

Hiroshima's dead remembered amid protest chants from Fukushima — Hiroshima honors A-bomb dead; protesters chant

Tuesday 18 September 2012, by [ITO Masami](#) (Date first published: 7 August 2012).

HIROSHIMA - Inside Hiroshima's Peace Park, tens of thousands of survivors, relatives, government officials and diplomats observed the 67th anniversary Monday of the city's atomic bombing, while just outside others marked the occasion by loudly protesting the decision to reactivate two nuclear reactors.

About 50,000 people, including Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba and the heads of the Lower and Upper houses, Takahiro Yokomichi and Kenji Hirata, took part in the annual Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, organizers said.

Noda told those on hand that the calamity 67 years ago must never be forgotten and vowed Japan would act to ensure a nuclear-free world.

"We must never forget the horrors of nuclear weapons and we must never repeat this tragedy that has been engraved into the history of mankind," Noda told the crowd. "As the only country to be victimized by an atomic bomb and experiencing its ravages, we have the noble responsibility to the human race and the future of the Earth to pass on the memories of this tragedy to the next generation."

Representatives from about 70 foreign nations were also present, including U.S. Ambassador John Roos, British Ambassador David Warren and French Ambassador Christian Masset, whose countries possess nuclear arsenals.

Referring to the March 11 disasters and the meltdown crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, Noda also promised to try to reduce the nation's reliance on atomic energy.

"Based on the fundamental principle of not relying on nuclear power, we will aim in the mid- to long term to establish an energy structure that will assure the safety of the people," Noda said.

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui said the victims of the March 11 disasters reminded him of the hibakusha in Hiroshima 67 years ago. The mayor also urged the government to promote a safe energy policy and to play a leading role in the abolition of nuclear weapons.

"Here in Hiroshima, we are keenly aware that the survivors of that catastrophe still suffer terribly, yet look toward the future with hope. We see their ordeal clearly superimposed on what we endured 67 years ago," Matsui said. "Please hold fast to your hope for tomorrow. Your day will arrive, absolutely."

Among the overseas visitors was Clifton Truman Daniel, the oldest grandson of former U.S. President Harry Truman, who ordered the Aug. 6 bombing, and Ari Beser, the grandson of Jacob Beser, the only military officer to participate in the atomic bombings of both Hiroshima and

Nagasaki.

"I was praying for the souls lost and trying to imagine what must have happened on that beautiful August day 67 years ago" during the silent prayer at 8:15 a.m., the time when the bomb was dropped, Daniel said during a news conference after the ceremony.

Daniel and Beser spent a few days in Hiroshima, meeting with survivors of the atomic bombing and paying respects to the war victims and offering flowers at the memorial cenotaph at Peace Memorial Park.

Daniel acknowledged his presence was not welcomed by all survivors and vowed to do whatever he could to work for peace.

"I think that the hibakusha for whom perhaps this (visit) is an uncomfortable thing, not a good thing, I understand that and I think they have every right to expect that I would go back and continue to work on their behalf. And I will do that," Daniel said.

This year's memorial service also comes at a time when an increasing number of people are joining protests over nuclear energy and as heated discussions on Japan's future energy policy are taking place across the nation in light of the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

Outside the memorial ceremony, protesters at an antinuclear rally could be heard shouting "Go home, Noda" during the prime minister's speech.

One participant, Kyoto resident Koichiro Mori, 21, said he was enraged by the administration's decision to reactivate two reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

"What does someone promoting nuclear energy have to say at a gathering like this?" Mori asked. "I think that Noda visiting Hiroshima is an insult to the hibakusha, and I feel a deep sense of anger."

As of March, the tally of survivors from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki stood at 210,830, 8,580 fewer than last year. The average age of a survivor living in Japan is 78, according to the Hiroshima Municipal Government.

MASAMI ITO, *Japan Times* Staff writer, Aug. 7, 2012

P.S.

* <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120807a1.html>