

Call to Pacific Leaders on Fukushima Waste Dumping

June 20, 2023

Dear Pacific Leaders,

We are a concerned coalition of civil society organisations, social movements and scholars, who are calling for the protection of the the Pacific Ocean and its inhabitants, our livelihoods that depend on it, and our precious children and descendants from the impacts of illicit radioactive waste dumping from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan.

We are worried and dissatisfied with the lack of progress that has been made by Pacific states to reverse the decision of the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) to imminently release more than 1.3 million tonnes of nuclear wastewater into the Pacific Ocean scheduled for later this year.

We, as the coalition, demand that Pacific states:

Support calls by [Pacific CSOs](#) and prominent organisations such as the [Pacific Elders Voice](#), as well as elected officials, ministers, and [Pacific churches](#), to oppose Japan's plans to dump radioactive waste into the ocean by issuing a strong collective statement of opposition from the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). This statement should strongly oppose any and all nuclear waste dumping on the basis of the scientific findings of the expert panel for Pacific Islands Forum and regional treaties and other international obligations, to urge Japan to a) abandon its plans to dump nuclear wastewater into the Pacific Ocean and b) pursue [alternatives to ocean dumping](#). This should be accompanied with a firm statement by Pacific leaders that failure to do so will result in the following:

1. Collective implementation of economic sanctions on Japan, particularly suspension of all Japan-Pacific trade agreements related to fisheries and logging industries.
2. A United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) party will initiate a lawsuit against Japan at the Tribunal on the International Law of the Sea (ITLOS) asking for Provisional Measures for the ensuing trans-boundary harm that will be caused by this act upon the Pacific, which constitutes a contravention of Japan's obligations under international law ([UNCLOS](#), [London Convention](#)) and its responsibilities as a neighbour to the Pacific that has historically advocated for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific ([South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone](#), [Noumea Convention](#), [Waigani Convention](#)).

We acknowledge the vast legacy of nuclear testing within the region along with the ongoing climate crisis, both of which will be exacerbated by attitudes which continue to treat rivers and oceans as nuclear dumping sites. We are aware that the promotion of nuclear power as a climate change solution and the characterization of tritium as a harmless substance

continues to prop up a nuclear order which generates billions of dollars at the expense of developing countries and Indigenous communities.

This group includes Pacific individuals, families and communities that have suffered and continue to bear the intergenerational consequences of nuclear testing, the subsequent abandonment of nuclear waste in our islands, and the catastrophic impacts of climate change. Communities throughout the Pacific have voiced their [deep opposition](#) to nuclear waste dumping as it compounds the trauma and suffering of Pacific peoples. How the world deals with this nuclear waste can set a new precedent on the behaviour of corporations and countries, and determine the course of economic, climate and ecological justice for Pacific people.

The Ocean is a sacred and vital source of culture, livelihood and well-being for all Pacific peoples. The Pacific Ocean is the largest and deepest of the world's oceans and each organism, from the tiniest protozoa to the majestic blue whale, must be safeguarded to preserve the balance of its incredibly biodiverse ecosystem. It has been made clear by the five-member independent international [scientific panel](#) appointed by the Pacific Islands Forum, that there is insufficient evidence to prove that the radioactive material will not harm the marine life within this precious Ocean. Aside from physical damage to our ocean, the proposed nuclear waste dumping will also harm the global reputations of Pacific regional fisheries and marine exports.

The Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) used by TEPCO is entirely unable to remove tritium (radioactive hydrogen) and radioactive carbon-14 from the contaminated water, and the ALPS-treated water may still contain some of the 64 radionuclides. [Numerous studies](#) indicate that tritium can produce damaging health effects such as cancers, genetic effects, developmental abnormalities, reproductive effects, mutations, tumours, and cell death. Tritium is also [clinically shown](#) to be more effective at damaging and destroying living cells than gamma rays. [Studies](#) also indicate that lower doses of tritium can cause more cell death, mutations, and chromosome damage per dose than higher tritium doses. Tritium may also have [transgenerational effects](#), as it crosses the placenta and could impact embryo and foetus—which is also true for [17 of the 64 radionuclides](#) in question. Therefore this is also a gender and women's human rights contravention, with implications for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Finally, tritiated water can take the form of organically bound tritium (OBT) and [bioaccumulate](#) in phytoplankton, mussels, and plants. A [scientific report](#) published in December 2013 in the *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* highlighted, “Unlike for tritiated water (HTO), the environmental quantification and behaviour of OBT are not well known.”

Furthermore, the dumping prioritises cost-cutting attempts by the Japanese government and industry over the self-determination and health of Pacific peoples. As the primary stakeholder in TEPCO since the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown, the Japanese government cannot claim objectivity in its management policies for this disaster. Though the IAEA offers reassurance of the safety of the policy, it must be observed that IAEA experts have been urging the Japanese government to dispose of Fukushima Daiichi's liquid nuclear waste [since 2013](#), prior to gaining any systemic knowledge of the feasibility of such a proposal from the perspective of environmental and public health.

