

In Japan, around 267,000 people remain evacuees 3 years after quake-tsunami disaster

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TOKYO (Kyodo) — Around 267,000 people are still living in temporary housing and other makeshift residences nationwide as Japan is set to commemorate three years since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeast of the country and triggered an unprecedented nuclear crisis.

Police and other authorities continue to search for those listed as missing in coastal areas following the Great East Japan Earthquake, one of the most powerful quakes on record in Japan, and the ensuing tsunami that left scores of people dead, unaccounted for or homeless.

Following the magnitude 9.0-earthquake that struck at 2:46 p.m., a tsunami engulfed large parts of the northeast, forcing the evacuation of up to 470,000 people.

The disaster-hit communities are still struggling with a host of issues including the slow rate of reconstruction and an exodus of residents.

According to the National Police Agency, 15,884 people were killed, mostly in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures in the Tohoku region, while 2,636 people remained unaccounted for as of Feb. 28.

The number of deaths including those caused by suicide due to the physical and mental stress of staying in shelters has continued to rise, totaling 3,048 as of Monday, according to a Kyodo News tally.

Based on Reconstruction Agency statistics as of Feb. 13, more than 97,000 remain in makeshift residences in Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima, home of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which suffered a series of explosions and meltdowns.

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* <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140310p2g00m0dm045000c.html>