

# America's Most Criminal Act: The Atomic Bombings of Japan

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Theme: [History](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

*On December 7, 1941, Japan carried out a premeditated and ruthless attack on U.S. ships at Pearl Harbor. At the time, America was already in World War II on the side of Britain and Russia. But the unprovoked Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor changed things drastically. At Pearl Harbor, 350 Japanese planes in a premeditated attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet destroyed or crippled 8 battleships. 2,403 Americans were killed. The next day, President Roosevelt declared December 7, 1941, as a day of 'infamy' and declared war on Japan. Fateful Decision One of the most barbaric, ruthless, and criminal acts by a nation against the civilians of another nation was the use of two deadly atomic bombs by the United States against the civilians of Japan during the Pacific War.*

Today, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, is the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki by the United States. The first bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Its population was between 320,000 to 400,000 people. As if this was not enough, three days later on August 9, 1941, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, a city of 270,000 people. About 140,000 innocent men, women, and children were killed in Hiroshima. The death toll in Nagasaki was 70,000.

The question is how and why the United States decided to employ such horrendous weapons against Japan, especially against its civilians.

A lot of books, essays, and articles have been written about this event. Yet after some 60 years, the United States government and its compliant mass media have succeeded in hiding the truth from the rest of the world. Due to massive propaganda, the most common belief amongst the people about these horrific acts is that the United States government used the atomic bombs to save from a quarter to half a million American soldiers' lives by forcing immediate Japanese surrender. Yet the truth of the matter is quite different.

During the Pacific War, which lasted from December 1941 till August 1945, the United States went through two presidents. On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt died suddenly and his vice president, an ex-senator from Missouri, took over the presidency. He was especially inexperienced in foreign policy. By all accounts, Truman was an honest, hardworking, and decent man.



But yet, he was far more complex a person. Robert Griffith describes:

Truman was a complicated, not a simple man; a man at times different and aggressive, capable of both humanity and arrogance; a man who would leap to decisions quickly and perhaps impulsively, but he could also be vacillating and indecisive; a man who always seemed to know his own mind, yet he appears in retrospect to have been highly dependent on those who advised him; a man who valued honesty and plain speaking, but who was also capable of contradiction and deception, including and perhaps especially, self-deception.

Henry Stimson, who would become the Secretary of War during the Truman Presidency, jotted in his private journal a year before Truman became president:

“Truman is a nuisance and pretty untrustworthy man. He talks smoothly but he acts meanly.”

James Byrnes, who was appointed the Secretary of State soon after Truman became president, had become the main advisor of the president who seemed to be so ill-prepared for the job. Though there were many other advisors to the president, James Byrnes was at the heart of the decision-making process for President Truman.

Roosevelt’s former aide, Harry Hopkins, on a presidential mission to Moscow in May 1945, reported Stalin as saying that

“according to his information the Japanese would not accept unconditional surrender” and that “if we stick to unconditional surrender the Japs will not give up and we will have to destroy them as we did Germany.”

**Yet, despite knowing that with changing the terms of the surrender, the war could be ended, Truman, with the advice of James Byrne refused to alter the terms of surrender!**

It was widely believed by many experts, military as well as civilian, that if Japan was offered a simple surrender, if the term ‘unconditional’ was removed from the surrender offer, then it would have surrendered without the use of the atomic bombs. Or if the United States would have clarified the term ‘Unconditional’ or if she would have simply promised Japan that no harm would have come to their Emperor and that they would keep the emperor’s position unchanged, then Japan certainly would have surrendered. Without the promise of the emperor’s position & safety, millions of Japanese soldiers would have kept fighting until death.

Sometime back, the United States had offered Japan an “unconditional surrender”! In the Japanese view the “unconditional surrender” meant the emperor could be arrested, tried, and executed. Th at could also mean the total destruction of their culture and lifestyle. Emperor Hirohito was like a God to most of the Japanese people. No Japanese would agree to their Emperor being insulted, let alone be tried, removed, or executed. Th e U.S. leaders knew well this feeling of the Japanese.

James Byrnes, who was appointed the Secretary of State soon after Truman became president, had become the main advisor of the president who seemed to be so ill-prepared for the job. Though there were many other advisors to the president, James Byrnes was at the heart of the decision-making process for President Truman.

Despite all these expert advice from various prominent people and groups, Byrnes and Truman refused to modify the surrender terms. What did they actually have in their mind? Was it that they had already decided to use the atomic bombs and force an immediate surrender? Was it that they wanted to try this new weapon, on which a lot of money was spent? Or was it because they wanted to show to the world, the Russians in particular, that America was now the Supreme Power, stronger than any other nation in the world?

General MacArthur’s Southwest Pacific Command prepared a “restricted background study” in the summer of 1944 which argued that “although there should be no weakening of the peace terms, to dethrone or hang the Emperor would cause a tremendous and violent reaction from all Japanese. Hanging of the Emperor to them would be comparable to the Crucifixion of Christ to us. All would fight to die like ants. The position of the gangster militarist would be strengthened immeasurably. The war would be unduly prolonged; our losses heavier than otherwise would be necessary.” Even Churchill, at Yalta, in February 1945 had taken up this general line. In fact, as early as this date, he had advocated some modification in the surrender terms.

By May-June 1945, significant development had taken place. Th e United States had broken through the Japanese code! Now, the Americans could clearly hear what the Japanese were saying. There was overwhelming evidence that the Japanese were close to surrender except they only wanted terms which would protect their Emperor.

A series of Japanese peace feelers were noted in Switzerland which OSS Chief William Donovan reported to Truman in May and June. This indicated even at this point that the only serious obstacle to peace was U.S. demand of ‘unconditional surrender’. Allen Dulles at the time chief of OSS operations in Switzerland (and later director of the CIA), in his 1966 book, ‘The Secret Surrender’, recalled that:

“On July 20, 1945, under instructions from Washington, I went to the Potsdam Conference and reported there to the Secretary Stimson on what I had learned from Tokyo - they desired to surrender if they could retain the Emperor and the constitution as a basis for maintaining discipline and order in Japan after the devastating news of surrender became known to the Japanese people.”

The U.S. minister in Stockholm on April 6, 1945, reported that his sources believed it

“Probable that very far-reaching conditions would be accepted by the Japanese by way of negotiation.”<sup>20</sup> “However, there is no doubt that ‘unconditional surrender’ terms would be unacceptable to the Japanese because it would mean dishonor. Application of

such terms would be fatal and lead to desperate action on the part of the people...The Emperor must not be touched.”

There is a copy of the powerful July 16, 1945 memorandum among Eisenhower’s papers that Stimson wrote for Truman urging multiple workings before the bomb was used. It is unclear though when this was given to him. However, Eisenhower in his book, ‘Crusade in Europe’, includes the following brief account of his ‘personal and immediate’ reaction of hearing of plans for the atomic attack from Stimson:

“I expressed the hope that we would never have to use such a thing (the atomic bomb) against any enemy because I disliked seeing the United States take the lead in introducing into war something as horrible and destructive as this new weapon was described to be...”



It is interesting to read the conversation between General LeMay and The Press:

LeMay: The war would have been over in few weeks without the Russians entering and without the atomic bomb.

The Press: You mean that, sir? Without the Russians and the atomic bomb?

LeMay: Yes, with the B-29

The Press: General, why use the atomic bomb? Why did we use it then?

LeMay: Well, the other people were not convinced....

The Press: Had they not surrendered because of the atomic bomb?

LeMay: The atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war at all.

—This was September 20, 1945, press conference by Major General Curtis E. LeMay U.S. Army Air Forces.

