

Radiation Disaster Reduction

From the Field Contaminated by Artificial Radionuclide

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1. Premise

We Touhoku HELP are engaged in the relief activities for the whole area affected by the triple disaster, Earthquake, Tsunami, and Radiation. Our office is in Sendai, the capital city of Tohoku area in Japan. Today I would like to share our relief activities for the Radiation Disaster Reduction.

First of all, I would like to introduce ourselves to share a Video to introduce the activities of ours. This Video was made for an International Conference in South Korea in Feb. 2011.

You can see it on YouTube at

<http://jasongoroncy.com/category/fukushima/>

I would be very pleased if you could see it after this conference.

a. Activities as a Faith-Based Organization

I am general secretary of Touhoku HELP, a relief agency of a faith-based organization. It is not always a waste of time to think about what “faith-based” means.

Scholars are those who look for the Truth. They welcome objections to seek the truth.

Politicians are those who make justice. They are eager to make it clear whether a policy is right or wrong.

Businesspersons are those who seek profits. They are devoted to economical competition.

The screenshot shows a blog post on the website <http://jasongoroncy.com>. The title is "Per Crucem ad Lucem" with the subtitle "Jason Goroncy: blogging life sub specie crucis". The main content is a post titled "Ministry and theology for a 'Post-Fukushima world'", dated 02/26/2012. The text discusses the role of the Secretary General of Touhoku HELP and a meeting of Japanese and Korean theologians. A video player for "Touhoku HELP" is embedded in the post. On the right side, there is an "Email Subscription" form and a "Recent Posts" list. At the bottom, there is a "Recent Comments" section.

Journalists are those who reveal information. They have a will to disclose by removing the veil of secret.

Then, what do we, faith-based people, do? I think we are those who try to make harmony with blessing based on the faith. As one of those who are in charge of the faith-based organizations, I would like to share our activities of Radiation Disaster Reduction at the field affected by radiation.

b. As Diakonia of Christians

We would like to support survivors affected by radiation as Christians. I believe we Christians have a precious ability. The ability comes from the feature of churches, which have close contact with the local, and the global directly. In this country, most of the Christians have made small churches to do service to the local people. Even though the works of these churches may be small, they have been conscientious enough to win the confidence of the local people.

No matter how small the churches in this country, they have not been set at naught thanks to the churches in the world. For example, there is a senior adviser of Touhoku HELP, named Prof. Victor Hsu. He was a staff of the World Council of Churches until 1980s and he was the person in charge of the issues of Solomon atoll affected by the A-bomb testing.

We closely support the victims with compassion to the secular local people and thanks to the prayer of the whole Christians of the world .

c. As “an Amateur in Need”

I think today there are three types of Scholars vis-à-vis the radiation issues .

The first type is those who are called “experts.” In this country they belong to a group called “Nuclear Power Village,” a tight-knit community of legislators, regulators and manufacturers involved in the promotion of nuclear power. After the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster, most of them have been a part of the world nuclear military-industrial complex with IAEA as the central figure.

The second type is those scholars who might be called “concerned non-experts.” Though they have a skill to study, they are not experts. But, because of their big anxiety, they have been eager to study the issue sincerely during these 3 years. And then they would like to support based on what they have found for everybody in the contaminated area to live safely. But I have some concern about them; they tend to neglect what they are still ignorant of. In consequence, they tend to play the same role as the radiation “experts”.

The third, and final, type is those scholars who have been expressly “Anti-Nuclear.” They have had to endure many hardships due to the lack of understanding of societies, until the accident of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Since the accidents, they obtained respect of many people. But now they are facing another danger, which is the schism. Because the society cannot change overnight, unfortunately they tend to become impatient and aggressive even to each other .

As a scholar of theology and a supporter of the victims, I have to be of the Second Type, a good non-expert compassionate with the people. But I have to listen to, and learn from, the scholars of the Third Type, “Anti-Nuclear” scholars. And also I have to learn from the findings of the First Type scholars, so that I may support people without thoughtlessly kindling fear.

2. Present Situation

During these 3 years of support activities, I have come to think we could sort out the whole problem

into 3 focal points.

a. Artificial Radionuclides

The biggest problem of the accidents of Fukushima Daiichi comes from the artificial radionuclide.

It is only 72 years since the Manhattan Project started. We should be aware that we do not know well about the danger of radionuclides for the public health.

