

# **Our urgent demands to the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Company regarding the Fukushima Daiichi power plant nuclear accidents**

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On 11 March, a massive earthquake and tsunami hit the eastern part of Japan. It is estimated that the number people who have died or are missing exceeds 30,000. We would like to express deep sympathy for the victims and to offer what support we can to the more than 300,000 people who are suffering from cold, anxiety, lack of water, food, and medicine, and the loss of their family and property.

We are concerned about the impact of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accidents on the natural environment in Japan, neighboring countries, and around the world, as well as the devastating damage of the earthquake and tsunami. High levels of radiation are being released from the nuclear reactors, and are seriously polluting the air, land, and water. People living near the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant have been forced to decide whether to leave their communities or stay despite the danger. People who have infants and children are particularly concerned about the impact, and the damage to many farms and fisheries is very serious. Workers are trying their best to cool the overheating reactors, but we cannot deny the possibility that the situation will grow worse and lead to a catastrophe.

We are outraged by the managers of the Tokyo Electronic Company (TEPCO), the Japanese government, and the mass media, who are neglecting their duties. The Japanese government must not close its eyes to the reality. It should carry out comprehensive research on the effects of radioactive contamination, prepare for the worst, honestly inform people of the risks, and work with citizens including local residents in Fukushima. However, the government is not releasing all information, and is seeking to convince people that the situation is neither very serious nor very dangerous. The mainstream media is not critical of the government's irresponsibility, and allows pro-nuclear "experts" to shape public opinion. In this way, the government, the media, and "experts" actually result in increasing people's anxiety about the impact of the accidents because we cannot trust their announcements that radioactive contamination will not immediately affect our health.

TEPCO claims that the tsunami which struck the plant was so high that it would have been difficult to prevent the accident. But this accident was not a natural disaster. The Japanese government must take responsibility: it allowed 54 nuclear reactors to operate across the country, sought to construct further reactors, and announced that these reactors are not dangerous. It ignored or suppressed the voices of people who were warning us about the risks of the nuclear reactors. Even now, the government and the opposition Liberal Democratic Party do not admit their responsibility for having promoted nuclear energy policy in the past, and have not apologised to local people in Fukushima for causing great damage to their lives.

Rather, the government and TEPCO failed to cope with the overheating reactors in the earlier stages, and then ordered subcontract workers to cool them in poor conditions, in which they have

been exposed to radiation and not provided with sufficient sleep and food. The government also refuses to stop the operations of the Hamaoka nuclear plant, which is seen as one of the most vulnerable to earthquakes, to decommission all other nuclear plants in Japan, or to give up exporting nuclear technology to other Asian countries.

We believe that the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident uncovers the unfair relationship in Japan: while people living in the local villages of Fukushima and working in the nuclear plant are exposed to radioactive contamination, people living in big cities such as Tokyo enjoy convenient and comfortable lives by using a large amount of energy produced in Fukushima. This situation demands that we reflect on our convenient and comfortable lives, which are based on nuclear power, and transform our prosperity and civilisation. We first need to deal with the accidents, and help the victims to reconstruct their lives, and then we need to shift to discussions about how we can rebuild our society. We should not go back to the same convenient and comfortable lives, rather we are required to create a new lifestyle.

We advocate that we should stop blindly pursuing economic growth. We need to transform our current economy and lifestyles which rely on nuclear power, and develop systems of community-based energy supply.

We insist that the Japanese government and TEPCO sincerely listen to the voices of people living in the disaster area and near the Fukushima nuclear power plants. They must take responsibility for the accidents by swiftly carrying out the following actions.

**1.** The government should provide support to people living in the disaster area who are suffering from poor sanitary conditions, lack of water and food, and psychological distress.

The government should mobilize the resources of various public sectors, and enhance their cooperation with local governments, companies, NGOs, NPOs, and citizen volunteers.

It should help local governments to accept people who have fled from their communities, provide temporary houses to people who have been forced to evacuate, give support in rebuilding houses, secure the income of people who have lost their sources of income, and provide health care, counselling, nursing care, childcare, and education free of charge.

**2.** The government and TEPCO must release accurate information about the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. They must clarify how they will cope with the worst case scenario, and ask local residents and other people to cooperate with them.

The government should extend the evacuation zone and develop an evacuation plan. In particular, it should give full support to people who cannot flee by themselves.

The socially weak, such as infants, children, pregnant women, hospital patients, disabled people, older people, and foreigners, should be protected first.

The government should improve the medical care system to treat health problems caused by nuclear radiation.

The government should secure people safe water and food, and compensate farms and fisheries who are prohibited from distributing their agricultural products.

**3.** The government and TEPCO must recognize that the accident is a result of their nuclear energy policy.

They should immediately stop the operation of nuclear reactors in Fukushima, Hamaoka, and other places, decommission them, transform their energy policy, and facilitate renewable energy.

They should immediately stop exporting nuclear technology to other Asian countries.

4. The government and TEPCO must apologise to workers working in the damaged reactors for exposing them to radiation.

Under the supervision of the government, TEPCO should assure these workers of as good working conditions as possible, and strictly control the amount of radiation exposure.

Labor unions should probe into the working conditions of the workers, and take action to protect their rights.

We hope that the above demands will be swiftly met with the support of a wide range of people.

31 March, 2011

**People's Plan Study Group**

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**P.S.**

\* From Japonasia:

<http://www.ppjaponesia.org/modules/tinycontent/index.php?id=8>