

Residents and fishermen file a lawsuit demanding a halt to the release of Fukushima wastewater

September 8 2023, by Mari Yamaguchi



A group of plaintiffs and supporters, demanding revocation of TEPCO's treated water discharge plan, head to the Fukushima District Court to file a lawsuit, in Fukushima, northeastern Japan, Friday, Sept. 8, 2023. Fishermen and residents of Fukushima and five other prefectures along Japan's northeastern coast filed a lawsuit Friday demanding a halt to the ongoing release of treated radioactive wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea. The banner reads "Lawsuit to halt the release of ALPS treated radioactive wastewater." Credit: Kyodo News via AP

Fishermen and residents of Fukushima and five other prefectures along Japan's northeastern coast filed a lawsuit Friday demanding a halt to the ongoing release of treated radioactive wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea.

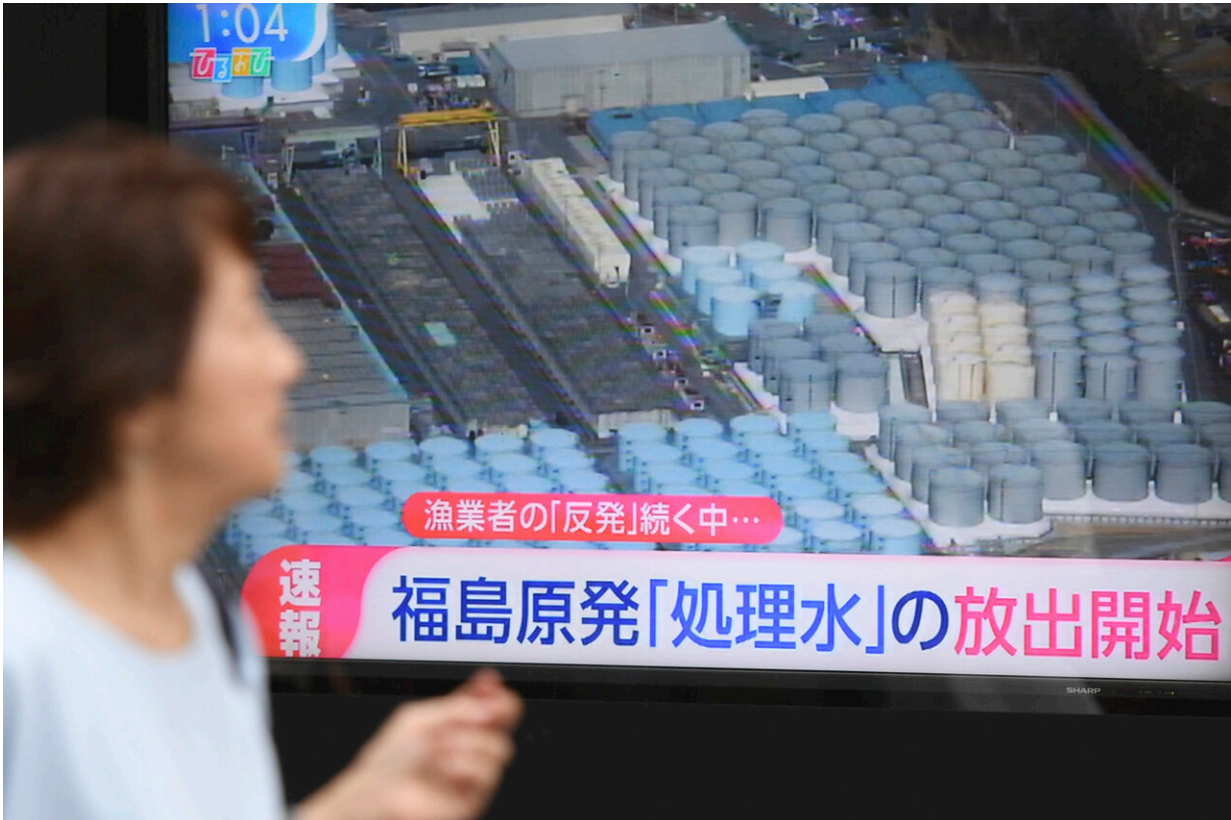
In the lawsuit filed with Fukushima District Court, the 151 plaintiffs, two-thirds from Fukushima and the rest from Tokyo and four other prefectures, say the discharge damages the livelihoods of the fishing community and violates residents' right to live peacefully, their lawyers said.

The release of [the treated and diluted wastewater](#) into the ocean, which began Aug. 24 and is expected to continue for several decades, is strongly opposed by fisheries groups that worry it will hurt the image of their catch even if it's safe.

Three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant melted after a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami in 2011 destroyed its cooling systems. The plant continues to produce highly [radioactive water](#) which is collected, treated and stored in about 1,000 tanks that cover much of the plant complex.

The government and the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, say the tanks need to be removed to allow the plant's decommissioning.

The plaintiffs are demanding the revocation of safety permits granted by the Nuclear Regulation Authority for the wastewater's release and a halt to the discharge, lawyer Kenjiro Kitamura said.



TV screen shows a news report on the release of the treated radioactive water of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant on Aug. 24, 2023, in Tokyo. Fishermen and residents of Fukushima and five other prefectures along Japan's northeastern coast filed a lawsuit Friday, Sept. 8, demanding a halt to the ongoing release of treated radioactive wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea. Credit: AP Photo/Norihiro Haruta, File

The government and TEPCO say the treated water meets legally releasable levels and is further diluted by hundreds of times with seawater before being released into the sea. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which reviewed the release plan at Japan's request, concluded that the release's impact on the environment, marine life and humans will be negligible.

"The intentional release to the sea is an intentional harmful act that adds to the ([nuclear plant](#)) accident," said another lawyer, Hiroyuki Kawai. He said the ocean is a public resource and it is unethical for a company to discharge wastewater into it.

TEPCO said it could not comment until it receives a copy of the lawsuit.

[China banned](#) all imports of Japanese seafood in response to the release, while Hong Kong and Macau suspended imports from 10 prefectures including Fukushima. Groups in South Korea have also condemned the discharge.

China is the biggest importer of Japanese seafood, and its ban has hit the industry hard.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Cabinet on Tuesday approved a 20.7 billion yen (\$141 million) emergency fund to help exporters hurt by the Chinese ban. The fund is in addition to 80 billion yen (\$547 million) that the government previously allocated to support fisheries and seafood processing and combat reputational damage to Japanese products.

Kishida said while attending a summit of Southeast Asian leaders in Indonesia that China's ban contrasts sharply with a broad understanding of the release shown by many other countries.

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