

## **“NO” to Discrimination**

The new civil society group called “Civil Action Committee Calling for the Enactment of a Law to Prohibit Discrimination” was officially launched on June 9, 2011. While Japan has a constitutional provision guaranteeing “equality” before the law for all people, it does not have any laws that criminalize discrimination. The Civil Action Committee has nine co-founders who are representatives of different minority communities, including Buraku, Ainu and people recovering from Hansen’s disease, human rights lawyers, an independent journalist, and researchers. The committee believes that the eradication of discrimination requires not only the implementation of legislation but also the education of people so that they fully support human rights as a rule of society, with slogans such as “No person harms another,” “Discrimination is illegal as a societal rule,” and “Nothing about us, without us!” During the launch ceremony, the committee adopted the following appeal to express its concern over a new form of discrimination that has emerged against evacuees of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant (NPP).

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“Fukushima Discrimination“ is emerging in the aftermath of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant explosion and subsequent nuclear radiation leak. It targets residents around the power plant and those living in Fukushima prefecture as a whole.

According to media coverage, discriminatory incidents have taken place against children evacuated from the NPP-affected area to other neighboring prefectures. The children in the local community made fun of them saying, “Keep a distance from us. We don’t want to be infected.” In other prefectures, people evacuated from Fukushima have been asked to show certificates proving they are not affected by radiation. At a highway service area, drivers with Fukushima license plates encountered this attitude: “Shut out Fukushima cars.”

Many other incidents followed: “The landlord was very reluctant to rent us an apartment,” and “I was asked to show a radiation certificate at the reception of a welfare facility and hospital.”

These constitute the apparent prejudice relating to the NPP explosion, and demonstrate

overt exclusion of the affected people.

In 100 days, a very short period of time since the earthquake, a new form of discrimination is being shaped. We cannot refrain from expressing our resentment and anger regarding this.

While the disaster has brought huge destruction, it is not what produces new forms of discrimination. The explosion of the NPP has caused the serious leakage of radiation, but it is not what generates discrimination. The discrimination is being generated by human beings.

All of us clearly remember that the A-bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffer strong anxiety regarding their health, livelihoods and the prejudice against them for the past several decades. We should not make the same mistake in the midst of radiation leakage from the Fukushima NPP explosion.

We sincerely make this call: Do not allow the opportunity for a new form of discrimination against Fukushima to emerge. To administrative agencies, educational institutions and the mass media, let's create a public opinion that will not allow the expansion of discrimination.