

Hiroshima, Iraq Victims Have Much in Common, Activist Says

By [Global Research](#)

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Hiroshima, Japan – Haruko Moritaki stood by an Iraqi hospital bed, hesitating to take a photo of a child dying of cancer.

The child's mother urged her to take the picture and tell the world their story.

"Because I was a visitor from Hiroshima, many locals told me 'You can understand our struggles'," Moritaki recalled.

The US bomber Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb code-named Little Boy on Hiroshima at 8:15 am on August 6, 1945, wreaking unprecedented havoc, killing tens of thousands in seconds. By the end of the year, some 140,000 people had died because of the bomb.

Some victims worry that the memories of the horrors of Hiroshima are fading, but 65 years after the world's first atomic bomb fell, the city is becoming a base of a growing international movement to ban uranium weapons.

In Japan, the campaign is spearheaded by Moritaki, executive director of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons' (ICBUW) Hiroshima office.

The group invited Iraqi doctors to Hiroshima ahead of Friday's anniversary to talk about the growing number of cases of cancer and birth defects among Iraqi citizens, believed to be victims of depleted uranium used during the 1991 Gulf War and the US-led invasion in 2003.

Moritaki, whose late father served as chairman of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, says she sees the parallels – in Hiroshima "cancer began to increase 10 to 15 years after the 1945 bombing."

Moritaki travelled to Iraq both before and after the 2003 invasion, visiting hospitals in Baghdad and Basra and looking into the effects of depleted uranium.

At home, she showed photos of dying Iraqi children at schools and local meetings, talking about the war-torn country. She and other activists then established the NO DU (depleted uranium) Hiroshima Project in 2003.

Jawad al-Ali, an oncologist at a hospital in Basra, who visited the city in late July, was one of the Iraqi doctors invited to hold conferences on the harmful effects of depleted uranium weapons.

Just as Hiroshima saw the first atomic bomb dropped in action, depleted uranium weapons

were used in Iraq for the first time, al-Ali said, adding that he came to Japan to “to share the sufferings” the two countries have to go through.

Moritaki used to teach at a public school until until she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1996.

In 1997, following reports that India and Pakistan might soon conduct nuclear tests, Moritaki and other Hiroshima citizens flew to the region to try and stop nuclear tests.

But both countries carried out the tests in 1998, which sparked an international uproar especially from anti-nuclear activists. Still, her group went back and visited schools to talk about Hiroshima’s devastation.

The activists sometimes face harsh criticism, as Japan has long been under the US nuclear umbrella and depends on nuclear energy, Moritaki said.

In Iraq, many slammed Japan for supporting the US-led war instead of helping dying Iraqi children.

Japan dispatched its Self Defense Forces to southern Iraq to join reconstruction efforts, the first deployment of the nation’s military to a war zone since World War II.

Moritaki criticized the decision, saying Junichiro Koizumi, the then-premier, helped the US government, not Iraqi citizens.

“Japan should have found ways to help them – for example, training Iraqi doctors or building hospitals,” she said.

But while the US has been Japan’s major ally for the past half-century, not everyone has forgiven.

On September 11, 2001, when Hiroshima citizens saw images of the New York terrorist attacks on television, some of them, including people who identified themselves as pacifists, were still cursing the Americans, Moritaki recalled.

“It was appalling,” Moritaki says. “Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in the atomic bombing. We can’t let them have died in vain. Hiroshima has to overcome animosity.”

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