

April 1, 2011

Declaration Concerning the Great East Japan Earthquake

We the members of International Peace Research Institute of Meiji Gakuin University (hereafter PRIME) extend our sympathy and condolences to all of people who have suffered pain and loss caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

PRIME is a university-wide, autonomous peace research organization that opens its doors to researchers and civil activists from outside Meiji Gakuin. Since 1986, PRIME has focused on studying conditions that beset world peace, and building networks of peace researchers, activists, as well as NGO organizers in and outside the university. Its fields of specialization encompass area studies from universal perspectives, studies of socially and temporarily significant issues, and highly interdisciplinary approaches to peace related problems.

We, the members of PRIME, recognize that the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 and consequent nuclear accident in Fukushima have severely impaired peoples' lives in the region. At the same time, we realize that these events have greatly endangered the stability and diversity of our entire society.

1. Evacuation to Safe Areas

Radioactive materials are now leaking out from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Many of those who have been left behind in the vicinity continue to be exposed to high levels of radiation. Further deterioration of these conditions may place these peoples' lives at risk. We keenly perceive the urgent need to systematically map out evacuation plans –especially for infants, pregnant women, and those who are sick. We ask the Japanese government to relocate these people to a distant and safe area in a way that sustains their social ties.

2. Providing Accurate Information

We believe organizations and public agencies dealing with the radiation issue have not provided the public with sufficient information on present conditions. We ask state as well as local authorities to conduct accurate analyses and disclose all relevant data, with the preservation of human life as their top priority. They should provide accurate information on the devastation, conditions at the nuclear plants, and radioactive material spills.

3. Assistance without Discrimination

We believe that factors such as place of residence, age, sex, disabilities, nationality, and historical background will have an impact on how people are affected by the earthquakes, tsunami waves, and radiation. There is a need to provide care in accordance with individual needs and backgrounds.

4. The Role of the University in Situational Analyses and Public Proposals

Our civil society must not uncritically submit itself to the current emergency atmosphere and the corresponding sense of “self restraint.” We proclaim that, instead, our civil society should look after socially vulnerable groups of people, and work toward building mutual trust and solidarity at the grass roots’ level without any loss of tolerance for dissenting opinions. We believe that the current crisis in eastern Japan is a product of modern Japanese society that has emphasized economic growth, developed inequalities, irreversibly damaged the natural environment, and abandoned the weak. In the process of rebuilding, it is our urgent duty to ensure the regeneration of lives and living conditions, as well as the revival of communal ties. We must gather our wisdom on behalf of these projects of social reconstruction. In such instances we should reconsider the causes and effects of a society that depends on economic progress, as well as seek new modes of production and living. We must move away from a lifestyle that is dependent upon nuclear power and we are determined to actualize a nuclear-free society. Such a stance requires the critical questioning of not only of the existing political and economic systems but also of modes of social research and education at large.

5. Free Speech and Open Criticism

In a society that has suffered a large-scale disaster, open discussions and critiques must be guaranteed in order to prevent further damage and promote social reconstruction. However, there is the danger that information management by the Japanese government and the media, as well as a general social tendency to seek conformity, will hinder free speech and open criticism. It is necessary to have sites for open debate and expression –i.e., places in which criticism is not suppressed.

PRIME believes its mission is the resolution of the aforementioned issues. Its affiliates declare they will engage in research and educational activities with the highest regard for the peace and security of humanity.

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