

Calls for peace ring on 80th anniversary of atomic bombings

by [World Council of Churches](#)

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The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, commonly called the Atomic Bomb Dome or Genbaku Domu, in Hiroshima, Japan (Paul Jeffrey/World Council of Churches)

On the 80th anniversary of the August 1945 atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, churches and communities across the world deepened their calls for peace and for a nuclear weapons-free world.

An estimated 150,000 to 250,000 people died in the bombings of the two Japanese cities. Many of the deaths were instantaneous, while others died years later due to the radiation.

Catholic bishops joined in a pilgrimage of peace to Japan coordinated by the Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons. Throughout a five-day visit, the bishops, along with a delegation of pilgrims, celebrated mass, participated in dialogue on Catholic ethics and nuclear weapons, and visited historical sites and museums. T

The pilgrimage began by bringing together Catholic bishops from Japan, South Korea, and the US alongside “hibakusha,” or atomic bomb survivors, for a panel discussion at the World Peace Memorial Cathedral in Hiroshima on August 5. On August 10, the pilgrimage will conclude with an ecumenical dialogue and academic symposium at Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki.

The pilgrimage—a joint effort between Japanese and US bishops as well as various Catholic universities—centers on the theme of the Catholic Church’s jubilee year: “Pilgrims of Hope.”

“We are pilgrims of peace and hope, crossing continents and histories to remember the past and transform the future,” said Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico. “This journey to Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not only a remembrance but a recommitment to the Gospel call for nonviolence and the abolition of nuclear weapons.”

An ecumenical event, organized by Justice and Peace Scotland, was held outside the south gate of HM Naval Base Clyde, United Kingdom, on August 2 against the continued presence of warheads described as an “affront to humanity.”

Known as Faslane and located on the Gare Loch near Helensburgh, the facility is home to the Royal Navy's four Vanguard-class submarines, which each carry Trident 2 D5 nuclear missiles. Described as Britain’s nuclear deterrent and ultimate defence, they can be fired at targets up to 4,000 miles away.

Rosie Frew, moderator of the Church of Scotland general assembly, attended the vigil and said the Church of Scotland stands in solidarity with all those who work at Faslane in the service of the UK, while praying for peace in a world where there is no threat of nuclear weapons ever being used.

The Church of Scotland general assembly in May reaffirmed the consistent position of the Church of Scotland in condemning the existence and threat of nuclear weapons.

“Our world is a very broken place at the moment, so much needless death and destruction,” said Frew. “My hope and prayer is to live in a world without war or the threat of war, a world without the threat of the deployment of nuclear weapons.”

The Church of the Brethren is encouraging congregations and individuals to take action to remember the devastation of the nuclear bombings and advocate for eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons and the reallocation of resources.

Church of the Brethren members also support the continuing work of Brethren Volunteer Service volunteers at the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima.

From August 6-9, a 75-hour vigil for peace will unite people around the world in prayer and remembrance of all victims of current conflicts. Two symbolic locations—the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in New York and the Chapel of Our Lady of Nagasaki (Hibaku no Maria) in the Urakami Basilica will be open to all for prayer and hospitality.

In both chapels, the vigil will take place continuously from 8 a.m. on August 6 until 8 a.m. on 9 August, local time, creating a spiritual bridge of communion and solidarity. Friends, families, groups, and communities are invited to join this global moment of intercession for peace. The vigil will also be available via livestream.

The vigil is organized by the Community of Sant’Egidio and the Archdiocese of Nagasaki, in collaboration with the Focolare, parishioners, volunteers, and other organizations.

To mark 80 years since the US nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons has launched an online memorial honoring the estimated 38,000 children killed. It features more than 400 profiles with details of the children’s lives, their agonizing deaths, and the grief of surviving family members. The children range in age from infants to teenagers.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is also encouraging people to mark this occasion by folding a paper crane and personalizing it with the name of a survivor whose story moved you then let that memory guide your next step.

A Joint Interfaith Statement Marking 80 Years Since the First Use of Nuclear Weapons has been released, calling for peace, nuclear abolition, and justice in all their forms.

“While the challenges are immense, this is a time to affirm that another way is possible: one rooted in solidarity, human dignity, and hope,” the statement reads. “The 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings offers a critical moment to reimagine our priorities.” —World Council of Churches