

# GREEN ACTION

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Green Action Press Release

## Japan Must Learn from the Lessons of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident

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For immediate release

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150,000 people remain displaced as a result of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident which began on 11 March 2011, and the reality of this nuclear disaster is still reported daily in the news. In spite of this, on January 30th, the new Shinzo Abe administration announced that it would scrap the former government's plans to phase out nuclear power during the 2030's, and would deliberate on the issue "from scratch," completely negating the public debate undertaken by the national government last summer. <sup>1</sup> The current national government must listen to the will of the Japanese people.

On November 26th last year, the Japanese government received a harsh warning concerning its handling of the Fukushima accident from the UN Special Rapporteur advising the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, concerning rights to physical and mental health.<sup>2</sup> Now, more than three months since the report, none of these serious concerns have been dealt with. The Japanese government must address these issues immediately before the final report is to be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2013.

The national standard for radiation exposure is 1mSv/year. Citizens, especially families with young children, living in areas contaminated by radiation due to the Fukushima accident who are anticipated to receive levels of exposure beyond this national standard should have the right to evacuate, in other words, they should receive government support if they choose to relocate.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 28 August 2012, Reuters.(In Japanese.)

<http://jp.reuters.com/article/topNews/idJPTYE87R05W20120828> Citizens were given a choice of zero, 15% and 30% nuclear power (percentage of total electricity production) by 2030, and 90% responded "zero." The most recent poll indicates 68% want to phase out of nuclear power.

[http://www.kahoku.co.jp/spe/spe\\_sys1115/20130224\\_02.htm](http://www.kahoku.co.jp/spe/spe_sys1115/20130224_02.htm)

<sup>2</sup> 26, November 2011, UN Special Rapporteur's Press Statement Press Release 12-058-E 26/11/2012.

[http://unic.or.jp/unic/press\\_release/2869/#entry-english](http://unic.or.jp/unic/press_release/2869/#entry-english)

<sup>3</sup> 20 August 2011, IPPNW statement, "International physicians' recommendations for protecting health after the Fukushima nuclear disaster" states, "People living in contaminated regions should have access to full information on their likely radiation exposures and supported in all possible ways to minimize these. For those with anticipated annual exposure greater than 5 mSv, or more than 1mSv

A comprehensive compensation regime must be established immediately for those that have been displaced or who have suffered economic damage due to the accident.

In spite of the fact that the The National Diet of Japan Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission (NAIIC), appointed by the national Diet, found that the accident was clearly man-made<sup>4</sup>, there has as yet been no investigation or criminal prosecution of individuals who held official capacities in TEPCO, the government, and other institutes whose decisions lead to the Fukushima accident. This situation must be ameliorated immediately.

The Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA) passed nuclear power accident evacuation guidelines on 27 February. Japan's national broadcasting corporation NHK reported that whereas over 3155 public comments were submitted on the draft, they all went virtually unheeded. According to NHK, the comments addressed such issues as over-restricted distribution of potassium iodine, and the need to lower radiation levels set to trigger evacuation plans. Nuclear regulation continues to be opaque and/or not responsive to public input.

Emergency evacuation plans being prepared in Japan cannot cope with a serious nuclear power accident. On 31 March, Shunichi Tanaka, chairman of the NRA, hinted that a legal framework should be put in place whereby nuclear power plants cannot operate without evacuation plans<sup>5</sup>.

The government states categorically that MACCS2, the radiation dispersal model currently being used in the event of an accident, is inaccurate beyond 30 kilometers. However, at the same time, the NRA's recently issued standards that would trigger distribution of stable iodine, food restrictions, and temporary evacuation if and when environmentally-monitored radiation levels exceed 20 microsieverts/hour. Areas of Fukushima City located 60 kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi reached levels in excess of this standard during the Fukushima accident.

Local governments responsible for areas within 30-some kilometers of a nuclear power plant have been ordered by the Japanese national government to submit evacuation plans by March 18th. The historic capital of Japan, Kyoto City, is one of them. Kyoto Prefecture officials admit that in the event of a large nuclear power accident emergency, some type of measures may need to be taken 50 to 60 kilometers from the plant. This would include areas in Kyoto including the Old Imperial Palace, the world-famous Golden Pavilion, the international conference hall where the Kyoto Protocol was signed, and Kyoto City Hall itself.

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for children and women of child-bearing age, equitable and consistent access to health care, housing, employment and educational support and compensation should be provided if they choose to re-locate.”

<sup>4</sup> 5 July 2012, The National Diet of Japan Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission. <http://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3856371/naaic.go.jp/en/>

<sup>5</sup> 1 November 2012, Sankei Shinbun (in Japanese)  
<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/affairs/news/121101/dst12110108240001-n1.htm>

The emergency plans being formulated this month do not include countermeasures in the event of radioactive contamination of Lake Biwa, which provides water to 14.5 million citizens in the Kansai region of Japan. The northern end of Lake Biwa is located 28 kilometers from nuclear power plants in Fukui Prefecture.<sup>6</sup>

The Ohi Nuclear Power Plant Unit 3 and 4 continue to operate without new post-Fukushima nuclear safety standards in place.<sup>7</sup> (These standards are to be put in place in July this year.) It is of great concern that reactors at Ohi are operating in violation of seismic safety guidelines that were put in place before Fukushima, on 20 December 2011. The guidelines state that if an active fault is suspected to exist under a nuclear power plant site, no important facility at the site could be located above it. (The emergency cooling pipes for Ohi Units 3 and 4 cross such a fault.) In July, NRA appointed an expert committee to investigate the site. None of the experts have stated the fault is not active. Has Japan really learned from the Fukushima accident if it does not even comply with its own seismic safety guidelines put in place *before* Fukushima? Ohi Units 3 and 4 should be shut down immediately.

The verdict on a lawsuit seeking a provisional injunction to shut down Ohi Units 3 and 4 filed against Kansai Electric by 262 citizens<sup>8</sup> will be handed down the end of March or beginning of April. Depending on the verdict, Ohi could be ordered shut before its scheduled outage in September.

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<sup>6</sup> Much closer if water sources flowing into Lake Biwa are taken into consideration.

<sup>7</sup> Kansai Electric's nuclear power plant (PWR) located in Fukui Prefecture. Ohi Units 3 and 4 resumed commercial operation on 5 July and 21 July of 2011, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> The executive director of Green Action, Aileen Mioko Smith, is co-lead plaintiff along with Hideyuki Koyama of Mihama-no-Kai based in Osaka.