The leaders of U.S. armed forces were also opposed to the use of this monstrous weapon. (General Douglas) MacArthur once spoke to me very eloquently about it pacing the floor of his apartment in the Waldorf... MacArthur believed that the same restrictions ought to apply to atomic weapons as to conventional weapons, that the military objective should always be limited damage. MacArthur, you see, was a soldier. He believed in using force only against military targets and that is why the nuclear thing turned him off. —Former President Richard M. Nixon, July 1985

George C. Marshall, the military Chief of Staff is also on record as feeling strongly that the atomic bomb should not be used without warning against a city.

Many military leaders had felt that the bomb was not a military necessity. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey's study (after-the-fact official studies) conducted closest to the actual events concluded that Japan in all probability would have surrendered by November and the War Department's Military Intelligence Division judged that it was "almost a certainty that the Japanese would have capitulated upon the entry of Russia into the War."

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, as reported by the *New York Times* on September 22, 1945, at a press conference at Pearl Harbor, took the opportunity of adding his voice to those insisting that Japan had already been defeated before the atomic bombings and Russia's entry into the war.

Nimitz considered the atomic bomb somehow indecent, not a legitimate form of warfare. Rear Admiral E.B. Fluckey, a submarine commander during the war and later personal aid to Nimitz, recalled that Admiral Nimitz did not think it saved many lives to blow up the Japanese like that.

Some 69 scientists who were working on the development of the bomb at the Chicago Metallurgical Laboratory signed a petition headed by the leading scientist Leo Szilard. The petition basically said that the atomic bomb should not be used unless the terms to be imposed upon Japan were made public in detail and that after knowing those terms Japan refused to surrender.

They were against the use of the bomb, without considering the moral issue as well as without changing the surrender terms, and without letting the public and Japanese know the details of these terms, and without giving the Japanese proper opportunity to surrender. Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, the man who chaired the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt very strongly against using the bomb and advised the President not to. Leahy's secretary, Dorothy Ringquist remembered vividly that on the day Hiroshima was bombed, Leahy said:

"Dorothy, we will regret this day. The United States will suffer, for war is not to be waged on women and children."

As the testimony of top military leaders is considered, the evidence clearly confirms that not only was their advice not seriously sought but also (perhaps with one possible ambiguous exception) none of them believed the use of the atomic bomb was dictated by overwhelming military considerations. Several of them even expressed profound revulsion at the idea of targeting a city.

The highly respected scientist Albert Einstein was vehemently opposed to the use of the bomb. August 10, 1946, headline in the *New York Times* announced:

"Einstein Deplores Use of Atom Bomb".



The story in the Times reported Einstein's view that "a great majority of the scientists were opposed to the sudden employment of the bomb." Einstein felt that political-diplomatic rather than military motives had been major factors. "I suspect that the affair was precipitated by a desire to end (the) war in the Pacific by any means before Russia's participation."

The U.S. religious leaders were also very much opposed to the use of this terrible weapon.

In the last week of July 1945, Truman and Byrnes by now had decided to use the new weapon on Japan. From Stalin they had found out that Russia was going to attack Japan on or around mid-August. But they didn't want Russia to join the war now. They wanted Japan's surrender and an end to this war before Russia came in. So, the fateful order to atomic bomb the Japanese cities was likely given on July 25th, a day before the Potsdam Proclamation was issued which was July 26th. The proclamation was supposedly the warning to the Japanese to surrender or face total destruction. Yet the order to atomic bomb them was issued two days before Suzuki's rejection of the proclamation of 28th July!

After the war was over, the U.S. media and the government pronouncements had falsely convinced the American people that the dropping of the atomic bombs was absolutely essential to ending the war. Polls taken in August 1945 showed that an amazing 85 percent of Americans approved the use of the atomic bomb. Many believed that no matter how dreadful and destructive the new weapon was, the Japanese got what they deserved.

Unfortunately, for more than half a century, a lie has been perpetrated in the United States that the bomb was necessary to end the Pacific War and that the atomic bombing of Japan saved, depending on who one believes, a quarter to half or even a million American lives!

The false propaganda and lies started just after the deadly bombing...right from the President onwards.

