

# The hiroshima and nagasaki genocide history essay



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One of the saddest events in the history of the world took place on 6th and 9th August, 1945, when the two cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were completely shattered and ruined. Usage of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction to effect the genocide of whole societies has become a common phenomenon since the twentieth century. Two examples of this would be: The Holocaust carried out by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s, the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, and the Genocide of Muslims in Bosnia.

However, this research will mainly focus on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and explore its colossal effects on people and society, some of which are still present till now, and then will decide if these bombings were necessary? If such extreme measures to end the Second World War needed?

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

With the completion, by the United States, of the most destructive weapon that has ever been created in the world, the decision now was of selecting the targets for the atomic bombs. This started in spring of 1945 with the collaboration of the Army Air Forces and its headquarters, and the commanding general. There were several reasons which led to the selection of Hiroshima and Nagasaki being the victims of the two bombings:

Firstly, because the range of the aircraft which carried the bomb could not travel further than the location of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Also, the desire for “visual bombing” to make sure that the bombs were used most effectively. Thirdly, at the end of the Second World War, the United States was desperate to end its war with Japan with minimum casualties of U. S. soldiers. With their nuclear programme ready for testing and increasing

pressure to end the war, they saw only one way, to drop the two atomic bombs on their rival and shorten the war.

Also as the president of The U. S. of that time, Harry S. Truman stated:

“ Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbour, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretence of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

“ We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan’s power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.” (Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman, 1945, pg. 212).

The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima at 08: 15am on 6th of August, 1945. It detonated 602 yards over the city and produced about 15 kilotons of energy. The blast took with it the lives of 130, 000 to 200, 000 people, some of whom were never found.

The second atomic bomb was released at 10: 58am on 9th of August, 1945, on the shipyards of Nagasaki. This blast produced about 20 kilotons of energy, killing 70, 000 civilians and about twice of that over five years. However, the atomic blast at Nagasaki did less damage than the first blast because of the place’s natural geography.

The bombings of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki were so gigantic that they largely corroded the two cities and their being an entity, with near to half of <https://assignbuster.com/the-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-genocide-history-essay/>

the population having died and the firestorm which enveloped the two cities immediately after the explosion causing the complete demolition of the two cities. Even the most terrible of the bombings that happened before on Japan and Germany, for example the inflammable raids in Hamburg and Tokyo in 1943 were not comparable to the beyond devastating effects of these atomic bombs.

### **THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS:**

The people, who were near where the blasts took place, turned to ashes immediately. Even the birds flying nearby instantly became residues. The blinding flash of white light that emerged from the blast burnt the patterns of "dark" coloured clothes onto people's skin. Less than 10% of buildings were spared after the blast, all the rest of them were either completely wrecked or suffered some sort of heavy damage. This further increased the death toll. A firestorm that emerged in the cities from the blast burnt 4.4 square kilometres of Hiroshima and the people present in that area and did large amounts of damage to Nagasaki.

Most of the survivors of the blasts had absorbed radiations of the blasts. Many of the people who had survived the blast and had minor injuries would suddenly start to show terrible symptoms such as purple skin splotches, hair loss, blood from mouth and nose which eventually lead to their deaths. The death toll from radiation started within a week after the two atomic blasts and went up to seven to eight weeks.

Such a huge number of people were killed or injured that the facilities for them in rehabilitation were not available, thus people, who were left alive,

panicked and started to flee from both the cities. At the end of November 1945 each of the cities had only about 140,000 people left. Even the cleaning of the wreckage and destroyed bodies and body parts were not removed till weeks after the bombings. The British Mission stated "the impression which both cities make is of having sunk, in an instant and without a struggle, to the most primitive level."

### **THE LONGTERM EFFECTS:**

The most important long-term effect of the atomic bombings was seen as the result of radiations that were absorbed by people after the blasts happened. Although the deaths that arose from radiation went down after seven to eight weeks, the suppressed effects continued to appear for a long time. Radiation crippled people for lifetime, and affected fetuses in their mother's wombs which resulted in elevated rates of miscarriages, still births and defects in children at birth. After the bombings it was common to see children being born with unusually small heads or being born mentally retarded (Schull, 189), or had stunted growths or other sufferings. Some people developed cancer or other blood disorders, heavy scarring, cataracts and male sterility (Schull, 105). The latter of these diseases such as cancer (leukaemia) and blood disorders were further carried on through the generations. Also children who were affected in their mother's wombs and for example had stunted growth may have passed this deformity later on to their kids and so on.

