

Japan software firm shrugs off rape game protests

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A Japanese computer game maker on Friday dismissed a protest by US rights campaigners against the game "RapeLay", which lets players simulate sexual violence against females.

New York-based Equality Now launched a campaign this week "against rape simulator games and the normalisation of sexual violence in Japan".

It urged activists to write in protest to the maker and Prime Minister Taro Aso, arguing the game breaches Japan's obligations under the 1985 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Yokohama-based games manufacturer Illusion brushed off the campaign.

"We are simply bewildered by the move," said spokesman Makoto Nakaoka. "We make the games for the domestic market and abide by laws here. We cannot possibly comment on (the campaign) because we don't sell them overseas."

Players earn points for acts of sexual violence, including stalking girls on commuter trains, raping virgins and their mothers, and forcing females to get abortions, according to the group's online statement.

Japan, often criticised as a major producer of child pornography, in 1999 banned the production, distribution and commercial use of sexually

arousing photos, videos and other materials involving those aged under 18.

However, the law did not criminalise possession of such materials, and the ban also failed to cover child porn in animation and computer graphics, often categorised as "hentai" (pervert).

US online retail giant Amazon in February took RapeLay off its websites after receiving complaints but clips of the game were still available this week on popular [video sharing](#) websites.

A Japan Committee for UNICEF spokeswoman said the Japanese loophole hindered international efforts to crack down on child porn.

"In this globalised world, connected via the Internet, even one loophole could jeopardise all the regulations," she said. "The world trend is to try to ban even the accessing and looking at websites of virtual images."

A spokeswoman for the Japanese government's gender equality bureau said the office "realises the problem is there".

"While we recognise that some sort of measures need to be taken, the office is currently studying what can be done," she said.

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