According to a report of NHK, in August this year, particles of vitreous uranium was found at Tsukuba city, 172km distant from the Fukushima Daiichi. They were insoluble particles with a size of PM2.5 and emitter of α and β rays which we cannot detect by Geiger counter at all. Given that these particles are to be dispersed in the radius of 172 km from the Fukushima Daiichi, there would be 76 at most of these particles per cm^2 of the surface of the ground. Nobody knows what would happen to those who inhale them, or to the viruses and bacteria in the soil.

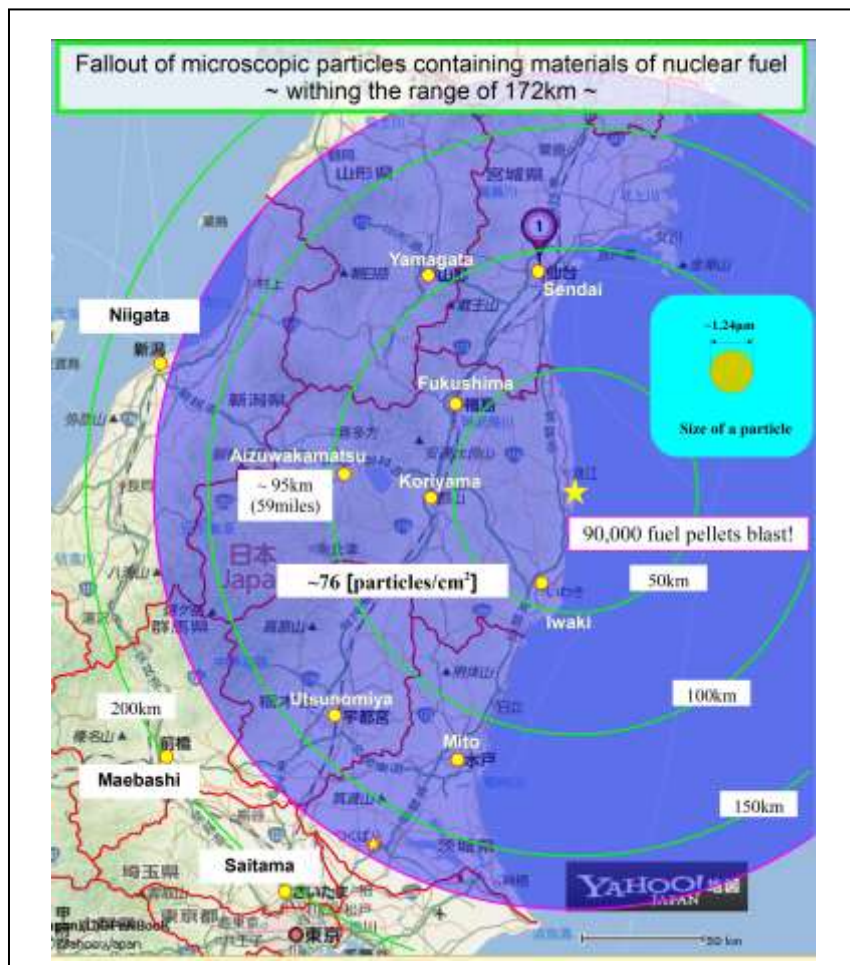
b. Pediatric Thyroid Cancer

And as is well known, there were an abnormal number of pediatric thyroid cancer cases. Above all, 5 children with thyroid cancers were found among 15,000 in the City of Aizu-Wakmatsu, some 100 km away from the crippled nuclear power plant. If these cases are derived from the nuclear accident, we will see an outbreak of multiple organ failures in wide areas. That is what we have learnt from Chernobyl.

c. Chernobyl

The evolution of the accidents of Chernobyl tells us more. We have to think about the possibility of a collapse of a nation.

In Chernobyl, it took 4 years before the world knew the horrible situation in an international



conference. And then, the three Baltic States obtained formal independence, and the USSR fell to pieces. In 2006, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last President of the USSR, looked back and said the accidents had been the turning point to the collapse.

In our country, we could see the same or similar movement. The result of election at Okinawa reminds us of the movements of Baltic people after Chernobyl. And our national government has tightened the control over the people since the accidents of Fukushima Daiichi. We have to see this disaster as a fateful problem of our nation.

4. Challenges

a. Triple Contradictions

Today, the people affected by radiation are suffering from triple contradictions.

Firstly, there is a contradiction between the Conflict and the Solidarity. The conflict brings about the solidarity. And in the pursuit of the solidarity, people have an inclination to look for conflicts. And the conflict provokes another conflict, and then, an internal division takes place. For example, ordinary people outside Fukushima tends to separate Fukushima Prefecture from the other area and, by doing so, try to feel they are safe. There we have to see a germ of discrimination.

