bomb’s radiation, blast and heat waves.

**CRITERIA FOR THE A-BOMB TARGETS:** The Interim Committee, headed by Harvard University President James Conant, was charged with establishing the criteria for the A-bomb targets. Midst the U.S. firebombing campaign which eventually burned more than 60 of Japan’s major cities to the ground, the Committee had to decide which cities would not be firebombed in order to fully demonstrate the devastating power of the A-bombs. The Committee decided that the A-bombing should make a “profound psychological impression on as many Japanese as possible” and concluded that the targets should be four cities with “a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers’ homes.” Tens of thousands of innocent civilians, women, children and men, were thus targeted. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had served as ports for sending troops and munitions to the Asian fronts of the war, but by war’s end their roles in Japan’s war effort were marginal

**THE A-BOMBS WERE NOT NECESSARY TO END THE WAR WITH JAPAN:** Beginning in 1944, Japanese diplomats engaged U.S. diplomats and intelligence figures in Europe seeking to arrange Japan’s surrender on the terms that the U.S. accepted after the A-bombings, with Emperor Hirohito remaining on his throne. General Eisenhower opposed the A-bombings saying “The Japanese were ready to surrender. It wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing.” Admiral Leahy, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, saying “The use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance to our war against Japan.” Secretary of War Stimson advised President Truman that even without the A-bombings, Japan’s surrender could be arranged on terms acceptable to the United States, and that he “did not want to have the United States get the reputation of outdoing Hitler in atrocities”.

**WHY HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI Were A-BOMBED:** By 1945 Japan was essentially defeated. General LeMay, who led the firebombing campaign, advised that even without an invasion of Japan, Tokyo would surrender by November 1945. But numerous factors led to the A-bombings, including institutional momentum, Truman’s fear that if U.S. voters learned that two billion dollars had been spent to develop the weapons and were not used, that it could cost him the 1948 presidential election, and racism. The consensus among scholars is that the definitive reason for the A-bombings was to bring the war against Japan to an immediate end so that the U.S. would not have to share influence in northern China, Manchuria and Korea. As then Secretary of State Byrnes put it, “We wanted to get through the Japanese phase of the war before the Russians came in.” The Interim Committee had also advised that the A-bombings would have a “salutary effect on relations with the Soviet Union,” meaning that the massive devastation they would inflict would serve to intimidate Soviet leaders for the post-war period.

**THE WORLD’S NUCLEAR WEAPONS:** According tothe Federation of American Scientists, Russia has 7,500 nuclear weapons. The United States has 7,200, followed by France with 300, China with 260, Britain with 215, Pakistan with 120-130, India with 110-120, Israel with 80 and North Korea with 10.

**THE CONTINUING DANGER:** During wars and international crises each of the nuclear powers has prepared and/or threatened to initiate a nuclear attack. The United States has done so more than 30 times, most recently on the eve of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and with the Bush/Obama “all options on the table” threats against Iran. In the face of NATO’s expansion and vast U.S. conventional and high-tech weapons superiority, Russia increasingly relies on its nuclear arsenal. President Putin said he considered their use to reinforce Russia’s military intervention in Crimea. Nearly 2,000 U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons are on hairpin alert. Former Secretary of Defense William Perry is warning that with the new U.S. weapons being developed in the $35 billion a year nuclear “modernization” program, increased U.S.-Russian tensions, and non-state terrorism, the danger of nuclear weapons being used is now greater than during the Cold War.

Recent research demonstrates that a comparatively small nuclear exchange of 50-100 weapons targeted against Indian and Pakistani cities would result in global cooling and a famine that could claim the lives of two billion people. A larger nuclear exchange risks nuclear winter and the end of all life as we know: it. There is also a long history of accidents, miscalculations and senior military officers disregarding orders that have brought humanity within minutes of nuclear annihilation. In the 1980s, this history played a major role in the Boston City Council refusing to endorse plans to make Boston harbor into a nuclear weapons base.

**CREATING A NUCLEAR-WEAPONS-FREE WORLD**: The first United Nations General Assembly Resolution called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Presidents Kennedy, Reagan and Obama have called for creation of a nuclear weapons-free world and engaged in arms control negotiations. Article VI of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) commits the nuclear powers to negotiate the total elimination of nuclear weapons, an obligation they resist fulfilling. During governmental conferences on The Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, and the U.N. High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and its Open Ended Working Group, the vast majority of the world’s nations have denounced the nuclear powers’ hypocrisy and double standards and demanded meaningful progress toward nuclear weapons abolition. Their demands are reinforced by those of scientists, religious, elected officials and popular movements across the U.S. and around the world, most recently by the Peace & Planet mobilization which brought 10,000 people and 8,000,000 petition signatures to the NPT Review Conference at the U.N.

**THIS EXHIBIT**: This exhibit was created by the Japan Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers Organizations, *Nihon Hidankyo* - the umbrella organization of Japanese *Hibakusha* (witness/survivors of the A-bombs and the 1954 Bikini H-bomb test), *Hibakusha* long complained that no one had adequately described what they had witnessed and suffered. In response, the NHK, Japan’s national broadcasting company, appealed to Hibakusha to send paintings of what they had experienced. These were broadcast nationally in Japan and published in *Unforgettable Fire*.

Due to their suffering from radiation diseases and from discrimination many *Hibakusha* hid themselves from the public. (Under the U.S. military occupation of Japan, scientific and medical research about the impacts of the A-bombings were prohibited, leading many Japanese to believe that these diseases were contagious.) Following the 1954 Bikini Bravo H-bomb shot, 1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima A-bomb, the first World Conference against A- and H-Bombs was held, which gave the *Hibakusha* courage to engage the world and led to the creation of Nihon Hidankyo. **Their warning to the world is that “Human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist.”**

Production and testing of nuclear weapons created *Hibakusha* in other nations, including the U.S., many of whom have died or are dying from cancer. These people include uranium miners and those downwind from the detonations, workers who build and dismantle the nuclear warheads, and soldiers exposed to radiation.

For more information contact: American Friends Service Committee, [www.afsc.org/pes](http://www.afsc.org/pes) and Massachusetts Peace Action, <http://masspeaceaction.org>