We acknowledge that Japan has been an important economic partner and donor country to many Pacific Island nations. However, we now observe with serious concern Japan using development assistance as a political tool to pursue their interests and stakes over those of the Pacific. This is a form of development injustice, coloniality, economic exploitation and constitutes a “second invasion” of the Pacific by Japan and Japanese companies. We hope that the economic partnerships with Japan do not deter Pacific states from protecting the interests of Pacific people whose livelihoods are threatened by Japan’s imminent release of nuclear wastewater.

TEPCO’s proposed dumping plan with the endorsement of the Japanese government, does not respect regional treaties and constitutes an unconscionable act of environmental pollution and crime that will detrimentally and permanently harm our shared Pacific Ocean, its people and biodiversity. It will bring Japan’s reputation into global disrepute and open it up to international legal challenge. It constitutes a brazen contravention of Japan’s obligations under international law ([UNCLOS](#), [London Convention](#)) and a flagrant disregard of its responsibilities as a Pacific neighbour ([South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone](#), [Noumea Convention](#), [Waigani Convention](#)). Of significant importance, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)), Japan is legally required to do everything within its power to ensure that its policies do not cause trans-boundary harm to other States and their environments by polluting them, or cause pollution to spread beyond Japan’s territorial boundaries.

We look to Pacific leaders to uphold your [commitment](#) to bolstering Pacific regionalism, development justice, human rights, strength, and unity. The time has now come for Pacific states to step up to collectively take clear and punitive action against Japan on the Fukushima issue, and activate all efforts to ensure the safety of our people and the Pacific region.

Signed,

Organisations:

The Pacific Conference of Churches, Regional
Pagopago Rotaract Club, American Samoa
Migrants Against Acceptable Standard of Health Aotearoa, New Zealand
Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Fiji
Radiation Exposure Awareness Crusaders of Humanity Marshall Islands - REACH-MI,
Marshall Islands
The Bok im Na Project, Marshall Islands
Tasty Kitchen Collective, Fiji
Transparency Solomon Islands Youth for Democracy Network, Solomon Islands
MISA4thePacific, Fiji/Marshall Islands
TSI Youth for Democracy Network, Solomon Islands
Queensland Australia Pacific Climate Warriors, Australia
Big City Marine Consultancy PTE, LTE, Fiji
Trans Affirmative Action Guild - TAAG, Fiji
Rainbow Pride Foundation and TAAG Assembly, Fiji
Strumphet Alliance Network, Fiji
House of Khameleon, Fiji

Bua Urban Youth Network, Fiji
Transparency Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands
Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network, Fiji
Islands of Opportunity Alliance (IOA-LSAMP), Hawai'i
Peace Movement Aotearoa, New Zealand
Marshallese Educational Initiative, Springdale, Arkansas
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (Te Ao o Rongomaraeroa)
Piku Biodiversity Network, Papua New Guinea
Pacific Youth Council New Zealand

Scholars:

Desmond Doulatram, College of the Marshall Islands
Dr. Vijay Naidu, University of the South Pacific
Debby Schutz, University of the South Pacific
Pualana Roby, University of Guam
Amelyn Aitora, Solomon Islands National University
Mary Suimae, University of the South Pacific
Axel Defngin, University of Hawai'i
Dr. Karly Burch, University of Auckland
Talei Mangioni, Australian National University
Neal Curtis, University of Auckland
Caroline Orchiston, University of Otago
Dr. Emma Sharp, University of Auckland
Steve Matthewman, University of Auckland
Rebecca Hogue, Harvard University
Dr. Ross Westerby, Griffith University
Dr. Bruce Cohen, University of Auckland
Manuel Valee, University of Auckland
Iowane Mow, Fiji
Norma Field, Ingersoll Distinguished Service Professor Emerita, University of Chicago
Professor Yuki Miyamoto, DePaul University
Maura Jess, University of California at Santa Barbara
Sterling Stokes, OHSU-PSU School of Public Health
Laura Seeton
Steven Sondheim, University of Memphis
Sybil Kelly, Portland State University
Sally Angelson, Otago University
Manuel Garcia Taramillo, Oregon State University
Chloe Fe der, Oregon State University
Delaney Chabot, Oregon State University
Ruth Chadd Garcia-Jaramillo, Claremont School of Theology
Catherine Eschle, University of Strathclyde
Fiona Amundsen, Auckland University of Technology
Mino Cleverly, University of Otago

Elected Officials:

Mr. Jioji Masivesi Cakacaka, Maritime Office for Youth and Women on Environment & Social Empowerment, Fiji

Supporters:

Nuclear Truth Project, International
Portland Raging Environmental Team
Seattle Fellowship of Reconciliation
Linnton Neighborhood Association
Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition
Gender and Radiation Impact Project
Mid-Missouri Peaceworks
St. Andrew Eco-Justice Team
Citizens Awareness Network
Youth Arts New York
Hibakusha Stories
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Fukushima Fallout Awareness Network
Coalition Against Nukes
Oregon Conservancy Foundation