Other long term effects of radiation that researchers concluded were that "radiation exposure had a negative impact on both outcomes; survivors had an IQ loss of approximately five points, and performed at a decreased level <https://assignbuster.com/the-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-genocide-history-essay/>

in school "(Growth...). This result was " supported by the apparent decreased level of intelligence seen in large portions of the generation born during the first years after the war " (Neel 344).

There were also certain psychological effects on survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts which consisted of:

Severe Anxiety Disorders: Such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is the trauma that a person faces after a terrifying event, people keep on viewing flashbacks of that event, while awake or asleep, and increases the suffering of a person, posing a threat of death to oneself or someone else. It overwhelms the ability of a person to cope. (RERF, questionnaire study on PTSD symptoms).

People were also reported to feel severe depression, and went through general fatigue, amnesia and lack of concentration in addition to an increased sense of unresponsiveness and immobility. There was also an increasing sense of guilt in the survivors as the result of a study stated " Survivors were convinced that their survival was made possible by deaths of others, and this conviction caused them terrible guilt" (Marston 312).

Increasingly, the survivors suffered from unresolved mourning. The loss of loved ones caused powerful feelings of sadness, helplessness, and rage, alongside feelings of survival guilt (Kapeluik, 1995 et al).

These are the type of effects that the victims, of the two atomic bomb blasts, experienced. The questions that now arise are that was it really necessary for the United States to completely demolish the two cities and cause such

devastation and despair in the two cities and others around it? As Truman stated in his speech above were “ Thousands” of Americans better off than the Millions of Japanese who lost their lives or were disabled for life?

## **WAS IT NECESSARY?**

The United States bombed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 on the basis of “ ending the war quickly”, and so that Japan surrenders.

However was a deadly invasion of Japanese mainland necessary to achieve ‘ world peace’?

Firstly, it has been seen and observed that Japan as a nation is of a resilient nature. Proud of their heritage and past, being a civilization which is more than 5000 years old and that has never been conquered by anyone. Their emperor was seen as the utmost important person in Japan. They saw their emperor as a “ God”, as a “ heart of the Japanese people and culture”. When the United States demanded Japan to surrender ‘ unconditionally’ it meant that the emperor would be taken off the throne. Also, the Potsdam proclamation by the United States (July 26, 1945) made statements that, for the Japanese, were threatening to the Emperor: “ There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest” and “ stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals” (U. S. Dept. of State, Potsdam 2, pg. 1474-1476). This was very disrespecting in the eyes of the military and even after receiving two deadly shocks, after the two Atomic Bombs, The Japanese Government had refused to surrender. In the end only when the Japanese government were allowed to keep their emperor did they surrender.

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So what was the use of the atomic bombings? The U. S. never was able to 'eliminate' the Japanese emperor, then why was it that the Nuclear Bombs were used on the cities? If at the time of the Potsdam proclamation the emperor would have not been threatened, there was a huge chance Japan would have surrendered earlier. The five-star general and the president of The United States, Dwight Eisenhower stated in a meeting with Simon that "...the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing." (Ike on Ike, Newsweek, November 11, 1963).

Secondly, The United States could have used a diplomatic method to end the war instead of a military method. Even after Leo Szilard's petition, which was signed by fifty eight scientists, Not to drop the Nuclear Bombs on the two cities, president Truman still ordered the bombs to be dropped. This could also be seen as a 'desire for revenge' that is associated with wars. President Truman statement after the Nagasaki blast " We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretence of obeying international laws of warfare" (Public Papers of the President, 1945) shows the emotionality which seemed to be at rage in the decision to bomb Japan. The question that arises here is that if more diplomatic thinking was employed by the leaders of U. S. would it have lead to a much less severe end to the war?

Thirdly, Other alternatives were also present to end this war. According to a historian of atomic bombings, Barton Bernstein, if Japan was given the promise to retain its Japanese Monarchy they may have surrendered, and even then if they did not surrender they could have imposed a threat to <https://assignbuster.com/the-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-genocide-history-essay/>



Japan of Soviet invasion (which was an ally of U. S.). After which conventional bombing could have been used to further pressurize Japan to surrender, “ But we may well regret that these alternatives were not pursued (before) and that there was not an effort to avoid the use of the first A-bomb – and certainly the second.” (Barton Bernstein, *The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered*, *Foreign Affairs*, Jan./Feb. 1995, pg. 150). Also, Japan was already a defeated military power by July, 1945