TURNING POINT IN GLOBAL WARFARE:
ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS IN WORLD WAR II

• League of Nations agreements on not bombing civilians, 1923 & 1938

| Question: Why would nations that had signed international agreements to refrain from attacking and bombing civilians not honor those agreements during World War II? |

• Shanghai, China, January 1932: Chinese boycott of Japanese goods

• Ethiopia, December 1935 - May 1936: mustard gas, air power, and indiscriminate bombing including Red Cross units; the League of Nations imposed minor sanctions against Italy, and Italy resigned in protest. More than 700,000 Ethiopians were killed during the fighting, while just 2,000 Italians soldiers were lost.

• Guernica, Spain, April 26, 1937: massive air raid by 43 German Luftwaffe on the Basque town of Guernica in Northern Spain killed almost a thousand people and destroyed 70 percent of the buildings

• Nanking, China, December 1937-February 1938: The population of Nanking was subjected to an uncontrolled butchery that came to be known as “the Rape of Nanking.” As the Japanese Imperial Army swarmed into the city, fleeing residents were shot or bayoneted. Thousands of suspected members of the Chinese Army who had shed their uniforms for civilian clothing were apprehended, their hands tied behind their backs and led en masse to killing fields where they were shot, beheaded, used for bayonet practice, or killed in some other gruesome manner before being dumped into mass graves. Thousands of others were buried while still alive. Rape of Chinese civilian women was rampant followed by their murder once the lust of their attackers had been satisfied. The carnage lasted for six weeks and took an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 lives.

• London, 1940-1941: “Beginning on September 7, 1940, and for a total of 57 consecutive nights, London was bombed. ... Other British cities targeted during the Blitz included Portsmouth, Southampton, Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol, Bath, Cardiff, Birmingham, Coventry, Nottingham, Norwich, Ipswich, Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Hull, Middleborough, Sunderland, Newcastle, and also Glasgow, Scotland, and Belfast, Northern Ireland. ...”

By the end of 1940, German air raids had killed 15,000 British civilians. One of the worst attacks had occurred on the night of November 14-15 against Coventry, an industrial city east of Birmingham in central England. In that raid, 449 German bombers dropped 1,400 high explosive bombs and 100,000 incendiaries that destroyed 50,000 buildings, killing 568 persons, leaving over 1,000 badly injured. The incendiary devices created fire storms with super-heated gale force winds, drawing in torrents of air to fan enormous walls of flames.

In London, on the night of December 29-30, the Germans dropped incendiaries, resulting in a fire storm that devastated the area between St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Guildhall, destroying several historic churches. Other famous landmarks damaged
during the Blitz included Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and the Chamber of the House of Commons. The Blitz climaxed in May of 1941, leaving 375,000 Londoners homeless.”

Source: http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/about-blitz.htm

“By May 1941, 43,000 had been killed across Britain and 1.4 million had been made homeless.”

Source: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/blitz_and_world_war_two.htm

• Dresden, Germany, February 1945: Five raids by American and British airforces, with over 650,000 incendiaries dropped, created a firestorm that covered eight square miles, totally destroying 4,200 acres. Around 135,000 people died. The city center was buried under 18 million cubic meters of rubble. So many people died that the corpses had to be burned in mass piles.

Source: http://www.dresden.de/de/02/110/01/c_13.php

• Tokyo, Japan, March 9-10, 1945: 300 American B-29s used low level incendiary bombing runs over Tokyo to create firestorms that destroyed 15 square miles of the city, killing 83,000 and injuring 102,000. All of the raids on the Japanese islands destroyed over two million buildings, made nine million homeless, killed 260,000, and injured 412,000. From July 1945 on, the Allied fleets closed in on Japan, using their heavy guns to bombard the coastal cities from close range.


• Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, August 6th & August 9th, 1945: An American B-29 bomber dropped the world’s first deployed atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan. The explosion wiped out 90% of the city and immediately killed 80,000 people; tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure. Three days later, a second B-29 dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki, killing an estimated 40,000 people. Japan’s Emperor Hirohito announced his country’s unconditional surrender in World War II in a radio address on August 15th, citing the devastating power of “a new and most cruel bomb.”

Source: http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/bombing-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki