

Global Article 9 Conference to Abolish War, - Tokyo, Japan
'Abolish War – Building a Culture of Nonkilling and Nonviolence'
4/5th May, 2008 – Mairead Maguire – www.peacepeople.com

Dear Mina Sama,

I am very happy to be with you in Japan. I would like to thank Peace Boat for their invitation to attend this Global Article 9 Conference. This is a good time to be in Japan and to celebrate with you, on May 3rd, the 60th anniversary of the implementation of the Japanese Constitution. The core of the Japanese Peace Constitution articulated in the Preamble and Article 9, which renounces war, bans the maintenance of military forces, and denies the right of belligerency of the state, continues to inspire many people. For 60 years it has set the spirit of disarmament, helped keep peace in South/East Asia, and given hope to the World. The Japanese people have every right to celebrate their great social and technological achievements. They have shown the world what can be accomplished when resources are not squandered on militarism, and war, but used to improve the lives of their people.

However, many of us are concerned to know that there are those, both in the Government, and wider Japanese society, who wish to endanger such peaceful policies, and abandon article 9 and Japan's Peace Constitution. All peace loving people must unite to oppose such a backward step and support all efforts to build a peaceful Japan and a world based on co-operation and understanding.

I am glad therefore to be in Japan to join in solidarity with the Japanese people of Peace, to support them in their campaign to save Article 9. The proposed rearmament and militarization of Japan threatens the safety of the Asian people, would increase fear, and could be the 'trigger' to set off an arms race in East Asia. The setting aside of Article 9 would strengthen militarism, and nationalism, could make Japan a target, and would make the world an even more dangerous place.

The world was made dangerous when in May, 2003, President Bush, after claiming 'victory' over Iraq, redefined war. He said 'By a combination of creative strategies and advanced technologies we are redefining war on our own terms'. This declaration means The American Government redefines not only war Strategies but also aims and doctrines of war. War aim has been redefined to mean occupation of the adversary state and/or regime change. Pre-emption is redefined as 'preventive war' with the American Government claiming an exclusive right to it, even in defiance of international law and multilateral consensus. We all, to our horror, watched the 'creative strategies and advanced technologies' of shock and awe cruelly unleashed upon the Iraqi civilians in March 2003, by the American empire, and their allies. (I believe this immoral and illegal occupation should be ended immediately, an apology by USA issued to the Iraqi people and a Marshall plan set up by them to rebuild Iraq). Japan, and all other world governments and citizens must be concerned in that America's redefinition of war is 'on our own terms' i.e. the terms of the American Global Empire and its Imperial wars.

People, and especially women and youth, who now pay the highest price in wars, must unite to reject these doctrines of ongoing war by the American empire, and the proposed rearmament of Japan. We must not only work to abolish Nuclear Weapons and war but all forms of violence, starting with the disarmament of our own minds. We can do this when we

empty our minds of prejudice and hatred, fill them with love and compassion, and work to build a culture of nonviolence.

The world is indebted to the Japanese people for their faithful commitment to world nuclear disarmament, and their suffering, with the nuclear holocausts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, must never be forgotten. The loving forgiveness of the Hibakushas (survivors) is an example of true forgiveness, and it is to be hoped that someday the American Government will say sorry to the people of Japan, for dropping the nuclear bombs. I also believe it would be a great insult to the Hibakushas if Japan abandoned its Peace Constitution.

Today the threat of Nuclear weapons is even higher, with increased proliferation in the past 60 years. The cost of nuclear weapons, human, financial, or the environmental consequences of even a small scale use of nuclear weapons, is so enormous, that we must continue to make nuclear disarmament a major part of our peace activity. The new nuclear doctrine of the USA places emphasis on the utility of nuclear weapons in US military strategy. The USA claims that nuclear weapons may be used in any war including preventative wars, and when it claims that nuclear weapons are indispensable, and continues increasing and upgrading them, it is ignoring, as is the UK, its obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. We must all oppose such policies and encourage the American administration, to lead the way in nuclear disarmament. We need also to challenge Israel to lead the way establishing a nuclear free middle east. So too the stockpiling of nuclear arms and their spread in the Asian region has to be strongly opposed. Of growing concern to us all is the threat from new weapons systems and the extension of the arms race to space.