On April 28, 1959, Truman told students at Columbia University simply that "the dropping of the bombs stopped the war, saved millions of lives."

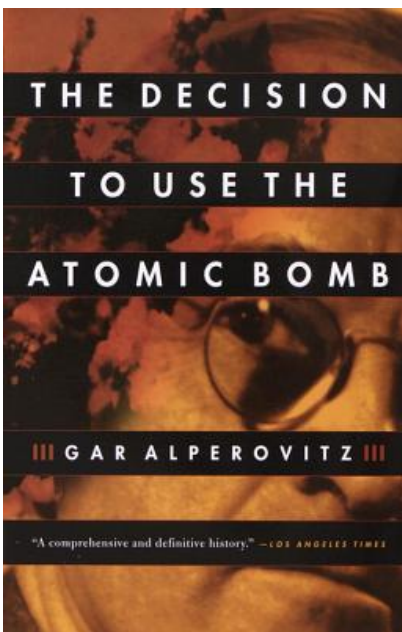
The actual estimate of casualties from the invasion was 31,000. It was presented to Truman directly on June 18 by General Marshall. On the basis of ratios then common in the Pacific Campaign, this in turn would translate into 7,000-8,000 deaths. But Marshall also had been telling Truman and others that the invasion would cost a ¼ to one million American lives, a highly exaggerated figure. On August 6, 1945, Truman made a public statement calling

Hiroshima “an important Japanese army base”, implying that, that was the main reason why it was bombed.

On August 9, three days later, in his report on the Potsdam Conference, the President offered a similar explanation:

“The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid in so far as possible the killing of civilians.” What a liar!

Thus, false information and lies upon lies were perpetrated by many top government leaders, including the president, after the deadly bombings. The news media, as always, just carried on these lies to the average Americans. As a result, generations after generations of Americans seem to believe that the atomic bombing of Japan was necessary to end the war and save ¼ to one million American lives!



According to Gar Alperovitz’s detailed book, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb”, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), it is worth examining the underlying reasons behind this horrible crime:

(1) President Truman and Byrnes, the two main actors in the decision to bomb, knew very well that Japan was badly beaten and close to capitulating, if only their Emperor was protected by the surrender terms. But they refused to alter those terms.

(2) The Potsdam Conference was intentionally delayed so that the bomb would be ready before the conference.

(3) All the peace initiatives by the Japanese were ignored, including the one by the emperor himself.

(4) First, they tried to encourage Russia to join the war against Japan.

(5) Once the atomic bomb test was successful, they had second thoughts. Then they wanted to discourage Russia from joining the war against Japan.

(6) To atomic bomb Japan was already decided by them.

(7) But once they knew from Stalin that Russia will declare war on Japan around mid-August, they decided to speed up and give orders to throw the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945, before Russia had chance to attack Japan.

(8) They in their decision, not to alter the surrender terms or to use the deadly weapon against Japan, ignored the opinions of overwhelming number of experts in the United States and Britain.

(9) The Japanese leaders were not given enough time to study the Potsdam Proclamation.

(10) They had decided to use the atomic bombs well in advance before the Potsdam Proclamation.

(11) Decision to bomb was not a military necessity.

(12) U.S. military leaders were not seriously consulted. It was strictly a civilian decision.

(13) Intentionally, major urban centers such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their civilian population were targeted to have maximum impact!

(14) Though one bomb, a uranium bomb would have produced the surrender, second bomb, a plutonium device was used three days later.

(15) After the ghastly killings of civilians, a campaign of lies and misinformation was carried out by Truman and his administration with the support of U.S. news media. So, average American has been kept in dark about the actual reasons of such criminal act by a U.S. president.

(16) The bombs were used to force Japan to surrender before Russia entered the war so as to keep Russia out of postwar Japan governance.

(17) Also, the bombs were used to impress upon the USSR and the rest of the world that America had this powerful weapon and it would not hesitate to use it to pursue its global interests and agenda.