Secondly, there is a contradiction between Self-support and Isolation. Those who have abilities escape from the contaminated area and rebuild their daily life. And those who have not are left behind. Resilience of some people is producing isolation of others.

Thirdly, there is a contradiction between health and daily life. If they want to keep their health, they cannot make living (they may go bankrupt). If they want to keep the quality of life, they may compromise their own health.

Under these contradictions, those whom we have supported, express their feeling by saying, “I want to escape, but it is impossible, so at least we want to feel happy.”

There is a video focusing on this sentiment of the people. In the video, we can see so many “happy” people; they are the mayor of Fukushima city, the stationmaster of Fukushima Station. These “happy” elders and children seem to me an embodiment of these contradictions.

b. Our Basic Policy



How could we support the people in these contradictions?

The basic policy of our support activities is “for preventing any repentance in the future *not* by disturbing information from supporters, *but* through attentive listening to, and interactions with, the supported. Otherwise, we would not be able to support, but would unintentionally control the supported.

c. Concrete measures

Now we have three challenges. *Firstly*, we are trying to keep the health of those who could not escape from the contaminated area. *Secondly*, we are trying to support those who look for the opportunities to escape from there. And *thirdly*, we are trying to build an international solidarity for the advocacy of/with *Hibakushas*, sufferers exposed to radiation.

Specifically, we are currently engaged in three projects. *Firstly* we maintain Radiation Measurement Center, which is linked to a network database of citizen measurement centers. And we distribute the recipes to protect visitors of our center against radioactive contamination. *Secondly* we give counsels to around 40 mothers and fathers worried about their children’s health, and provide facility to their children to go for short-term health seeking stays outside contaminated areas by supporting their travel expenses. And *thirdly* we exchange information with Nagasaki, Korea, Taiwan and Pacific islands to express voiceless voices of the sufferers of radiation to the world.

4. Future vision

a. Faced with the Nuclear Arsenal

The World Council of Churches has adopted the “Statement toward a Nuclear Free World” as our sign of international solidarity of/with *Hibakusha*. The Statement confirms that nuclear arms and nuclear power plants are the two sides of a same coin integrated intrinsically. And the statement calls us to deliver ourselves from nuclear by listening to the victims affected by radiation.

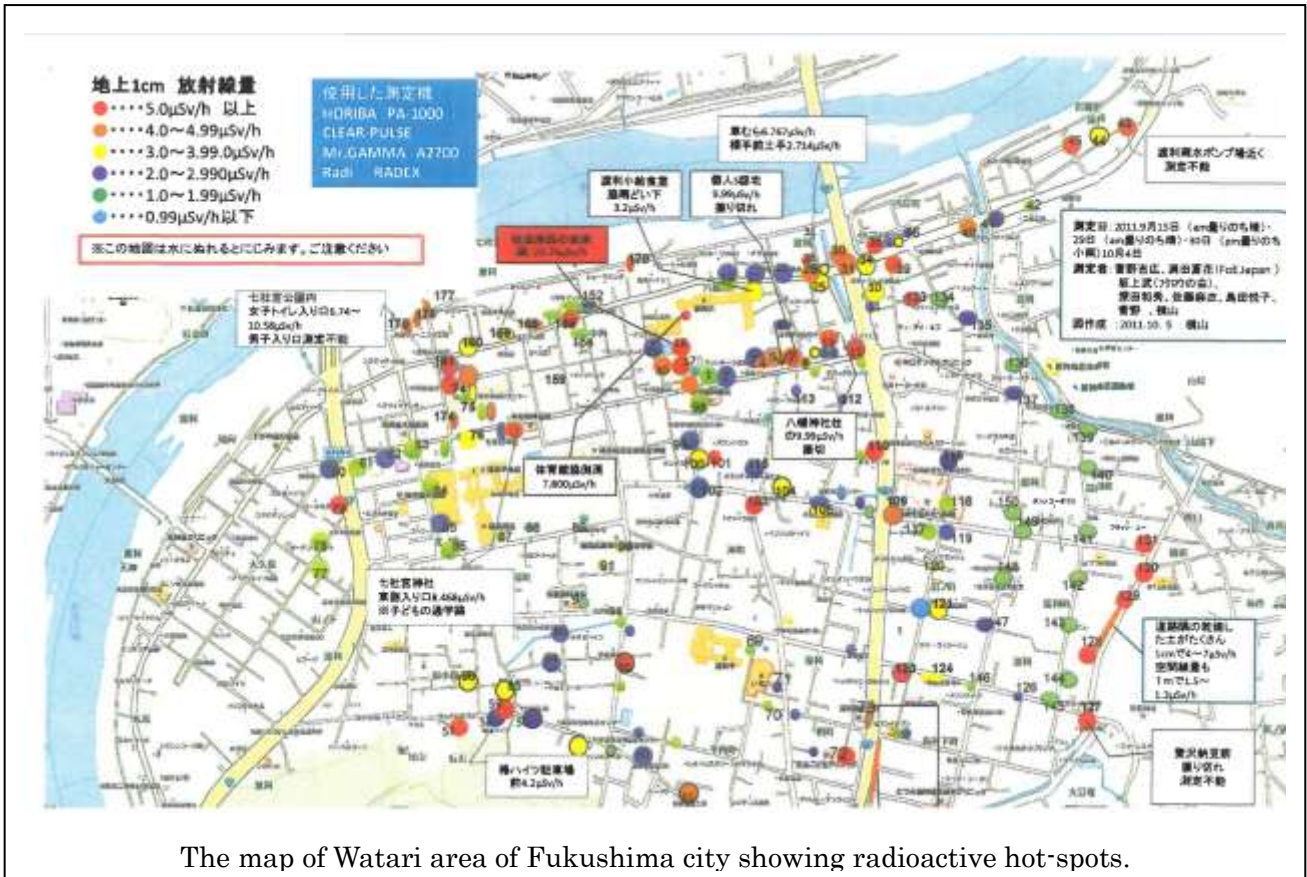
Faced with the international nuclear military-industry complex, what can we do?

