



Protests: The 20 Millisievert Decision and the Future of Atomic Energy in Japan May. 08, 2011

抗議各種—20ミリシーベルトの基準決定および日本原子力の将来

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The Japanese government's decision to increase the maximum yearly radiation exposure limit for Fukushima school children by a factor of 20 – from 1 to 20 millisieverts – continues to spark outrage in Japan and internationally.

20 millisieverts is the maximum recommended dose for adults during emergencies. The Japanese government's decision to use that figure as a standard for children who will undergo their studies as usual has already led to the resignation of Special Advisor to the Cabinet Kosako Toshio, a Tokyo University radiation expert, who has [described](#) the government's decision as going against "humanism" and "international common sense".

The US group Physicians for Social Responsibility have held a press conference describing the 20 millisieverts decision as "unconscionable".

The group International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War calls raising the allowable radiation dose for Fukushima children "unacceptable" in an April 29 open letter to Yoshiaki Takaki, Japan's Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology: The letter is available in two parts:

[Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#)

The group is direct in pointing out increased risk for children: "The U.S. National Academy of Sciences BEIR VII report estimates that each 1 mSv of radiation is associated with an increased risk of solid cancer (cancers other than leukemia) of about 1 in 10,000; an increased risk of leukemia of about 1 in 100,000; and a 1 in 17,500 increased risk of dying from cancer. But a critical factor is that not everyone faces the same level of risk. For infants (under 1 year of age) the radiation-related cancer risk is 3 to 4 times higher than for adults; and female infants are twice as susceptible as male infants."

In Japan, a group of over a dozen influential doctors and scientists has sent a [letter](#) to Prime Minister Kan Naoto warning of the dangers of allowing sustained radiation exposure.

They call for caution and a careful response to the Fukushima radiation release, pointing out that there are laws in place governing appropriate reactions to protect workers and the public in times of crisis. They note how a rate of exposure of 0.6 microsieverts hourly is high enough to demand emergency action. In mid April, areas outside of the Japanese government's 30 km evacuation radius such as Namie-machi to the northwest of Fukushima Daiichi saw an hourly rate of 25.3 microsieverts, or over 40 times the emergency level. In areas like this one, they warn, pregnant women and young children are at particularly high risk.

On May 7, a protest was held in front of NHK Headquarters in Shibuya to call for an end to Japan's reliance on nuclear power and bring more attention to the issue of the exposure of children to radiation. Reports indicate that as many as 10,000 took to the streets.

Click [here](#) for videos and photos of the event.

An April 10 demonstration in the Koenji area of Tokyo attracted 15,000, but received only scant media attention. By making NHK the focal point of the May 7 protest, organizers won significant media coverage. There were articles or TV news reports from:

[NHK](#) | [Asahi](#) | [Mainichi](#) | [Akahata](#) | [Jiji](#) | [Tokyo Shimbun](#) | [NTV](#)

Prime Minister Kan has pressed for the temporary shutdown of the Hamaoka nuclear power facility – a Shizuoku power plant ever closer to the ocean than Fukushima Daiichi – but demonstrators go further, demanding the shutdown of all nuclear plants in Japan. The march included several DJs on sound trucks and reports indicate that families and young people who found out about the protest online made up a large part of the turnout.

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