

Hiroshima Appeal 2005

War is when people cease being human beings and the unthinkable becomes routine. Hiroshima and Nagasaki represent this reality carried to the extreme.

As the full reality of the Asia-Pacific War came to light, the YWCA of Japan confessed that “in looking back, as Christians we have much to reflect on,” but it took a long time for us to become conscious of ourselves as aggressors in the war.

The YWCA of Japan celebrates its 100th anniversary in November of this year. Over the past few decades we have fervently aspired to peace and striven to protect our country’s peace constitution, with an anti-nuclear stance at the core of our position. Squarely facing our history, as part of the Asian community we have striven to pursue the path of peace and trust, particularly with our neighbors in Northeast Asia. And in keeping with the resolutions of the World YWCA, we have stood in solidarity with the people of the Middle East, particularly with the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom and dignity.

In spite of many people’s calls for peace, the world is still unable to free itself from the various cycles of violence.

We who, sixty years after the end of the war, now stand here in Hiroshima, reflect deeply on the vast number of people who endured indescribable suffering because of the war. We are deeply moved by the atomic bomb survivors who, overcoming their own excruciating pain, hatred and anger, strive to open our eyes to peace through dialogue, not retribution.

We are proud of the Japanese Constitution, a constitution obtained at such a high price. To live out this peace constitution requires many times the amount of effort needed to wage war. But we will never divert our steps from this difficult path. We know all too well the kind of world that awaits us under the logic of power, which sees war as the solution to everything and as something “just”.

We who are gathered here, seeking to uphold a peace posited on belief in the goodness of human beings, resolve the following.

- Now, at a time when the Constitution is in danger of being revised, we who believe in the principle of non-violence that under girds Article 9 pledge ourselves to actively work to stop this revision.
- Article 24 of the Constitution guarantees the equality of the sexes and the dignity of human beings and, along with Article 9, is a precious asset of our country. Article 9 and Article 24 are closely linked in the sense that the former disavows the “public force” (war) carried out by the state, while the latter disavows the “private violence” that takes place in the home. We want to increasingly work to see that Article 24 operates effectively so that each one may live in peace.
- The abolition of nuclear weapons is necessary in order to build peace in Northeast Asia. In cooperation with the YWCAs of other countries, we will endeavor to create opportunities to pass on to the younger generation our respective countries’ memories of, and testimonies about, the War. We will strive to strengthen networks of people at the grass roots level to realize peace.
- To bring about peace in Palestine it is essential that we recognize the violations of human rights taking place under the occupation. We will cooperate with the Olive Tree Campaign and, through exchanges of young people, learn more about the reality there and the suffering that the Palestinians are enduring.

Participants in the Pilgrimage to Hiroshima, An International Peace Program to Commemorate the 100 Anniversary of the Japan YWCA.

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