

# Protesters denounce military legislation as Japan marks anniversary of nuclear bombings

By Ben McGrath  
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Over the past week, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki held ceremonies to mark their destruction by US nuclear bombs 70 years ago. While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke at both events, falsely claiming to oppose nuclear war, demonstrators used the anniversary to decry the government's military legislation, currently before the parliament's upper house, that would allow Japan to go to war in aid of an ally, namely the US.

The ceremony in Nagasaki was held on Sunday, the anniversary of the bombing, and included speeches from Abe, the city's mayor and a representative of survivor groups. Approximately 74,000 people were killed, directly or from the after-effects, when the US dropped the bomb known as "Fat Man" on the city. This added to the 140,000 people killed at Hiroshima when "Little Boy" detonated on August 6.

Speaking at the Nagasaki ceremony, survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi, 86, recounted the horrors he endured in the blast. Taniguchi is also chairman of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivors Council. He warned of the dangers of war, criticizing the government's "security" legislation and Abe's efforts to amend Japan's post-World War II constitution that renounced resort to war.

Taniguchi stated: "The national security legislation being advanced by the government will lead Japan to war. It will overturn from the foundation the movements and thoughts toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, which have been built up by many people seeking peace, including *hibakusha* [atomic bomb survivors]. We can never tolerate it."

According to media reports, the audience erupted in loud clapping. Abe, sitting nearby, looked straight

ahead, showing no emotion.

Protesters gathered at the ceremony in Nagasaki, as well as at Hiroshima on August 6, to denounce Abe and the military legislation. Anti-war protests, including a large demonstration on Friday, have become a regular occurrence in Japan, attracting a wide range of people, from young students to working class people and retirees.

Former soldiers have also voiced their opposition to war, as well as Abe's attempts to whitewash the Japanese army's war crimes. Kiyosaku Kudo, 90, stated in the *Japan Times*: "As someone who went to war, I don't welcome it. War is no picnic."

In his speech, Abe stated: "As we look around the city of Nagasaki that has achieved its present-day restoration, we appreciate once more how precious peace is. I have also renewed my determination for Japan, as the only country to have ever experienced the horror of nuclear devastation in war, to take the lead in the international community's nuclear disarmament efforts, firmly upholding the 'Three Non-Nuclear Principles' as we work towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons."

These platitudes are a sham. Abe's reference to the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" was added only after his speech at Hiroshima omitted it, drawing criticism from opposition parties. Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) secretary general Yukio Edano stated: "[Abe] couldn't have omitted (the principles) by accident." The principles state Japan will not possess, build, or allow into the country any nuclear weapons.

In reality, Japan has never followed these guidelines, which were first adopted by Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967 and passed merely as a Diet resolution in

1971 and not a law. The DPJ revealed in March 2010 after coming to office, that Japan had a secret agreement with the US dating back to the early 1960s to allow nuclear-armed vessels into Japan's ports. At the same time, however, the DPJ emphasized that the US-Japan alliance would remain the cornerstone of Tokyo's foreign policy.

Abe's omission of the non-nuclear principles was not a simple oversight. Driving home this point, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani stated a day before Abe's Hiroshima speech that the legislation in the Diet could allow Japan to provide or transport nuclear weapons, as well as refuel nuclear-armed planes and naval vessels.

Nakatani attempted to downplay the admission with appeals to the non-nuclear principles. He added: "As our country does not possess nuclear weapons, we cannot provide them. It could never happen." However, that does not exclude the possibility of Japan developing them. Japan can produce enough weapons-grade plutonium through its Rokkasho reprocessing plant for 2,000 bombs annually.

For now, Japan sits under Washington's "nuclear umbrella"—its network of nuclear-armed war planes, naval vessels and military bases across the region—which is currently being strengthened as the US plans for war with China. Abe's military legislation, which would allow Japan to take part in such a war, is bound up with these preparations. Any conflict with China could easily involve nuclear weapons, many times more destructive than those dropped in 1945, with Tokyo playing a role in their use.

Abe's government is also pursuing the military legislation at Washington's behest. The bills correspond to military guidelines agreed with President Barack Obama when Abe visited Washington in April.

The legislation is widely opposed by the Japanese people—60 percent are outright against the bills while upward of 80 percent believe the legislation and its necessity have not been adequately explained. For many, their participation in anti-war demonstrations is their first experience protesting, reflecting the mounting popular concern.

This is particularly true for youth. High school and university students are taking part in the protests and using social media to form new organizations opposed to Abe's military legislation. One such group, called Teens Stand up to Oppose War Law (T-ns Sowl), is

comprised of high school-aged students. It led a protest of 5,000 people on August 2 in Tokyo's Shibuya district. T-ns Sowl was formed after the students were influenced by the university organization SEALDs, or Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy.

A member of T-ns Sowl, Ryuki Fukuda, 17, stated: "I can see politicians believe we are so naive and can easily be led to cast ballots in their favor. I want to demonstrate that we are learning about politics and thinking about it on our own."

However, these groups remain tied to the political establishment. At Friday's protests, demonstrators shouted: "Abe resign!" The war drive taking place in Tokyo is not the result of a single administration or political party. The entire bourgeois establishment has backed, in one way or another, the war drive against China being led by the United States.

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