

By Toru Shikoda, The Hokkaido Shimbun Press

2025.5.10

The city of Hiroshima was burned to the ground by the intense blast and heat rays of the atomic bomb. "No grass or trees will grow there for 75 years." These words of an American scientist involved in the development of the atomic bomb devastated people.

Nature is strong and there are many trees that miraculously survived. Chinese parasol trees, Chinese hackberry trees, Japanese hackberry trees... Hiroshima City designated trees that survived within two kilometers of the hypocenter as "atomic bomb-stricken trees" (*hibakujumoku*). There are currently 30 species and 159 trees.

The citizens were encouraged by their strong vitality. We want these tree seeds to spread around the world and inherit Hiroshima's wish for peace. With this in mind, Green Legacy Hiroshima was established 14 years ago. It was initiated by Nassrine Azimi, who was then the director of the Hiroshima office of a UN agency. So far, they have donated seeds not only to Japan but also to about 40 countries and regions, including conflict zones, and continue to exchange with them.

This week, a persimmon sapling from an atomic bomb-stricken tree was planted at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It is a "second generation" tree that grew from a seed. With the cooperation of a UN (New York) staff who learned about the group's activities, it was planted to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing and the founding of the United Nations.

Persimmon trees take a long time to grow, but their glossy fruit is eye-catching. "It is precisely because we are living in a time when war is still raging that this tree is needed at the United Nations, which is a base for working towards world peace. This tree conveys the preciousness of life," Azimi emphasized. As a silent living witness to the tragedy, and as a symbol of peace and hope, she hopes for the day when Hiroshima's trees will bear fruit all over the world.