The claim by President Truman and some of his aids that ¼ to one million American lives were saved if invasion was necessary is highly exaggerated at best. **But, as per most experts at the time, no invasion was even necessary.**

The intentional targeting of civilian women and children in a highly populated urban area was intended to create the maximum psychological impact on the minds of the Japanese, the Russians, and the world.

The instant deaths of thousands of Hiroshima and Nagasaki residents had profound impacts on the minds of people around the globe.

More than 140,000 of Hiroshima's 350,000 people and 70,000 of the 270,000 people of Nagasaki perished within five months as a result of the atomic blasts.

There is hardly any logical dissent from the conclusion reached by the members of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey...

“that surely Japan would have surrendered prior to December 31, 1945, and in all



likelihood prior to November 1, 1945. Japan would have surrendered even if atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.”

Th e U.S. leaders must have known this before they decided to use the bombs. Then why did they commit such a crime?

Well, more than anything, they wanted to show Russia the new weapon the United States possessed. They not only wanted to show Russia, but also to proclaim to the world that the United States would not hesitate to use any means to protect and guard its interests!

They also wanted to curb Russia from exerting its influence in Europe, especially Eastern Europe, and Asia. Also, the atomic bomb would produce both Japanese surrender and subordination to the United States in the post-war period for years to come. It forestalled a possible Russian invasion of Japan, leaving the U.S. free to shape, unilaterally under the occupation, Japan’s postwar course. Also, the bombs as intended sent powerful and electrifying signal to the world and especially to the Soviet leadership of the new powerful weapon and American readiness to deploy it ruthlessly in the pursuit of its global interests.

**Only the utter inhumanity and brutal ruthlessness of man can commit such crimes against civilians of any country!**

**The Destruction and the Death Toll in Hiroshima:** From the estimated 320,000 people, some 80,000 were instantly killed or mortally wounded. About one third of the casualties were soldiers.



Sometime after the moment of detonation which occurred at approximately 08:15 and 43 seconds (local time), with the writing of Paul Tibbets (From the Public Domain)

The stone columns at the entrance to the Shima clinic were rammed straight down into the ground. The whole building had collapsed. All its occupants were instantly vaporized. Out of a total of 90,000, 62,000 other buildings were destroyed. The city's utility and transportation services were wrecked. The water main suffered over 70,000 breaks. 180 of the city's 200 doctors had been killed; 1,654 nurses out of 1,780 were also similarly afflicted. From the total of 55 hospitals and first-aid centers, only three remained operational.

The largest single group of casualties occurred at Hiroshima castle some 900 yards from the hypocenter. There, out in the open, several thousand soldiers and one American POW were exposed directly to the spreading blast. They were instantly incinerated. Their charred bodies were burnt into the parade ground. Similar fates befell thousands of others in the surrounding areas. Hiroshima castle was totally destroyed. Ninety percent of its occupants were killed. Amongst the casualties were the schoolgirls who were on duty in the communications center.

The radiant heat set alight Radio Hiroshima. It burnt out trucks, tram cars, and railway rolling stock. Stone walls, steel doors, and asphalt pavements; all glowed red hot. The blast transferred clothing on to the skin. Men had their caps etched on their scalps, women their Kimono patterns imprinted on their bodies and children had their socks burned on to their legs. All this happened within seconds from the explosion!

In both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 50 percent of all who were within three-quarters of a mile of the hypocenter died on the day of the explosion and 80-100 percent of those exposed at this distance eventually succumbed to their wounds.

According to Richard Rhodes' estimates, within five years, Hiroshima's atomic bomb-related deaths numbered nearly 200,000 and Nagasaki's 74,000. In the annals of warfare, no single attack extracted so heavy a toll in human lives as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Victims included not only those who felt the direct effect of the deadly blast but tens of thousands of others including fetuses in the uterus who were exposed to the radiation days after the bombing. Hundreds of thousands have suffered ghastly effects of radiation, 'death in life' in subsequent years down to present.

