

Hiroshima marks 75th anniversary of first atomic bombing



Hiroshima, August 6 (RHC)-- Bells have tolled in Japan's Hiroshima for the 75th anniversary of the world's first atomic bombing -- a criminal act committed against a civilian population by the United States. This year, ceremonies were downsized due to the coronavirus pandemic and the city's mayor urged nations to reject self-centred nationalism and commit to nuclear disarmament more seriously.

Though thousands usually pack the Peace Park in central Hiroshima to pray, sing and lay paper cranes as a symbol of peace, entrance to Thursday's memorial ceremony was sharply limited, with only survivors, relatives and a handful of foreign dignitaries allowed to attend.

Participants, many of them dressed in black and wearing face masks, stood for a moment of silence at 8:15 a.m., the exact time that the atomic bomb -- nicknamed "Little Boy" -- exploded on August 6, 1945, obliterating Hiroshima and killing 140,000 of an estimated population of 350,000. Thousands more died later of injuries and radiation-related illnesses.

"On August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb destroyed our city. Rumor at the time had it that 'nothing will grow here for 75 years,'" Mayor Kazumi Matsui said in a speech afterwards. "And yet, Hiroshima

recovered, becoming a symbol of peace."

He called on Japan's government to heed the appeal of survivors and sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and urged the world to come together to face global threats.

"When the 1918 flu pandemic attacked a century ago, it took tens of millions of lives and terrorised the world because nations fighting World War I were unable to meet the threat together," he said.

"A subsequent upsurge in nationalism led to World War II and the atomic bombings. We must never allow this painful past to repeat itself. Civil society must reject self-centred nationalism and unite against all threats."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his speech at the ceremony, said Japan is committed to nuclear weapons ban but said a nuclear-free world could not be achieved overnight and that it has to start from dialogue between opposite sides.

"Japan's position is to serve as a bridge between different sides and patiently promote their dialogue and actions to achieve a world without nuclear weapons," Abe said.

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