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A Medical Problem of Vast Dimensions

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As I write this on 25 March from Ottawa, two weeks since the earthquake and Fukushima Nuclear Plant No 1, the situation has grown increasingly grave.

Despite the heroic efforts of the “Nuclear Samurai” – the TEPCO employees who stabilize the reactors and restore power – there are worrying signs that signal

Among them, the announcement today that one of the reactor cores may have amounts of radiation at the plant; the widening of the exclusion zone to 30 kilometers and the banning of milk and vegetables from that area from importation.

In truth, as I say in this just-published **CNN Opinion piece**, nuclear power and its vast dimensions — the greatest public health hazard the world will ever see.

Tragically, the “Nuclear Samurai” work for a company — TEPCO — that has been evasive and unforthcoming about the real facts of the unfolding emergency at Fukushima; as allowing spent fuel rods far in excess of the number that should be there.

What we have also seen is a second tsunami of a different kind – a tidal wave of blow-back from the nuclear industry back on its heels by Fukushima but is now regrouping. There are claims that radiation is good for you; that nuclear power is green and that fears about the safety of nuclear power are unwarranted and panic-stricken.

Let us be clear: there are billions and billions of dollars at stake for the nuclear industry, which has, as I’ve written around the world, much of the press, and many ordinary citizens into believing that nuclear power is green and clean. The industry will not walk away from that money without a fight.

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Nuclear radiation ‘the greatest public health hazard’

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CNN: What is the health risk for people living near the Fukushima Daiichi plant?

Helen Caldicott: The risk cannot be determined with any accuracy yet, because radiation has or is escaping. NPR reported last week that 17 workers have suffered from a government called “deposition of radioactive material” to their faces. And some were hospitalized for exposure to radiation, which means they received a huge dose

Containment vessel may be leaking radioactive material

High levels of exposure can cause acute radiation sickness, a syndrome first reported in the medical profession after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It can have terrible effects. In two weeks, they develop hemorrhaging under the skin, severe nausea and diarrhea and internal bleeding or infection.

If a meltdown occurred at the plant, a large number of people could be exposed in the surrounding region, one of the most heavily populated in Japan. (After the March 11 earthquake, the government evacuated people living within a 20-kilometer radius to mitigate the possibility.)

Men exposed to such a dose would be rendered sterile, women would stop menstruating, and abortions would likely occur. Babies could be born with microcephaly, with tiny heads. Many people would develop acute shortness of breath from lung damage. In five years, there would be an epidemic of leukemia, and in 15 years, solid cancers would start appearing in the lungs, brain and bone.

Read the rest: **[Nuclear radiation ‘the greatest public health hazard’](#)**

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