Thus, Hiroshima was destroyed by a single atomic bomb. Most of the buildings were flattened out. Thousands of them burned and gutted. Besides the estimated 80,000 who were instantly killed, thousands received lethal dosages of radiation. Thousands were badly burned or injured. Some of them with their clothes torn and burned, their skin peeling from their face, hands and legs, and their hair burned. Many looked like ghosts, moving around aimlessly, frightened, zombie like, groaning and asking for help and water. A vast majority of them were children and women who would ultimately die a painful death.

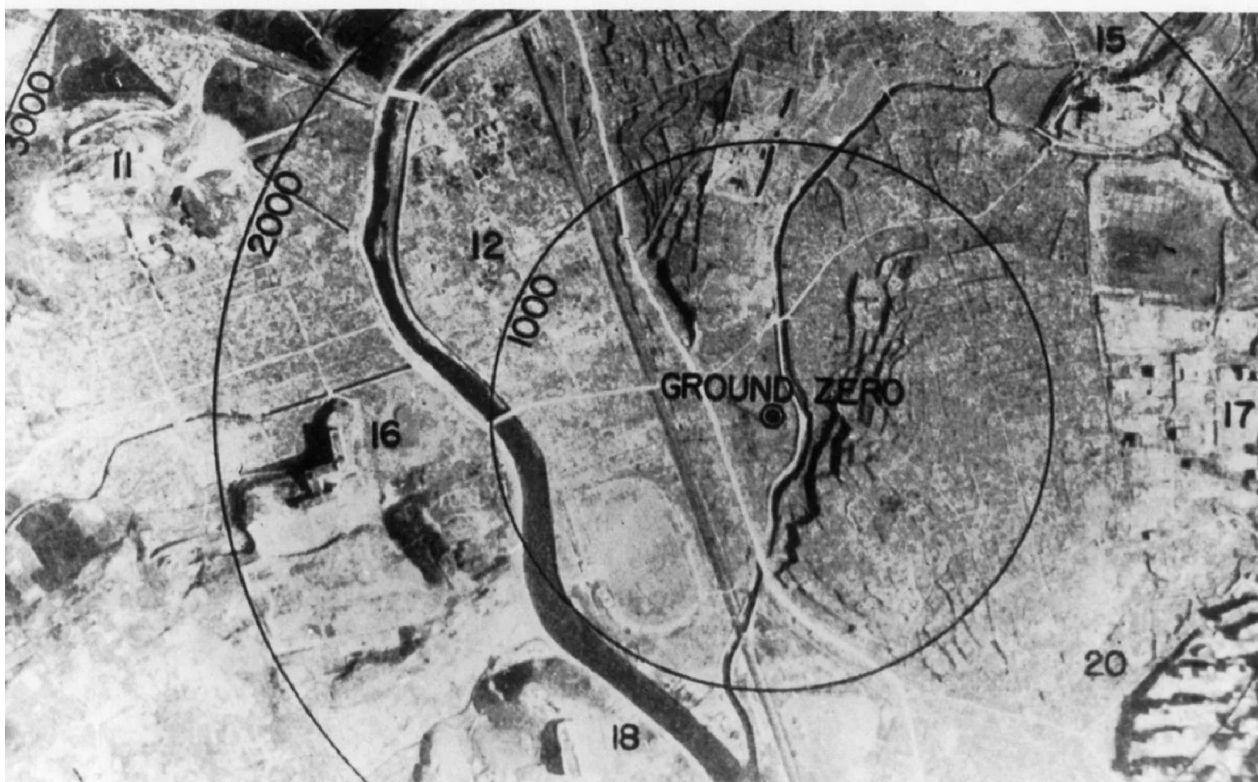
President Truman learned about the historic explosion while he was finishing lunch with the crew of the ship Augusta as it was sailing through calm waters towards home.

A map room officer handed him the message which read:

"Hiroshima was bombed visually...at seven fifteen p.m. Washington time, August five ...Fifteen minutes after drop", Captain Parson reported "Condition normal in airplane following delivery. Results clear cut successful in all respects. Visible effects greater than in any test."

