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# The abolitionist city of Saintes will be fasting from August6

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### **In August, in Paris and elsewhere, there will be fasts for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Saintes is one of the places...**

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For some fifteen years the city of Saintes has been very involved in actions for disarmament and the abolition of nuclear arms.

In June 2000, the city joined "Abolition 2000", the international network of NGOs and municipalities aiming to rid the planet of the nuclear danger in all its forms, and particularly of atomic weapons.

In May 2001, the Mayor, Madame Bernadette Schmitt, inaugurated the first « Nuclear Disarmament Days » by lighting the Nuclear Disarmament Flame, the first flame of its kind in France, and the first in the world apart from the Peace Flame which burns permanently in Hiroshima.

In 2004, 2006 and 2008, Saintes hosted the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Rallies for Disarmament - nuclear, biological and chemical (RID-NBC in French).

In 2008, the city joined « Mayors for Peace » a network chaired by the Mayor of Hiroshima and now linking over 6000 cities and towns in more than 150 countries.

In November 2009, Saintes and Saint Pierre d'Oléron (another town in the Charente maritime, likewise a member of Abolition 2000 and Mayors for Peace) welcomed the World March for Peace & Nonviolence and the Hiroshima Flame, which was travelling the world from Wellington (New Zealand) to New York (UN headquarters, May 2010). The Saintes-based NGO « Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire » (ACDN) organized their travel through France and accompanied the Hiroshima Flame as far as Barcelona.

For all these reasons, Saintes is known abroad, notably in Japan and the US, as one of the French cities most involved in the struggle for nuclear disarmament. ACDN's bilingual website (French-English) contributes to this reputation.

In July 2004, a Japanese delegation from the Hiroshima World Peace Mission came to Saintes. After a reception at the Mayor's office, the delegation visited the city, from the Roman arenas to the Gallia theatre.

Two hibakusha (atom-bomb survivors), a man and a woman, relit the Nuclear Disarmament Flame at the Monument to the Fallen, and carried it to the Salle Saintonge, where the delegation held a conference about the bombing of Hiroshima. One of the hibakusha, who had been 17 when the bomb was dropped, declared : *"From now on two cities are in my heart: Hiroshima and Saintes"*.

The hibakusha know perfectly well how much Japanese militarism is to blame for the 2nd World War, and they condemn it unreservedly. Like tens of millions of Japanese citizens who sign petitions for nuclear disarmament, they have one desire: that their tragic experiences should be of service to humankind, and should help present and future generations to avoid a nuclear catastrophe. Their slogan is « Never again ! ». The last survivors would like to be able to die convinced that humankind is totally committed to the path of peace. That is the meaning which they and we give to every annual commemoration: to be concerned about the past is to be concerned about the future. Our future

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and our children's.

Regularly, on August 6 and on other occasions, the Nuclear Disarmament Flame in Saintes is relit in Place Foch alongside the Monument to the Fallen of past wars, or at other locations in the city. It has been lit for example by City Council representatives, by war veterans, by a child, by young people, by a Russian and an American, by UK citizens.

This year the event will take place on the edge of the Prairie de la Palu (near the Avenue de Saintonge), close to the trees of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were planted in 2006 and 2008 during the International Rallies. There will be two ceremonies and a collective fast of three days:

**On Wednesday 6 August, 8am, Prairie de la Palu: Opening Ceremony, in memory of the victims of Hiroshima.**

On August 6, 1945, the uranium bomb that exploded over Hiroshima at 8.15 am (local time) destroyed the city and caused at least 150 000 deaths immediately or later on.

**From August 6 to 9, Prairie de la Palu: Fast for Citizens Action.**

**Saturday 9 August, 10am, Prairie de la Palu: Closing Ceremony, in memory of the victims of Nagasaki.**

The plutonium bomb that exploded on 9 August 1945 at 11.01 am over Nagasaki caused about 80 000 deaths.

Since 13 July 1945, [the US government had known that Japan wanted to surrender](#). The objective of the bombs was not so much to end the war as to perform a live experiment using unprecedented weapons of destruction and annihilation. It was a way of affirming supreme power, power that could if necessary be diabolical.

Those two tragic events plunged humankind into the atomic era. We live still today under the permanent threat of self-destruction. There are 20 000 bombs, exorbitantly expensive, hanging over our heads right now, and each one carries on average the power of ten Hiroshima bombs. Several thousand can be launched in a matter of minutes and can explode at any time.

**Let's not wait till too late, let's cry STOP !** The French people need to be consulted by referendum on this vital question. And France must commit to participating in abolition.

**From 6 to 9 August 2014, in Saintes, come to the Priarie de la Palu to fast or to support those fasting in order to tell all the world's leaders : « Get Rid of Nuclear Weapons ! Abolition Now ! »**

***For information, support or registrations to fast (until August 1): + 33 6 73 50 76 61***