



## **Mayors for Peace**

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Secretariat

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### **In Memory of the Chemical Weapon Victims of Halabija A Message from the Mayor of Hiroshima**

Today, as the city of Halabija holds its solemn ceremony to mourn the victims of the chemical gas attack of 1988, I offer my heartfelt condolences and pray sincerely for the peaceful repose of the more than 5000 souls who fell victim to that attack. I also express my sorrow and sympathy for the many who continue to suffer from the aftereffects.

In August 1945, a single atomic bomb reduced the entire city of Hiroshima to a burned plain. By the end of the year, that bomb had taken 140 thousand lives. Unfortunately, the memory of our great tragedy is fading worldwide. Something of enormous power is using violence to achieve its selfish desires, and millions of people around the world are being sacrificed.

Saddam Hussein became president in 1979. He built an authoritarian system of government, suppressing all opposition through violence and oppression. In the process, he inflicted terrible suffering. Subsequently, he went so far as to attack the Kurdish people with chemical weapons that, like nuclear weapons, are weapons of mass destruction. Thousands of innocent noncombatants were killed or injured.

In March 2003, the United States and United Kingdom, ostensibly because they suspected that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, launched a military attack on Iraq. They did this over the objections of millions of people worldwide calling for continued or strengthened UN inspections and a peaceful resolution. As a result of this attack, thousands of completely innocent Iraqis have been killed, and Iraq's roads, water system, and other essential infrastructure elements have been badly damaged.

Prior to that attack, I visited the US Department of State and personally delivered a letter to President Bush demanding that he listen to Hiroshima and other peace-loving people around the world. I begged him to halt all plans for attack and work to resolve the problem through dialogue not military force. If we are to create a peaceful future for the human family, we must maintain a spirit of tolerance and seek reconciliation. We

must reject violence and act in accordance with reason and conscience. These are the demands we must all make of all our leaders.

More than sixty years since the atomic bombing, Hiroshima has recovered. Through generous assistance from people around the world and the ceaseless effort of our citizens, we now live in a beautiful, green city of parks and rivers. I fervently hope that the day will soon come when the city of Halabija returns to peace and tranquility, and its people can live their lives in freedom and security.

I close with my prayer for peaceful repose for the victims and true happiness for all the people of Halabija.

March 17, 2006

Tadatoshi Akiba

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tadatoshi Akiba". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Mayor of Hiroshima

President, Mayors for Peace