Truman looked up, his face alight. "Captain", he exclaimed to the officer, "this is the greatest thing in history!"

**The Destruction of Nagasaki:** At 11:02 am, America detonated the Plutonium bomb on Nagasaki.



Nagasaki before and after the bombing, after the fires had burned out (From the Public Domain)

The plutonium bomb, upon exploding above ground, had released enormous energy in the form of light, heat, gamma radiation and pressure. Within 1,000 yards, nearly all living

organisms—insects, birds, cats, dogs, chickens and horses—had perished instantly.

Also, all plants, flowers, grass, and trees wrinkled and died. Wood started burning. Galvanized iron roofs and metal beams started bubbling and the resultant soft gooey masses twisted and formed grotesque shapes. Stones had pulverized. Every cubic inch of air was burned away for a second. Those exposed within this parameter neither knew nor felt anything. Their scorched, blackened, and unrecognizable forms dropped quietly where they stood.

The heat rays, though very intense, lasted only a few seconds. Then came the blast. Within 800 yards, due to the tremendous pressure created, a hundred times stronger than the strongest typhoon, all the buildings were totally destroyed. Three miles away, the blast effect, traveling outward at a speed of 9,000 miles per hour, blew off the walls and roofs of the houses.

Of the estimated 55,000 buildings in existence at the time, some 20,000 were destroyed either by fire or by blast. Thousands of people who escaped radiation were hurt badly by flying glass, wood, beams, and other objects.

About 30,000 people were killed in the first few minutes of the explosion. Three times this number would die in the days, months, and years to come. Urakami branch of Nagasaki prison, some 100 meters north of the epicenter was annihilated along with 134 prisoners and wardens. Urakami Church, 500 meters to the east had collapsed—killing all 200 people and twenty priests inside. At Shiroyama Primary School, 500 meters west of the epicenter, out of about 1,500 children and teachers, about 1,310 died. Also, as many as 1,300 were killed at Yamazato Primary School. At Josei Girls' School, 212 pupils and nuns perished. Other schools were near the epicenter, each lost between 140 and 220 children and the staff. Over 1,000 doctors, nurses, patients and students were killed in and around the burning structures of Nagasaki College Hospital and the Medical College. Out of 1,800 that were there, over 200 patients and 530 medical students died.

The death and destruction was heart-wrenching.

In the aftermath, after a few hours and during the next several days, thousands of people, most of them civilians who were terribly burned, were seen slowly crawling, walking or simply lying down on the streets. Their faces were burned, blackened, the hair on their heads and eyebrows burned, the skin from their faces and limbs peeling and their upper body naked as their clothes were burned, they were groaning and moaning in extreme pain. They looked like ghosts with pink color of the inside of their skin showing from some areas of their face, hands, and legs. A terrible calamity that was man-made had befallen on their unfortunate city.

America had succeeded in targeting the civilians to create maximum casualties and have the greatest impact. Of those who died in this explosion, 3 percent were military personnel, 13 percent worked in the war industry. But a vast majority of them, comprising 84 percent, were ordinary people. They were mainly women, girls, children, students, and the elderly.

For generations, the civilian victims of atomic bombs have suffered from the horrific effects of radioactivity where thousands of babies have been born with birth defects attributable to the radiation that hundreds of thousands of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were subjected to. These radiation victims suffered for years and finally succumbed to their

agonizing wounds. There is no parallel in history when hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians were subjected to such a tragic fate on such a massive scale. The crime crosses all the limits of barbarity when one realizes that the whole tragedy was avoidable!

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*Featured image: In this handout picture released by the U.S. Army, a mushroom cloud billows about one hour after a nuclear bomb was detonated above Hiroshima, Japan on Aug. 6, 1945. (AP Photo/U.S. Army via Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, HO) \*\* NO SALES, CREDIT MANDATORY \*\**

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