

Fact Sheet

“After the passage of nearly four decades and a concomitant growth in our understanding of the ever growing horror of nuclear war, we must shape the climate of opinion which will make it possible for our country to express profound sorrow over the atomic bombing in 1945. Without that sorrow, there is no possibility of finding a way to repudiate future use of nuclear weapons or of conventional weapons in such military actions as would not fulfill just-war criteria.”

-U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, 1983, no. 302.

Quick Facts: First Nuclear Weapons

- On August 6, 1945, on the orders of President Harry Truman, a US bomber dropped an atomic bomb called “Little Boy” on Hiroshima. “Little Boy” had an estimated equivalent explosive force of 12,500 tons of TNT. It is estimated that 140,000 people died.
- On August 9, 1945, a second atomic bomb called “Fat Boy” was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. The original target city, Kokura, could not be reached because of weather problems and Nagasaki was selected as the alternative target. Estimates generally put the number of deaths around 80,000. “Fat Boy” was more powerful than “Little Boy,” but was accidentally dropped on the outskirts of the city, lessening the amount of deaths.
- It is estimated that out of every 6 deaths in the bombings, 5 were civilians and 1 was military.

Questions and Answers: Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings

- ◆ Were there more casualties than those who died when the bomb hit?

Yes. Many more people suffered for several years before dying, or died in the following years due to radiation exposure from the bombs. It is estimated that by 1950, 200,000 more people had died from atomic bomb-related diseases or injuries. Many more lived with permanent disabilities.

- ◆ What types of long-term effects did the radiation from the atomic bombs give the survivors?

Cancer was the most common radiation-caused disease, although other diseases, such as liver failure and respiratory diseases, occurred in atomic bomb-survivors.

“To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war. To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace.”

-Pope John Paul II on his visit to Hiroshima at the Peace Memorial Park, Feb. 25, 1981

- ◆ Was the atomic bomb the only way to end the war?

Many experts, politicians, and scientists - including Dwight Eisenhower - came forward before and after the bombings to state that the war could have been ended quickly even without the use of the atomic bombs. They stated that nuclear warfare hits civilian, not military, targets and that the United States should not begin the age of nuclear warfare.



Sources: Radiation Effects Research Foundation website (<http://www.rerf.or.jp/eigo/faqs/faqse.htm>); Lawrence Coalition for Peace and Justice website (<http://www.lcpj.org/hiroshim.html>); article on “atomic bomb” at www.encyclopedia.com; and The History Learning Site (http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bombing_of_nagasaki.htm)

Case Study

Testimony of Kinue Tomoyasu, Hiroshima Survivor

Kinue was in her home the day of the bombing. Kinue suffered from weakness and illness due to exposure to radiation during the bombing and lived in the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Victims Nursing Home for 13 years. Kinue's daughter was killed in the bombing. Her daughter had been on her way to the train station, closer to where the bomb hit. Years later, Kinue recited the story of the search for her daughter and her own radiation-caused illnesses.

“Mr. Ishido [a neighbor] came up to me and said, “Quick! ...Your daughter is at the bank of the Ota River...She is alive.” ...Around Hiroshima Station, I saw more people lying dead...I couldn't tell who was who. I kept wondering where my daughter was. But then, she cried for me, “Mother!” I recognized her voice. I found her in a horrible condition. Her face looked terrible. And she still appears in my dreams like that sometimes. When I met her, she said, “There shouldn't be any war.” ...And nine hours later, she died. ...I held her in my arms... [She said] “I don't want to die.” ...On August 15th, I held her funeral. And around early October, my hair started to come out. I wondered what was happening to me... In November, I became bald. Then, purple spots started to appear around my neck, my body and my arms,..., a lot of them, all over. I had a high fever of forty degrees [Celsius]...I still had a fever when I was admitted here [HABV Nursing Home] for a while, but now I don't have a fever so often. ...My son [served in the Japanese army and] ... suffered a lot. I don't know why, but he... killed himself... I was left alone. I had to go through hardships, living alone. I have no family. I [pledged] to donate my body upon death for medical education and research. My registration number is number 1200. I'm ready. I'm ready now to be summoned by God at any moment. But God doesn't allow me to come his side yet. If it were not for the war, my two children would not have died. If it were not for the war, I wouldn't have to stay at an institution like this. I suppose the three of us would have been living together in happiness. Ah, it is so hard on me.

Source: Voice of Hibakusha website, <http://www.inicom.com/hibakusha/kinue.html>

“Thus the disarmament issue is not merely an academic question; it is a necessity on which the survival of our world depends. The experience of these last months is enough to show the futility and cruelty of war. The Holy See, for its part, has spoken and continues to speak the same language to all: war, with the means of destruction provided by modern technology, will never definitively solve the problem of relations between peoples.”

-Archbishop J.L. Tauran, Statement on Item 62h (UN-Com1), October 25, 1991, *Words that Matter*, p. 270.

“Justice, then, right reason and consideration for human dignity and life urgently demand that the arms race should cease; that the stockpiles which exist in various countries should be reduced equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned; that nuclear weapons should be banned; and finally that all come to an agreement on a fitting program of disarmament, employing mutual and effective controls.”

-Pope John XXII, *Pacem in Terris*, #112

We Remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki

And the skies rained down fire.
Hiroshima. Nagasaki.
In the gardens of those cities the agony began.
The images of flames, smoke, destruction.
The smell of burning flesh.
The taste of ashes on the tongue.

Hiroshima. Nagasaki.
We ask forgiveness again, decades later.
And we will continue to ask forgiveness.
Through our acts of contrition,
May we learn to act as peacemakers,
So peace may be the restitution
We offer humanity. Amen.