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Mrs. Mikiko Yamada

(Survivor of Nagasaki, aged 54)

On the 9th of August, Mrs. Mikiko Yamada, then an 16-year-old student of a nurse training school in Osaka, was on her way home to Isahaya, 30 kilometers west of Nagasaki city. On entering the A-bombed city of Nagasaki on the 10th of August, she stayed there for a week, aiding the injured and removing corpses, at a distance of 2.5 kilometers from the epicenter. Then, under the guidance of a military surgeon, she worked for five months, dissecting bodies of the dead. Speaking of her memories, she says, "By no word can I describe the terrible sight of the dead and injured I saw then." While engaged in those first-aid activities, she began to develop acute symptoms of diarrhea, epirration and other symptoms, followed by the onset of more than ten complicated diseases that spread all over her body: a cranial tumor, liver trouble, nervous disorder and so on.

Later she married and suffered eight miscarriages before being able to bear her first child, a son. She says, "I want everybody to understand that many Hibakusha are still suffering in this way, simply from secondary radiation in the ravaged city."

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Why were the atomic bombs used?

By the middle of 1945, Japan had lost all its marine and air forces, and scarcely any war potential remained with which to continue fighting. An agreement had been made among the allies at the Yalta Conference in February, that the Soviet Union should enter the war against Japan from Siberia in early August, within three months of the surrender of Nazi Germany. The use of the atomic bombs by the U.S. was not really "to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands" as President Truman claimed, but "to get a political advantage in the U.S. post-war strategy against the Soviet Union," according to Secretary of War Stimson.

There was also another hidden aim, viz., to do research and study on the power of an atomic bomb in preparation for the further use of nuclear weapons in the future. This is why Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets for conducting living-body tests. For this reason the U.S. kept the damage of the atomic bombing a military secret, and refused to aid the Hibakusha in spite of an offer made by the International Red Cross.

The U.S. forcibly took many Hibakusha to military hospitals in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where they took samples of their blood and cut off affected parts of their weakening bodies for pathological research, treating the victims as 'guinea pigs'. But they gave them no medical treatment.