

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom  
10 Downing Street  
London, SW1A 2AA

07 June 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

It's almost 65 years since the bomb tests were done on Kiritimati and still the British Government and American Government say there is no damage done to the lives of the people of Kiritimati or the island as a whole.

As a Kiritimati islander who has settled in the UK with my English husband, I know that this is not the case and I ask you to address the problems that the British Government has caused.

Even though I was not on the Island during the bomb tests my eldest sister was and her child was born there. It was a very scary time for them. During the tests they were either taken on board the ship and put in the manhole of the ship or they were all put on a tennis court covered with tarpaulin. She had her baby son with her during one of the tests, and when the bomb exploded the light was so bright she could see all the bones in her baby's body as she held him. When she looked at the people sitting next to her they all looked like skeletons. My sister didn't live long - she died in her mid-forties. Her husband died in his fifties and my nephew died in his forties. We wonder why my sister and her family died so young.

At that time the people on Kiritimati were naive about things going on around them. They couldn't understand why the fish they caught were poisonous. They were scared to eat fish for a long time. Children were born with soft bones in their skulls and did not survive. When it rained after the bomb tests they couldn't understand why their bodies were covered with burns. The survivors were suffering for a long time but no one came to assess the lives of the people.

When I lived there in the 1970s the island was in a very sad state. Derelict buildings were everywhere. Some had asbestos falling off them. Hangers, fuel tanks and rows of buried tarmac drums were laying around. In the heat of the midday sun the tarmac drums leaked into the soil. Everywhere you go on the island there are terrible sights of what was left behind by the British and Americans.

Even though they sent a team to clean up the island the damage has already been done to the livelihoods of the people of Kiritimati and the island as a whole and also the veterans who witnessed the tests. Why is it that veterans and the people of Kiritimati have been denied compassion for what they've been going through and suffered all these years? Lots of lives were lost yet the British Government still does not think it is responsible.

We plead that the British Government as a leading Commonwealth nation should lead the way to ban nuclear weapons. And we plead that the British Government comes and joins the Meeting on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna this month where there will be discussions between countries about how to help victims and clean up environments affected by nuclear weapons.

Don't run away from your responsibilities. Show the world you are a caring Government that cares about human lives.

Yours sincerely,

Philomena Lawrence