

The nuclear catastrophe in Japan

On March 11th, 2011, a nuclear catastrophe occurred in Japan: an earthquake, a tsunami and multiple explosions destroyed four reactor blocks of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant. Large amounts of radioactive particles were released and contaminated large parts of the region.



The ecological and social consequences of this catastrophe can be seen everywhere in the country: whole families uprooted from their ancestral homes, deserted evacuation zones, hundreds of thousands of bags of irradiated soil dumped all over the country, contaminated forests, rivers and lakes. **Normality has not returned to Japan.**

Large scale contamination

The reactors continue to be a radiation hazard as further catastrophes could occur at any time. Every day adds more radioactive contamination to the ocean, air and soil.

Enormous amounts of radioactive waste are stored on the premises of the power plant in the open air.

Should there be another earthquake, these would pose a grave danger to the population and the environment. The nuclear catastrophe continues until today.



TOKYO 2020

The Radioactive Olympics

放射性オリンピック

Olympic Games 2020

In 2020, Japan is inviting athletes from around the world to take part in the Tokyo Olympic Games. We are hoping for the games to be fair and peaceful. At the same time, we are worried about plans to host baseball and softball competitions in Fukushima City, just 50 km away from the ruins of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant. It was here, in 2011, that multiple nuclear meltdowns took place, spreading radioactivity across Japan and the Pacific Ocean – a catastrophe comparable only to the nuclear meltdown of Chernobyl.

In light of the upcoming Olympic Games in Japan in 2020, the anti-nuclear movement is organizing an international campaign that will focus on the health effects of radioactive contamination, especially for people with increased vulnerability towards ionizing radiation, such as pregnant women and children. According to the Japanese government, the Olympic Games will likely cost more than \$25 billion. **We denounce the attempt of the Japanese government to pretend that normality has returned to the contaminated regions of Japan.**



Foto: Nuclear Regulatory Commission, CC BY 2.0

Dangerous contamination

International regulations limit the permitted dose for the general public of additional radiation following a nuclear accident to 1 mSv per year. In areas where evacuation orders were recently lifted, the returning population will be exposed to levels up to 20 mSv per year. Even places that have undergone extensive decontamination efforts could be recontaminated at any time by unfavourable weather conditions, as mountains and forests serve as a continuous depot for radioactive particles.

Starting in March of 2019, the Japanese authorities are trying to force the people evacuated from the contaminated areas to return by cutting their financial assistance and ending housing schemes for nuclear refugees. In December of 2018, Fukushima Medical University published the latest data from their ongoing thyroid screenings of people under the age of 18 at the time of the nuclear meltdowns. Similar to the Chernobyl case, we are again seeing an increased incidence of thyroid cancer. So far, 166 cases have been confirmed and 38 further patients are still waiting for operations.



Foto: Ian Thomas Ash

Further reading

IPPNW-Information: Health effects of ionising radiation: Summary of expert meeting in Ulm, Germany, October 19th, 2013. ippnw.de/bit/ionising_radiation

IPPNW-Report: „30 years living with Chernobyl – 5 years living with Fukushima - Health effects of the nuclear disasters in Chernobyl and Fukushima“ (2016) ippnw.de/bit/chernobyl_fukushima

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