



International Physicians
for the Prevention of Nuclear War



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IPPNW urges Japanese government to take urgent action to protect Japanese people from unacceptable radiation exposure

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Now more than eight years after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the 1985 Nobel Peace Laureate, strongly supports the call by civil society organisations in Japan for the ionising radiation maximum permissible dose limit for members of the public to be promptly reduced from 20 to 1 mSv per year.

IPPNW leaders wrote to the Japanese government on 29 April 2011 expressing concern about the government's decision a few days earlier to increase the allowable additional exposure to ionising radiation for children in Fukushima from 1 to 20 mSv per year: *"As physicians, we consider the decision to allow the children of Fukushima to be exposed to such injurious levels of radiation an unacceptable abrogation of the responsibility of care and custodianship for our children and future generations."*

A few months later, on 22 August 2011, IPPNW co-presidents wrote to then Prime Minister Naoto Kan, urging that: *"The maximum acceptable additional non-medical radiation exposure limit for the general population should be returned to 1 mSv per year in total (i.e., including both internal and external exposures to all radioactive isotopes). This is especially important for children and pregnant women and should occur without delay."*

We reiterated then: *"We remain profoundly concerned that the 20 mSv annual radiation dose limit for members of the public, including children and pregnant women, set by your government in April, unfortunately represents the greatest willingness to accept radiation-related health harm for the general population of any government around the world in recent decades. As physicians, we have an ethical responsibility to state that such a level is associated with unacceptable health risks where these can be avoided."*

It is inexcusable that eight years later, these measures which need to be taken for the Japanese government to fulfil its responsibility to protect its citizens have still not been implemented.

Since 2011, powerful new evidence of radiation-related health risks greater than previously estimated at doses as low as a few mSv and dose rates as low as 1mSv per year has emerged

from large studies of children having CT scans, rates of leukaemia in children living in areas with differing levels of background radiation, and large long-term studies of nuclear industry workers. These studies have also confirmed the particular vulnerability to radiation of young children, and women and girls, with long-term cancer risks for young girls being up to 8 to 10 times greater than for adult males for the same radiation exposure. This evidence has reinforced the urgency of protecting the health and safety of the people of Japan by returning the radiation dose limit for the public back to 1mSv.

IPPNW therefore urges prompt return to the 1 mSv/year standard, which should be applied consistently throughout Japan, including to evacuation orders and return of citizens to radioactively contaminated areas.

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