

Nuclear Weapons Free Future

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This topic resonated deeply in my heart. I was born and raised in the Semey city (previously named Semipalatinsk) of East Kazakhstan, where nuclear tests were conducted for more than 40 years. It is difficult to believe now, but in the period from 1947 to 1991, there were approximately 500 tests within 130 kilometers from my hometown. The consequences were severe. The significant health and environmental effects of nuclear testing on the region's population had been known to the Soviet authorities from the beginning, but despite this, the test site remained open until 1991. Residents of the areas surrounding the test site suffered from irreparable health damage in the form of radiation sickness, cancer, diseases of the nervous system, as well as serious exacerbations of chronic diseases. A huge number of children in eastern and north-eastern Kazakhstan were born with congenital anomalies, genetic mutations due to radiation exposure.

At Semey Medical University, where I studied, there is still a "Peace Museum", where you can familiarize yourself with the history of the test site, as well as see with your own eyes the severe consequences of radiation exposure. From my childhood, I was surrounded by this history, which made me realize even then that I am for a world without nuclear weapons.

As mentioned before, the tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site had an extremely damaging impact on the health of local residents. During that time, several small villages were very close to the test site. I remember that when I was a child I heard so many stories, since a large number of my relatives lived there. They told me that at that time people did not know anything about radiation and that these tests were dangerous. So, people went to see these explosions as "mushrooms" like we now look at fireworks. But no one could have suspected that they would pay for "the spectacle" with their health and lives.

Besides, the vast area is now no longer usable. Because the decay period of radioactive particles can take hundreds of years.

Unfortunately, the situation in the world today is difficult, every day there are terrible news about wars and the risk of nuclear weapons that cause fear in everyone. When I heard for the first time about Russia attacking Ukraine I was shocked. As these countries are quite close to Kazakhstan and have always had a lot of cooperation, I found it hard to believe. It has been over a year now and still every day there is discussion in the media about the possible use of this type of weapon. In the

comments and discussions on such news, I have seen many questions from people along the lines of "What will happen if such a weapon is used as an attack?" or "Should this kind of weapon be used for protective purposes?".

Thus, some politicians openly state that the existence of nuclear weapons is necessary for national security and protection. I have thought a lot about this, and if you go back to the history of my region, is it the price of peace? Is it the protection of its own citizens? Are the thousands and thousands of people and children who suffered after the tests worth this "peace"?

And should civilians who oppose war, but who could potentially suffer from the direct use of nuclear weapons, pay with their lives? I strongly believe that no.

It is still difficult to imagine what Japan had to face after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima during the end of World War II. Just how in the blink of an eye the cities could have been erased. Residents who were not responsible for anything. I do not understand much about politics, but I do not think it was done to create peace. Rather, it was done to show the power.

I have read and watched a lot of movies about that time, it was always scary to me to realize that for example someone was just going to work, someone was going to school or home, someone wanted to go buy groceries and, just in a moment, everything disappeared. Vanished from the face of the earth. I think humanity should NOT have that kind of power.

Moreover, from my point of view, any conflicts should be resolved through negotiations. This may be utopian, but I believe in world peace.

Also, we have to keep in mind that the use of nuclear weapons would cause an environmental disaster not only for the affected countries, but also for the rest of the world. Humanity is already facing global problems such as climate change, namely warming, and also ocean pollution, and so on. There are not enough resources to solve these problems. So why should we create more harm to our planet? After all, as history shows, even during the creation and testing of these types of weapons, irreparable damage is done to the environment and to the population of the country.

I believe that since we cannot change the events that have already happened, we should make every effort to learn from past mistakes and thus create a better future for ourselves and for the next generations. A future without nuclear weapons.