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Commemorating the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings and a call for nuclear disarmament

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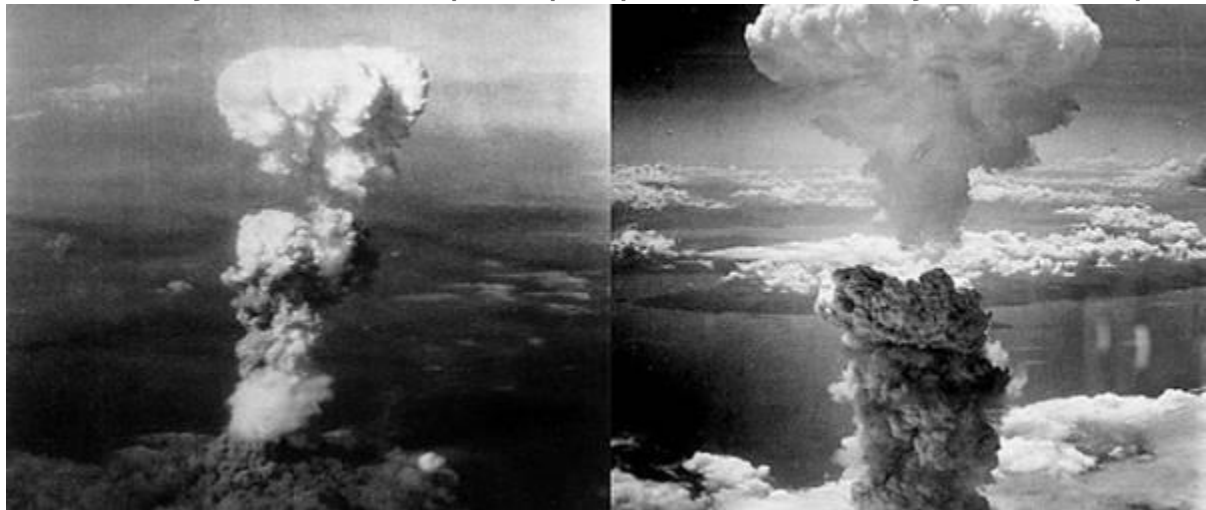
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GLOBAL

Commemorating the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings and a call for nuclear disarmament

By [ROBIN COLLINS, SYLVIE LEMIEUX, AND ERIKA SIMPSON](#) AUGUST 9, 2021

Abolition will never happen in a strategic vacuum. The elimination of nuclear weapons will require a durable security framework based upon the principles of common security and sustainable peace.



The U.S. detonated two nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on Aug. 6 and 9, 1945, respectively, killing between 129,000 and 226,000 people. We must collectively push our governments forward to take action, write Robin Collins, Sylvie Lemieux, and Erika Simpson. *Photographs courtesy of Commons Wikipedia*

This year we commemorate the 76th anniversary of the use of atomic weapons over Japan. In 1945, a 14-kiloton uranium bomb exploded at Hiroshima on Aug. 6, and a 20-kiloton plutonium bomb on Aug. 9 was dropped over Nagasaki. It killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, most of whom were civilians.

Debates continue to this day over the impact of these bombings on the Japanese surrender that ended the Second World War. Not in doubt is that tens of thousands of Japanese civilians were intentionally targeted, and [slaughtered or maimed](#) from the two small nuclear detonations.

In its [1996 opinion, the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) determined: “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

That same year, in 1996, the first meeting of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([CNANW](#)) was held. CNANW’s 17 member organizations include faith communities, professional groups, peace research and women’s organizations—all of which work in various ways toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. The Canadian Peace Research Association ([CPRA](#)) joined the network in 2021 and, as a scholarly research association, contributes research on ways forward to create a world without nuclear weapons.

Today, nearly [13,000 nuclear warheads still remain](#), [more than 90 per cent](#) belong to Russia and the United States. Average explosive yields are many times the destructive capacity of the bombs dropped over Japan in 1945.

Across the world, commemorative events are held to remind us of the terrible cost and ongoing dangers of nuclear arms races and the potential impact of even a limited nuclear missile exchange. Yet, the nine official and unofficial nuclear-armed states are intent on retaining, rebuilding, and modernizing their warheads.

In Canada this week—and in many cities across the world—disarmament organizations and peace activists are [calling for action](#). This includes events in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, and nuclear remembrance days across Europe and Asia.

Now the hands of the [Doomsday Clock point at 100 seconds to midnight](#), a symbolic reminder of how close our global community is to environmental catastrophe and human annihilation. We must collectively push our governments forward to take action—no excuses.

Many types of risk reduction measures – including the adoption of [No First Use](#) of nuclear weapons; [de-alerting nuclear](#) warheads; and the [end of Launch on Warning](#) policies – will be critical to immediately

dial down existing nuclear dangers. These measures are not substitutes, however, for deep cuts in nuclear arsenals and the full elimination of nuclear stockpiles.

The CNANW and the CPRA call on the Canadian government to engage in discussions and participate as full observers to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) and to undertake diplomatic negotiations toward a proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention ([NWC](#)) that achieves the comprehensive elimination of nuclear weapons.

We ask the government to re-establish nuclear disarmament and arms control as a [Canadian foreign policy priority](#). We are seeking more parliamentary debate and the onset of parliamentary committee hearings on Canada's role in advancing disarmament.

Canada must retake a [leadership role within NATO](#) toward creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons and spearhead a comprehensive re-examination of NATO's reliance on nuclear deterrence, a rejection of NATO's outmoded strategic concept, and the rejection of any modernization of nuclear weapons and their carrier systems.

Abolition will never happen in a strategic vacuum; therefore the elimination of nuclear weapons will require a durable security framework based upon the principles of [common security and sustainable peace](#) in order to prevent future nuclear breakouts and arms races, including in space.

The CNANW and the CPRA encourage Canadians and their government to take a lead role as part of the [Stockholm Initiative](#)—a multilateral platform formed in 2019 that is working to more strongly support the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Japanese hibakusha who survived the Aug. 6 and 9 atomic bombings in 1945 remind us—as does Canadian Setsuko Thurlow—that another future is possible. [In the words of Beatrice Fihn](#), executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons: “We represent those who refuse to accept nuclear weapons as a fixture in our world, those who refuse to have their fates bound up in a few lines of launch code. Ours is the only reality that is possible. The alternative is unthinkable.”

The CNANW and the CPRA ask everyone to contribute in all ways they can to speed us toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Robin Collins and Sylvie Lemieux are co-chairs of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([CNANW](#)) and Erika Simpson is the president of the Canadian Peace Research Association ([CPRA](#)). August 9, 2021 Reprinted with permission of The Hill Times. Available <https://www.hilltimes.com/2021/08/09/commemorating-the-hiroshima-nagasaki-bombings-and-a-call-for-nuclear-disarmament/310630>