

THE REASON WHY WE NEED TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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Like many people across the world, I am horrified by the continued modernization and proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as the yawning gap in leadership from nuclear weapon countries to curb this earth destroying technology. In June this year, two erratic leaders of two nuclear-armed states met in Singapore. Little more than vague language about future actions has thus far resulted from the Trump-Kim summit, although the de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the cessation of joint military exercises between the US, South Korea and Japan are important steps to garner peace and stability in the region.

What was not discussed at the Singapore Summit was the denuclearization of other nuclear-armed states, and so the threat of nuclear weapons use by accident or design continues to cast its long shadow over our one shared world.

I know this threat all too well as a survivor of Hiroshima.

I was a 13-year-old schoolgirl, when I witnessed my hometown blinded by the flash, flattened by the super-hurricane like blast, burned in the heat of 4000 degrees Celsius and contaminated by the radiation of one atomic bomb. A bright summer morning turned to dark twilight with smoke and dust rising in the mushroom cloud, dead and injured covering the ground, begging desperately for water and receiving

no medical care at all. A rapidly spreading firestorm and foul stench of burnt flesh filled the air.

Miraculously, I was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building, about 1.8 kilometers from Ground Zero. Most of my classmates in the same room were burned alive. I can still hear their voices calling their mothers and God for help.

Within that single flash of light, my beloved Hiroshima became a place of desolation, with heaps of skeletons and blackened corpses everywhere. Of a population of 360,000 — largely non-combatants, women, children and elderly — most became victims of the indiscriminate massacre of the atomic bombing.

It has been 73 years since the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and yet, people are still dying from the delayed effects of the atomic bombing, considered crude by today's standard for mass destruction.

Because I was given a chance to live, and because I intimately understand the reality of the nuclear threat, I have spent my entire life working for disarmament. Unfortunately, we hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) do not have much time left. But great things are happening if we can seize the moment.

For the first time in more than seven decades after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the majority of the world's nations have voted to adopt a prohibition treaty on nuclear weapons. For the first time in the history of the atomic age, nuclear weapons have been de-

clared illegal. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, TPNW, prohibits the development, production, possession, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. On 7 July 2017 at the United Nations in New York the treaty was adopted by 122 member states that have categorically rejected nuclear weapons. Sweden was one of the majority that voted in favor of this new legally binding instrument.

I have personally met the Prime Minister Mr. Stefan Löfven and Foreign Minister Ms. Margot Wallström, both of whom promised me that they would work hard for disarmament and that Sweden would play an important role. Swedish parliamentarians must also show their support, in representing the people's will to broker peace and sanity in the world. Now is the time to step to that role in the form of signing the TPNW, and beginning a process to make nuclear disarmament a reality.

Most experts agree that nuclear weapons are more dangerous now than at any point in our history due to a wide variety of risks including: geopolitical saber rattling, human error, computer failure, complex systems failure, increasing radioactive contamination in the environment and its toll on public and environmental health, as well as the global famine and climate chaos that would ensue should a limited use of nuclear weapons occur. And given the bravado of certain nuclear-armed states, providing little comfort in intelligence or de-escalation, some experts fear we may stumble into a nuclear war by accident.

Thus, we have a moral imperative to act now without delay, to abolish nuclear arsenals, in order to ensure a safe and just world for future generations. I trust that Sweden will join in this effort by formally signing and ratifying the TPNW. I further trust that Sweden, with her history as a humanitarian nation, will not bow to bullying from the Trump Administration to abandon the treaty, but rather stand by her word and play a pivotal role in declaring nuclear weapons illegal. The majority of the world's nations

have stated their commitment to finally draw a close to the nuclear arms race. Our choice is abolition or annihilation. I am confident that Sweden will choose the right side of history and proudly join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as a matter of principle that the world has come to expect from such a model democracy.