Some western governments led by America, have defined (wrongly I believe) Terrorism, as the greatest threat to world security. In their misguided attempts to deal with this they are carrying out a 'war on terrorism' taking the form of war, invasions, occupations and abuse of civil liberties. The resulting human rights violations being committed by Governments under the guise of security issues have increased terrorism, set back the course of International Laws and human rights and created not a safer but a more dangerous world. These policies must be abolished if we are to secure real peace. We must challenge our governments to deal with the real threats to Human security, i.e Poverty, Climate change; Competition over resources; Marginalization of the majority of the world; Global militarization; increasing violence and ethnic/political conflicts; Abuse of human rights & international laws by state and non-state players.

Terrorism: I believe all-inclusive dialogue with all parties to the conflict, including insurgency leaders, is the only way in which to genuinely address many of the world's ongoing conflicts. Governments need to address grievances of groups and work for a win/win solution to the problems. (The British Government spoke to the Irish republican Army and Loyalist armed groups which helped bring about a ceasefire and peace agreement in Northern Ireland). Insurgency groups must be challenged to use only non-violent methods, and civil society plays an important role in dialoguing with armed groups, and bringing them into ceasefires and peace processes.

Killings by Governments, and nongovernmental armed groups, and threats to kill damage peoples' entire wellbeing, leading to traumatization and despair. To reverse this, Governments need to uphold international law and human rights of their citizens, as injustice breeds violence and hatred.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are important components of peace. Taking personal responsibility for the state of chaos that the world is now experiencing will help us reach the decision to be peace makers. We have all hurt each other and we need to say sorry for our part in past and present conflicts. Japan too must say it is sorry for its actions against others and move towards reconciliation with its neighbours, Korea, China, Russia. In my last two visits to DMZ in South Korea I was impressed to hear of progress made through dialogue between the six nations, Japan, China, Russia, North/South Korea, and America, on economic and other issues. I was very inspired to hear of the people-to-people movements between South/North Korea, and other neighbouring countries. Through respectful listening and dialogue it is possible to reach solutions amongst Asian neighbour, on the many issues facing them. It is people who will make peace, breaking down old enmities and barriers and choosing to ask forgiveness from those they have hurt, and give forgiveness to those who have hurt them, as forgiveness is the key to peace. I would like to make a special appeal to Women and Youth to take up the work of building friendships and reconciliation as already being done by Peaceboat, who truly are a model in peacemaking both locally and internationally.

In Northern Ireland after 30 years of violence, we now have peace. The roots of the long conflict was inequality, injustice, fear and separation of people. When the Peace People started in 1976 we realized that militarism and paramilitarism would not solve our ethnic/political problems. We knew from experience that the way of violence never works but the way of dialogue does. We encouraged dialogue between the separated communities in Northern Ireland, between North/South Ireland, between Ireland/England. We put aside our old rivalries and hatreds and began to make friends. We organized dialogue, paramilitaries to politicians, people to people, town to town, country to country. We agreed a political agenda based on equality, justice, power sharing and human rights. We learned there are no quick fixes to peace, it demands peoples' commitment and it takes a long time. Choosing not to kill each other, choosing to uphold human rights and dignity, choosing to build friendship, co-operation and trust amongst old enemies, is not easy, but it must be done. To embrace diversity, to go beyond nationalism and militarism and commit to solving our problems without threats of violence and war. We have proved in Northern Ireland peace is possible, it is our human right, and we hope this will be an example to others. In 2007 the Nobel Peace Laureates launched a Charter for a world without violence. It is hoped this charter will be adopted by Governments, Civil Society, and individuals. This Charter, whose spirit is summed up in Principle 13 invites us all 'to work together towards a just, killing free world in which everyone has the right not to be killed and responsibility not to kill others'. I would like to propose that the Japanese Government adopt the Charter, and consider strengthening your own Peace Constitution, by including Principle 13. Also consider setting up a Ministry of Peace in your Government. This would be a fitting tribute to all those in Japan and neighbouring countries, who have died during war and violence, and give hope to others as they too build a Culture of Nonviolence and Peace.

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