

Fukushima disaster has affected and continues to affect their lives. Plus scientists, Dr. Ian Fairlie and Dr. David Toke, on the continuing dangers from the ruined reactors. Free. Allow 20 minutes to get through security at main St. Stephen's Entrance. <https://kicknuclear.com/>  
**Wednesday March 20th**, 7pm: Film Screening and talks by Akiko Morimatsu, who evacuated to Osaka with two young children after Fukushima Disaster and leading campaigner on behalf of victims of disaster and Asami Yokota who remained in Fukushima but evacuated her son to Hokkaido In Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, off Russell Square WC1. Free. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1503536093114824/>

## FUKUSHIMA 8 YEARS ON

**Near the site of Fukushima nuclear disaster, a shattered town and scattered lives.**  
By Simon Denver, *Washington Post*, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019 (edited)

Noboru Honda lost 12 members of his extended family when a tsunami struck the Fukushima prefecture in northern Japan nearly eight years ago. Last year, he was diagnosed with cancer and initially given a few months to live.

Today, he is facing a third sorrow: watching what may be the last gasps of his hometown, Namie. For six years, Namie was deemed unsafe after the three-reactor meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant following a 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

In March 2017, the government lifted its [evacuation order](#) for the centre of Namie. But so far, hardly anyone has ventured back. Its people are scattered and divided. Families are split. The sense of community is coming apart.

"It has been eight years; we were hoping things would be settled now," the 66-year-old Honda said. "This is the worst time, the most painful period."

For the people of Namie and other towns near the Fukushima plant, the pain is sharpened by the way the Japanese government is trying to move beyond the tragedy, to use the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as a symbol of hope and recovery, a sign that life can return to normal after a disaster of this magnitude.

Its charm offensive is tied up with efforts to restart the country's nuclear-power industry, one of the world's most extensive nuclear power networks.

Six Olympic softball games and a baseball game will be staged in Fukushima, the prefecture's bustling and radiation-free capital city, and the Olympic torch relay will start from here.

But in Namie, much closer to the ill-fated nuclear plant, that celebration rings hollow, residents say. This was a close-knit community of farmers, fishermen and potters - of

orchards, rice paddies and cattle sandwiched between the mountains and the sea. It was a place where people celebrated and mourned as a community, and families lived together across generations. That's all gone. On the main street, a small new shopping arcade has opened. But a short walk away, a barber shop stands abandoned... A sign telling customers to make themselves at home is still displayed in a bar, but inside debris litters the floor. A karaoke parlour is boarded up. Wild boars, monkeys and palm civets still roam the streets, residents say.

Just 873 people, fewer than 5%, of an original population of 17,613 have returned. Many are scared...that their homes and surroundings are still unsafe. Most of the returnees are elderly. Only six children are enrolled at the gleaming new elementary school. This is not a place for young families.

80% of Namie's geographical area is mountain and forest, impossible to decontaminate, still deemed unsafe to return. When it rains...radioactive caesium...flows into rivers and underground water sources close to the town.

This is what's left of communities abandoned after the Fukushima disaster

Greenpeace has taken thousands of radiation readings for years in the towns around the Fukushima nuclear plant. It says radiation levels in parts of Namie where evacuation orders have been lifted will remain well above international maximum safety recommendations for many decades, raising the risks of leukaemia and other cancers to "unjustifiable levels," especially for children. In the rural areas around the town, radiation levels are much higher and could remain unsafe for people to live beyond the end of this century, Greenpeace concluded in a [2018 report](#). "The scale of the problem is clearly not something the government wants to communicate to the Japanese people, and that's driving the whole issue of the return of evacuees," said Shaun Burnie, Greenpeace senior nuclear specialist. "The idea that an...accident closes off an area of Japan, with...limited habitable land, for generations...that would just remind the public why they are right to be opposed to nuclear power."

Today, Namie's former residents are scattered across all but one of Japan's 47 prefectures. Many live in the nearby town of Nihonmatsu, in comfortable but isolating apartment blocks where communal space and interaction are limited. With young people moving away, the elderly, who already feel the loss of Namie most acutely, find themselves even more alone.

"People are losing the purposes of living. The more time that passes, they feel their dignity as human beings is lost," said Shigeru Sasaki, a former farmer from Namie.

"As a community, we were already suffering from an aging population," said Katsunobu Sakurai, former mayor of the nearby town of Minamisoma. "Now, the damage is more severe because young people are not returning. The elderly who come back feel pessimism and depression. The biggest tragedy now is the high rate of suicides."

