

Sachiko Sato's Appeal in USA

Over the past 30 years, I've brought up my five children while farming in harmony with nature. Since the Chernobyl incident, I've lived based on time-tested wisdom and skills from the past for the sake of our future generations. Even if there is no more petroleum and all the nuclear power plants are shut down, we can still continue living. That is the way people should live, recognizing the importance of relationships with other people and respecting nature.

Our family of 7 lived modestly by growing rice, vegetables and various grains on our "natural farm" and cooking our food over firewood. Many people from all over the country gathered to learn about our lifestyle.

But 11th March changed everything. Despite the pain caused by the 3 tragedies of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident, we had to carry on living. It was especially difficult to accept the damage caused by the nuclear accident as we were unable to see it. My fellow farmers couldn't bring themselves to abandon the land they had put so much work into.

We heard about the nuclear power plant incident on 11th March at midnight. I decided to evacuate four of my children, who were living in Fukushima, to Yamagata. After the Chernobyl incident, I had already planned that if an accident ever occurs at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, I would send my children to Yamagata.

I quickly called my friend in Yamagata, who accepted my request and told us to come immediately. I was able to fulfill my basic duty as a parent, by protecting my children's lives.

My own children evacuated to Yamagata on 13th March, but in Fukushima, 300 000 children were left behind. I wanted to help every one of those children and hence, started measuring radiation levels in schools. The results showed that 75% of schools in Fukushima Prefecture were in radiation-controlled areas. I submitted the report to the prefecture, hoping that the children would be evacuated immediately. But on the day that I submitted the report, the country set the safety standard for children's exposure to radiation at 20milisievert of radiation per year.

This standard was set so that Fukushima city and Koriyama city would not be compulsory evacuation zones. Has the immunity of people towards radiation been changed by the nuclear incident? By increasing the safety standard values, the compulsory evacuation zones would not expand. The country said that people who wish to voluntarily evacuate are welcome to do so, however, they would not be compensated. This was done to decrease the amount of spending on evacuations and happened as a result of prioritizing the economic costs over the children's lives.

"Fukushima Prefecture's residents, as well as other prefecture's residents, have rights to not be exposed to radiation right?" but we didn't get an answer to this question. Fukushima Prefecture's residents have been abandoned. Our right to evacuate to avoid radiation exposure has not been recognized. The country is funding the decontamination but not the evacuations. The sequence is incorrect. Leaving children in a contaminated location while carrying out decontamination is not solving the problem.

The radioactivity that exists amidst the unchanged beautiful scenery has created a gap between those who think it is safe to remain there and those who think it is unsafe.

For the sake of the children, evacuation is the best option. However, can we find jobs after we evacuate? What about our housing loans that cost 100,000yen a month? Is it alright to leave behind our frail parents? Is it necessary to evacuate at the cost of our children losing their friends?

The Radiation Health Risk Management Advisor said that at levels of 100 millisievert/h, only 1 in 200 people will have increased chances of cancer. Some people want to believe that Fukushima is alright and do not want any more disturbances. Many just want to return to their lives before 11th March. It is sad that the victims' family and local people are not able to share their feelings and memories together. These are direct health effects of mental stress.

Fukushima Prefecture's Radiation Health Risk Management Advisor, Mr Yamashita Toshikazu has made speeches around Fukushima Prefecture saying that it is alright, even if pregnant women and young children are exposed to 100 millisievert/h. As a result, many Fukushima residents did not take any precautions and continued their lives as usual.

Fukushima Prefecture did not release any official data or gave any information to people living within the contamination zones. As a result, residents who lived within a 20km radius of the nuclear power plant were actually evacuated to a place with higher levels of radiation at one point in time.

This was only realized more than a month later, based on officially released information. This happened even though the prefecture already had the information 3 days after it happened.

The tentative safety standard for food products was set at 500 becquerel. If food was found to be below that level, it was supplied to the market as usual. The prefecture and country did not announce the safety standards that Ukraine and Belarus had set.

Internal radiation was not taken into consideration in deciding the safe level of radiation exposure per year. Furthermore, the damage caused by low levels of radiation exposure will only emerge little by little. As the probability of effects appearing is low, nothing much can be done. On the contrary, data on exposure to radiation levels of below 100 millisievert/h is not available. To gather these data, the 2 million Fukushima residents would be the guinea pigs.

We, the residents, find such circumstances to be very strange, but the media does not provide any accurate information. At Chernobyl, there were no effects other than children's thyroid gland cancer. Despite our demands, the prefecture and country have not explained anything. Overall, based on what the prefecture and country have done for the Fukushima residents so far, we do not feel that we are being protected. We really cannot believe what the prefecture and country are saying.

The Fukushima contaminated by invisible radioactivity seems like a battlefield to me. Surely, it is foolish to believe that people can overcome nature, resulting in this fight between mankind and nature. Fukushima with a wealth of nature, "Beautiful Island Fukushima", its appearance has not changed at all and hence is a "Beautiful Battlefield". The battle with radioactivity is using the country's power to snatch away the children's future. The children cannot remain at the battlefield. We cannot desert the children in the midst of the battle's flames. We have not been able to save the children with our priority on economic costs. We have to do everything we can to save the children immediately.

Still, this country refuses to stop using nuclear power. Why is that so? How many more generations of people would this nuclear accident affect? This is the Japan that has a bigger budget for repairing fighter air crafts than that for saving the children's lives. We cannot expect anything from this country that has left its children in the lurch for 6 months. It has been clearly shown that it is not the country's duty to protect its children's lives. The 21st century's adults have decided that instead of protecting the lives of our future children, the immediate economy is more important. This attitude cannot be passed on to the future generations or we'll eventually be destroyed. The residents have to protect the children's lives. Let's use our hearts to see what we can do to help save lives.

The Fukushima parents have stood up for our only hope to "Save our children's lives". Let's protect the Fukushima children. Let's not let the tragedy that has happened to Fukushima children ever occur again. Let everyone continue with this action.

I want to tell everyone in the world about the terrifying effects of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident and am prepared to continue with my activities till all the nuclear power plants have been shut down. Even though it might not have concerned you directly, now is the time to make a decisive action to change our way of living. If this cannot stop the use of nuclear energy, humans are on the path towards self-destruction. Everyone one in the world, let's put our energies together to stop the use of nuclear energy!!