

## Fukushima victims take a stand with human rights declaration

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### THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

FUKUSHIMA--In a symbolic gesture, residents of Fukushima Prefecture have sought to address their grievances stemming from the nuclear disaster here last year with a basic declaration of human rights.

It was drafted by Yoshitaro Nomura, a Tokyo-based lawyer who has been providing legal consultations for those affected by the reactor meltdowns that caused mass evacuations. He has also been giving advice to victims and taking part in negotiations for compensation from Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 plant.

Nomura, 53, wrote the draft of the Fukushima human rights declaration this spring after listening to the views of Fukushima residents.

Among other things, it says the March 2011 disaster deprived residents of the right to pursue happiness as stipulated in the Japanese Constitution.

More than 150 people responded to an appeal circulated at meetings and on the Internet to support the declaration. Nomura's goal is to collect 100,000 signatures.

Although the declaration is nonbinding, Nomura said he will ask the national and local governments to heed the concerns of local residents.

A symposium was held in Fukushima on Nov. 11 to generate momentum for the declaration. It was attended by scholars as well as ordinary citizens whose lives were uprooted by the disaster.

Nomura refers to the parties directly involved, and in his view responsible for the disaster, as "perpetrators."

"Those who caused the accident switched from having responsibility to escaping from responsibility," he said. "In essence, they are trivializing the disaster, cutting the amount of compensation and announcing the crisis is over."

Nomura said the parallels between the Fukushima case and that of Minamata disease, a neurological disorder caused by mercury poisoning in seafood, were inescapable.

"What did the administration do in the wake of Fukushima crisis?" Nomura asked. "The government delayed giving evacuation orders. Now it is giving priority to economic recovery over the health of residents."

Participants in the Nov. 11 symposium commented on the declaration.

"We want Fukushima to return to the way it was, where we can eat tasty rice, vegetables, fruit, fish and meat without the slightest fear," says one passage in the declaration.

Tomoo Onuki, 63, and his wife Setsuko, 56, said they were impressed by the passage in light of the fact their vegetable garden stopped producing following decontamination work.

Only a single basil tree now survives in the sandy soil. The couple's efforts over 20 years to nurture the soil have come to naught.

"I had thought that decontamination would make me feel refreshed," Setsuko said. "But I was wrong. I feel as if I had my skin removed."

Airborne radiation 1 centimeter above the soil in their garden has dropped to 0.4 microsievert per hour compared with 2-3 microsieverts per hour prior to decontamination.

The Onukis continue to drink filtered water. They buy their vegetables from a farmer in Yamanashi Prefecture and rice from a farmer in Akita Prefecture.

Still, they do not feel safe. They are particularly concerned about the health of their 20-year-old daughter, who lives with them, Setsuko said.

Fumiko Hirai, a 63-year-old resident of Fukushima's Kitawamata district, shared the message in this passage: "We have the right to receive information on the damage caused by radiation until we are fully satisfied. We have the right to know."

Using 500,000 yen (\$6,100) provided by city authorities for decontamination work, Hirai got rid of weeds in her garden. She also had a ditch decontaminated.

Given that she intends to continue living in this city, Hirai has plenty of questions about the future of nuclear power generation in Japan as well as the current state of the Chernobyl plant, site of a catastrophic nuclear accident in 1986, in Ukraine.

Despite her concerns, Hirai said that many people prefer not to think about the past, perhaps out of a fear of rocking the boat.

"They opt to close the lid on the right to know, and this goes to the heart of freedom of expression," she said. "I want to nudge them to speak up."

Yasuhiro Abe, a movie theater manager, cited a passage that says, "We have the right to self-determination about whether to evacuate or not."

Abe, 49, his wife, 44, and their eldest daughter, 11, fled Fukushima Prefecture shortly after the crisis flared.

Abe returned alone to open the theater three weeks later.

He said he wants to continue to work in Fukushima, but the prospects are dim.

He visits Kyoto, where his wife and daughter live, once a month. The overnight bus costs 20,000 yen for a round trip. He also sends them 150,000 yen each month.

Abe said a gulf has been developing among people whose lives have been transformed by the nuclear disaster.

He said they hurt each other unintentionally with comments like, "It's nice to have a place to evacuate to" and "People with children get more in the way of consolation payments."

(This is article was written by Masakazu Honda and Etsuko Akuzawa.)

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