Kazuhiro Yoshida, the...mayor of Namie, said fears about radiation are not the only reason people aren't returning; many complain the deserted town lacks amenities. He

has managed to get a medical clinic reopened, and hopes a supermarket will...reopen despite the lack of residents. But an elder-care facility remains shut...because the owner can barely find workers, he said. "For...eight years, we have seen the destruction of the area...of the community, and it will be difficult to bring people back... But throughout history, we have been through many hardships. If we give up, we would lose our town, and as mayor, I will work with all my heart to prevent that."

But many residents say the central government is being heavy handed in its attempts to convince people to return, failing to support residents' efforts to build new communities in places like Nihonmatsu, and then ending compensation payments within a year of evacuation orders being lifted. "We are upset. Everyone is upset," said Sasaki, the former farmer.

In other towns around the nuclear plant, people have complained that arbitrarily decided compensation pay-outs - more for people deemed to have been in radiation-affected zones, far less for tsunami victims, nothing for people just a mile outside the zone most affected - have divided communities and caused resentment and friction.

The government is building and fortifying sea walls along hundreds of miles of the Pacific coast to prevent another tsunami from wreaking havoc, but some residents say they weren't consulted and aren't happy about being shut off from the sea. "This is a place desperate to attract people to return, but this reduces our attractiveness for young people," said Riken Komatsu in the fishing port of Onahama, who is working to rebuild a sense of community and raise awareness about problems with the reconstruction effort.

Komatsu says reconstruction has been imposed from above; a problem he says reflects...what Japan is like. "We are going through a second sense of loss because this is not the reconstruction we wanted," he said. Today, Honda's home, ruined by the tsunami, has been bulldozed to make way for new houses. But so far none have been built. "We were driven out of our community, and had it destroyed," he said. "We asked the town and the prefecture to re-create a community for us, away from home, but we were not listened to."

### "CAPENHURST: THE FACTS"

This is the title of a new 20-page illustrated pamphlet, published February 2019, about the uranium enrichment plant in Cheshire, a key element in the nuclear fuel cycle. Some of this enriched uranium is sent to the Springfields nuclear fuel manufacturing plant in Lancashire where it is turned into uranium hexafluoride (HEX) and then sent back to Capenhurst for enrichment and then returned to Springfields for reconversion to uranium dioxide which is then fitted into fuel rods for use in the UK's operating 14 advanced gas-cooled reactors. Much of the enriched uranium from Capenhurst is also exported abroad. These complicated processes are described in detail in the pamphlet. The pamphlet costs £2 and can be ordered from the Close Capenhurst Campaign c/o News From Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY, <http://close-capenhurst.org.uk/> A similar pamphlet on Springfield, "Spotlight on Springfields", published April 2018, is also available.

# KICK NUCLEAR & NUCLEAR TRAINS

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Editor: David Polden, Mordechai Vanunu House, 162 Holloway Rd. N7 8DQ  
[www.kicknuclear.com](http://www.kicknuclear.com) ; [www.nonucleartrains.org.uk](http://www.nonucleartrains.org.uk) ; 020-7700 2393

## REGULAR FRIDAY SOLIDARITY VIGILS

**Every Friday** (since August 2012): leafletting outside the Japanese Embassy, 101-104 Piccadilly (Green Park tube) from 10am-12.30pm; and then outside Tokyo Electric Power Co. offices, 14-18 Holborn (Chancery Lane tube) from 1-1.30pm. Held in solidarity with the anti-nuclear movement in Japan. Organised by: *Kick Nuclear* and *Japanese Against Nuclear UK* (JAN UK)

## NEXT JOINT KN/NTAG PLANNING MEETINGS

**Thursday February 21<sup>st</sup>**, 7pm, at CND Office (Address above.)

## FUKUSHIMA ANNIVERSARY EVENTS, 2019

**Monday March 11<sup>th</sup>**, 5.30-7.30pm: Vigil outside the Japanese Embassy, 101 Piccadilly, W1 (nearest tube: Green Park, with speakers, poetry and music.)

**Wednesday March 13<sup>th</sup>**, 7pm: "The End of Nuclear Power in the UK." Talk by Dr. Ian Fairlie, nuclear expert, at Jackson's Lane Community Centre, N6 (Corner of Jackson's Lane and Archway Road N6. Other side of Archway Road from Highgate tube. Org. Haringey CND. Info. [davidtrpolden1@gmail.com](mailto:davidtrpolden1@gmail.com)

**Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup>**: March from Japanese Embassy to Parliament for rally outside it, in Old Palace Yard with speakers, poetry and music also. Meet noon outside Japanese Embassy for march; rally 2pm-3.30pm.

**Tuesday March 19<sup>th</sup>**, 7-9pm: "The Continuing Effects of the Fukushima Disaster" Public meeting in Committee Room 9, House of Commons with three Fukushima mothers recounting how the