

**A Statement by Thai People's Network to Monitor Nuclear Development
To Support Iwaishima Islanders Who Oppose
Chugoku Electric Power Company's Nuclear Plant Construction and Reclamation at
Kaminoseki Town in Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan**

The *Iwaishima* Island is located in Japan's inland sea. It is a small island with the area of 7.67 km² and the circumference of 12 km. The population of *Iwaishima* these days is approximately 500. Villagers maintain ways of life that are traditional to Japanese small islands by practicing nature-friendly agriculture, for instance, planting loquat (*biwa*) trees, harvesting loquat tea, and growing rice. It is also important to them to make use of local marine resources, by catching fish with *takotsubo* (an octopus trap), collecting seaweed, and making dried seaweed. *Iwaishima* preserves ancient island cultures, too, for example, through a festival called *Kammai*. In this celebration, held every 4 years, villagers launch boats called *Kaidenmasen* into the ocean and perform a sacred dance to welcome and worship the god who comes to visit them on a boat from the opposite *Kunisaki* Peninsula. The festival depicts the island's history which is said to be longer than 1,000 years.

About 3.5 km off the coast of *Iwaishima* is *Tanoura* in *Kaminoseki* Town, where the Chugoku Electric Power Company (CEPC) has a plan to build a nuclear power plant with the generation capacity of approximately 1,350 MW. Twenty-nine years ago, when *Iwaishima* villagers learned that a nuclear plant might be built only 3.5 km away from their homeland, most of them immediately expressed opposition to the project, recognizing that it would affect their nature-friendly agriculture as well as fishing activities and damage areas in the ocean which nurture various marine life, including a type of whale called *sunameri* and *namekujiuo* fish, rare birds, and endangered species, such as falcons. *Iwaishima* and neighboring places enjoy rich natural resources and biodiversity so much that the entire area has been designated by the Japanese government as part of *Setonaikai* National Park.

Iwaishima villagers have continued a campaign against the nuclear plant project for almost 30 years by forming *Iwaishima* Islanders' Association against the Nuclear Plant with the purposes to carry out various activities both inside and outside the island. One important action is for members to come out from home at 6 o'clock every Monday evening, rally at an island harbor, hold a banner and wear a hair band with a slogan "We oppose the nuclear plant!", and then march around the island for an hour or so. They have been mobilizing themselves 4 times a month for over 30 years and have already rallied 1,077 times. Demonstrators chant the following slogans in chorus which echo over the island:

Kirei na hurusato wo mamorou! (We will protect our beautiful homeland!)
Genpatsu hantai! Ei, ei, ou! (We oppose the nuclear power plant!)
Kirei na umi ya yama wo mamorou! (We will protect our beautiful mountains and ocean!)

Iwaishima villagers have been organizing various activities inside and outside the island to express their position against the nuclear project. When CEPC tried to place buoys to mark the zone for reclamation to build a power plant, *Iwaishima* villagers rode on all available boats to rush to close off the area, repeatedly demanding the company to halt construction activities. Every time, however, village leaders are prosecuted under the allegations that they have trespassed on and destroyed private properties, have resorted to violent means to interfere with CEPC's work, and have even obstructed official duties of

authorities, such as the police, who are deployed to protect the company's benefits. Many village leaders are now facing court cases. In the beginning of 2008, CEPC, wanting to reclaim the site to build a power plant, submitted a request to *Yamaguchi* Prefecture to allow them to start reclamation. The prefecture gave consent. *Iwaishima* villagers in response have collected more than 850,000 signatures among themselves and from the Japanese general public against reclamation plans. Village representatives also filed a case with the court in October 2008, asking the court to order CEPC not to reclaim the ocean. The case is still being disputed.

As for the most recent situations as of last week, Thai People's Network, which had been monitoring controversies over the nuclear project near *Iwajjima*, was informed by islanders that CEPC had sent workers to put up a fence to close off the area, which the company would want to reclaim to build a power plant, without paying due attention at all to voices of *Iwajjima* villagers as well as the Japanese general public who are against the project. Even at this very moment, *Iwajjima* villagers are trying to protect the sea and their island by protesting on boats against CEPC's moves and demanding the company to stop reclamation, which will devastate the marine environment. However, CEPC and the prefectural government are very persistent about reclaiming the area to build a power plant.

Just like *Iwajjima* islanders, organizations and individuals working within Thai People's Network, are also facing the Thai government's policies to develop nuclear power, and have kept close eyes on the difficulties experienced by *Iwajjima* villagers with great sympathies. We are very much concerned about the conflicts that have emerged due to inflexible behaviors of CEPC and the prefectural government, who try to implement the nuclear project, while violating community rights and human rights, as well as ignoring voices and demands of *Iwajjima* islanders and the Japanese general public.

Thai People's Network is also concerned that both constructing a power plant and reclaiming the ocean will affect *Iwajjima* villagers as well as people living in neighboring areas, especially fisher folks in and around the project site. They will lose livelihood means and access to rich natural resources and environment. Reclamation will also impact the entire inland sea.

At present, *Iwajjima* villagers are going through very strained situations. Thai People's Network to Monitor Nuclear Development would like to send encouragement to all the villagers on *Iwajjima* and express our solidarity to their struggles, as well as those led by the Japanese public. Thai People's Network oppose any activities to start the nuclear project which would damage the ocean, the local communities, and the rich natural resources and demand CEPC and the prefectural government to stop violating local people's rights. We will continue to monitor the situations closely.

In solidarity

15 October 2010/2553

Thai People's Network to Monitor Nuclear Development

Eco-Culture Study Group

Udonthani Environment Conservation Group

Northeast Human Rights and Peace Information Center

Community Resources Centre (CRC)

Thai Network of People Affected by Mining Activities

Nuclear Watch

Palang Thai

BioThai Foundation

Project for Ecological Awareness Building (EAB)

Thai Working Group for Climate Justice

Sustainable Energy Network, Surin Province

Foundation for Consumers

Sustainable, Alternative Development Association (SADA)

Chiang Mai Network to Stop Global Warming

Foundation for Ecological Recovery

Public Policy on Mineral Resources (PPM)

Lower Northern Network on Land, Water, and Forest Resources

People's Organization on Development, Nern Maprang District

People's Network on Environment, Phitsanulok Province

People's Network for Social and Political Reform

Thai People Foundation

Project for Environmental Law (EnLAW)

Thai Volunteer Service (TVS)

NGO Coordinating Committee (NGO-COD), Central Section

Northern Network of NGOs

Lower Northern Institute of Social Management

Project for Rural Development and Agriculture Reform

Group of Lawyers for Society

Nern Maprang Environment Conservation Group

Love Homeland Group, Loei Province

Hin Lek Fai Mountain Conservation Group, Loei Province

People in Sroy River Basin, Phrae Province

Group of Cadmium Victims, Mae Taw, Tak Province

Mae Moh Patients' Rights Network, Lampang Province

Phahya Promotion Institute

Mae Jaem River Basin Network

Alternative Energy Project for Sustainability (AEPS)

38 organizations (October 20, 2010)

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Original in Thai