

OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Oregon Senate Joint Memorial 5

Urging Congress to lead global effort to reduce threat of nuclear war

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Testimony of

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I was 11 years old, when, in 1947, Pakistan was carved out of my birth country, India. At that time, I personally witnessed thousands of Muslims having to leave their homes, many in the middle of their morning meal. And a few days later, I also witnessed hundreds of them being surrounded in a muddy field, and put to death, one by one. I still have nightmares about those events.

Then, 1972, like many others, I was horrified to see the video of a girl running down a road, with her clothes on fire, after a napalm bomb attack on her village, in South Vietnam.

But neither of these experiences was as heart-rending as the effects of the 1945 atomic attacks, which destroyed most structures and killed 129,000 to 226,000 innocent civilians in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Equally noteworthy are the psychological effects on the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic attacks. Studies have documented acute reactions in the survivors such as apathetic withdrawal, psychic numbing, helplessness,

disorganized behavior, and severe fear and anxiety. Long-term psychological effects included survivor guilt, psychosomatic reactions and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Adverse psychological reactions have been documented also other nuclear events. For example, after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986, even in areas where actual radiation exposure was just a little over the normal background radiation levels, some people refused to go outdoors unless it was absolutely necessary. They ate only canned food. Some were so terrified of contracting a horrible and painful radiation-caused disease that they committed suicide rather than face that prospect.

And in the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident in Pennsylvania, when there was only a minor release of radioactive gas, many people had fled the region in the mistaken belief that a major nuclear detonation might occur at any moment.

Also, in the 1987 radiation accident at Goiania, in Brazil, in which only 249 individuals were actually contaminated and only 20 required hospitalization, 125,800 people came up to be screened, 5,000 displayed psychosomatic reactions, which mimicked symptoms of radiation exposure.

We can only imagine the physical destruction and psychological devastation that would likely be caused by today's nuclear bombs, which are more than 3,000 times as powerful as the ones used against Japan in 1945.

Finally, even if a nuclear weapon was never again used in a war, there are lasting negative consequences just from the production, testing and deployment of nuclear arsenals.

Therefore, I implore this legislative body to urge our Congress to take appropriate steps to prevent a nuclear war and not allow any one individual, regardless of that person's position, to authorize nuclear attack anywhere.

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