

## The Struggle to Abolish Nukes

by Jay Kvale

Minneapolis can draw 40,000 to a baseball game, but only 60 people showed up at the Lyndale Park Peace Garden in Minneapolis for the annual Hiroshima remembrance event on August 6. There was music, some speeches, and statements from mayors of both Hiroshima and Minneapolis that are Sister Cities. Origami cranes were hung from trees representing the story of the little girl Sadako, a radiation victim. A minute of silence was observed at the time when the United States dropped the first atomic bomb, “Little Boy,” in 1945, killing approximately 150,000 people—tens of thousands instantly, others after agonizing suffering. Across the river, on August 9, St. Paul held its annual event commemorating the 75,000 victims who were killed when the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb—this time on Nagasaki. Today Nagasaki is St. Paul’s Japanese Sister City.

Though attendance was sparse in the Twin Cities, about 55,000 people from 74 countries came to Hiroshima this year. President Obama was not among them, but he sent Ambassador Joseph Roos, a sign to many of a belated apology for what the United States did to that Japanese city in World War II. UN chief Ban Ki-Moon promoted the idea of abolition of nuclear weapons in a speech he delivered. The mayor of Hiroshima said that he wants to invite the world to his city in 10 years to host an Olympics that would celebrate the complete abolition of nukes.



The skeletal structure of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall near Ground Zero was left intact as a memorial commemorating the 150,000 who died as a result of the atomic bomb August 6, 1945. The Peace Memorial Park was established nearby to educate about peace and advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

However, there are powerful forces in the United States opposed to abolition. This year there will be a 14 percent increase for upgrading and modernizing warheads, even as some older ones are being dismantled.

But resistance within the United States continues as well.

About 220 peace activists from around the country gathered at Maryville College in eastern Tennessee over this past July 4th weekend to participate in the Resistance for a Nuclear-Free Future Conference.

Good news about nuclear power plants was delivered by Mary Olson of Nuclear Watch South: ninety-eight nuclear power plants have been cancelled in recent years as the public has become aware of the huge toxic radioactive waste problem. A couple of new federally-subsidized plants for Georgia may be halted also. The nation's 103 aging nuclear plants will continue to emit carcinogens such as tritium, strontium, and plutonium for years to come, but it looks as though nuclear power may finally be on the way out, in spite of recent hype about it being a "good" environmental choice.

Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico delivered bad news about nuclear weapons. Despite President Obama's pledge to work for a nuclear weapons-free world, the government is allocating about \$7 billion dollars for refurbishing, reuse, and replacement of nuclear warheads as part of the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, with most of the money going to Tennessee's Oak Ridge Y-12 complex and Los Alamos in New Mexico. It was announced that a new factory in Kansas City for making nonnuclear components broke ground in August.\*

But there was something to celebrate: the anniversary of antiwar activism, 30 years of Nuclear Resister and Nukewatch and Plowshares. The original Plowshares Eight, four of whose members were in attendance received a standing ovation.

On Sunday evening, July 4th, participants traveled to Oak Ridge to support the weekly protest vigil conducted by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance.

The protest for Independence from Nuclear Weapons took place on a warm Monday morning, July 5th. Twenty-three demonstrators were arrested on state charges for obstructing the roadway, and 13 were arrested for the more serious federal charges of trespassing on the property and brought into a federal courtroom in Knoxville the next day in handcuffs and chains, even though some were in their 70s and 80s, including several nuns known for lives of peaceful service. Supporters of the defendants were shocked when the prosecutor requested a jail term of up to one year and a fine of up to \$100,000—an outrageous figure for a misdemeanor.

The defendants were allowed to return home, but have to return to Tennessee for further hearings and a trial. At stake is an important issue – can the government successfully punish citizens who are peacefully exercising their constitutional rights

in a nonviolent manner to protest the government's policy of spending billions of dollars to make thousands of weapons that can kill hundreds of millions of people?

Ralph Hutchison said it best: "Y-12 represents death and the fears of the past. We represent life and hope for the children."

Images from the action - [click here](#)

\* Report by Steve Clemens about the Kansas City resistance that followed: "It Doesn't Matter if You Should Jail Us," at [mennonistablogspot.com](http://mennonistablogspot.com).

Jay Kvale was a participant in the Resistance for a Nuclear-Free Future Conference in Tennessee. He is a member of Twin Cities Peace Campaign, one of the dedicated men in Women Against Military Madness and has participated in the AlliantAction vigils opposing weapons manufacture. Jay is a frequent contributor to Worldwide WAMM.