

Nuclear Testing in The Marshall Islands

Introduction to

“Nuclear Savage”

A Documentary by Adam Jonas Horowitz

DOXA Documentary Film Festival

Vancouver, B.C.

May 6th, 2012

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Good Evening,

I am pleased that The Simons Foundation is the sponsor of this important documentary – *Nuclear Savage*. It is a story that should have been told a long time ago. The information has been available to the general public for many years but no-one seems to have paid attention.

I first became aware of this tragic story of the people of the Marshall Islands in the mid-1990s. In 1995, the International Court of Justice was weighing the question of the illegality of nuclear weapons. A Council Member of the Rongelap Atoll Local Government – representing the people of the Marshall Islands – presented her devastating testimony to the Court “on the effect the explosions of nuclear weapons have had on her life and the lives of ... family, friends and fellow citizens of the Marshall Islands.”¹

The Marshall Islanders participated as witnesses in the Court hearings because they were concerned that the “unnecessary injuries, indiscriminate impacts, and adverse collateral environment effects of the radioactive fall-out resulting from atmospheric tests, which have so gravely affected the Marshall Islands, would be repeated for other people and their lands, in event of any military use of nuclear weapons.”²

Their experience provides an understanding of what life would be like for any survivors of a nuclear catastrophe – nuclear war – though this seems unlikely at the moment - a nuclear accident, an accidental or malicious launch of nuclear weapons, or acquisition by terrorists – these are the very real current dangers.

Since 1954, the people of the Marshall Islands have engaged in “a lifelong battle for their health and a safe environment.” The radioactive fallout destroyed the lives of many – with deaths from leukaemia, brain tumours, thyroid and other forms of fatal cancers. Their food sources were destroyed – staple crops, like arrowroot, disappeared completely; the fish were radio-active and instantly caused blisters, terrible stomach problems and nausea.

The radioactive fallout from the nuclear testing has affected the health of three generations so far – and has definitely jeopardized the lives of future generations. The consequences have been the inability to reproduce and the birth of severely deformed babies – entities - because in many cases they do not resemble human forms. There were no words in the Islanders language to describe these “monster” babies – some with two heads – so they described them as “octopuses,” “apples,” “turtles” and “jellyfish babies” who lived for a day or two - with no bones and transparent – their brains and beating hearts visible.

I commend Adam Jonas Horowitz for presenting in documentary form this painful and cruel story coupled with the evidence that the Marshall Islanders were deliberate guinea

¹ *International Court of Justice, Doc CR 95/32*

² *International Court of Justice doc. CR 95/32*

pigs for the study of the effects of radiation on human beings – a *crime against humanity*.

This is not the first incidence of United States nuclear bomb testing on human beings. Despite evidence to the contrary, some hold the position that the bombing of Hiroshima was necessary to end the war. However, there was absolutely no justification for the bombing of Nagasaki six days later. The Nagasaki bomb was a plutonium bomb and there is documentary evidence that the United States wanted to see the effects on humans of a bomb, different from the uranium one used on Hiroshima.

Though there can never be a happy ending to the tragedy of the people of the Marshall Islands, I imagine – but cannot be sure – that Adam Jonas Horowitz’s Documentary, *Nuclear Savage* has finally brought the fate of the Marshall Islanders to the attention of the world.

In March of this year, the United Nations Human Rights Council sent a Special Rapporteur to the Marshall Islands on a fact-finding mission on *human rights issues*, associated with the 67 nuclear tests, between 1946 and 1958, conducted there by the United States. He found the people living like nomads and suffering long-term health effects. And urged “the country’s government, the United States and the international community to find effective redress to the affected population.”³

I am sorry that Mr. Horowitz is not here tonight because I would like to shake his hand for bringing this issue to the world’s attention – perhaps now it will resonate in the public realm.

Thank you Adam Jonas Horowitz!

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³ www.2.ohchr.org/english/issues/environment/waste/index.htm