b. “Nuclear Free” instead of “No Nukes”

At first, we have to use correct words to describe our goal. In my view, “No Nukes” is not enough, and we ought to use the words “Nuclear Free.” At the statement of the World Council of Churches, the word “free” is used referring to the old story of Moses. As the Lord shall deliver slaves from the Empire of Egypt, we should be free from nuclear energy. Actually since 19th century, we have found real Moses in the African-American Liberation Movement in the U.S., such as M. L. King Jr. Harriet Tubman. Now I would like to testify that there are similar people around Fukushima.

In Kyoto last September, I met a woman who is one of the refugees from Fukushima city. She has been affected by radiation in Watari area, the most contaminated in Fukushima city. Before evacuating, she created in Fukushima an advocacy group for children together with other mothers in Watari area. The group made a map of Watari showing contamination levels with a view to discussing with their local government. Though they did this with all their might, the local government did nothing at all. Deeply disappointed, members left the group one by one. Finally in 2012, she decided to evacuate with her little child. She told me that she would go back to Fukushima when her child is grown up. She said she wanted to support those who have to live in Fukushima.

At the end of the 19th century, Harriet Tubman who was a slave from his birth could escape from the South America by the skin of her teeth. After the liberation of herself, she went back to the South to support other slaves to deliver themselves. The woman from Watari helping those remaining reminds us of Harriet Tubman. We, Touhoku HELP, would like to support the people like her.



The Possibility of Solidarity

Harriet Tubman could escape by the support of a network named “Underground Railroad” and went back to the South as a “Conductor of the Underground Railroad” for bonding men and women. I believe we are going to build a network similar to the “Underground Railroad” as a network for the life.

Actually the issues of radiation could be linked with some other issues to make a broader network.

Firstly, the problem of radiation is linked with the problem of nuclear war. We can see the reality of the devastation by a nuclear bombing in the disaster of the Fukushima Daiichi.

We can find another connection between the problem of military bases and radiation. The problem of the U.S. military bases, especially in the Pacific region is at the root of the radiation contamination by nuclear arsenal.

And we should not forget the problem of radiation deriving from nuclear tests. For the nuclear tests in the Pacific, many workers were gathered from islands around the test sites. They were seriously exposed to radiation. This problem could be linked to the problem of immigrant workers.

Of course the problem of radiation contamination is one of the environmental pollution cases. We have a mine of knowledge accumulated worldwide over a long time of period.

The freedom of press is so important for the Radiation Disaster Reduction. Indeed the radiation problem is directly linked to the problem of human rights.

When we look at the Fukushima Daiichi disaster as situated at the node of this set of problems, we can see a possibility of constructing a widespread network. And I believe the wider network could be the basis to support a large number of people who were affected by radiation in general. We, Touhoku HELP, will continue our support activities with this vision of solidarity in our mind.

