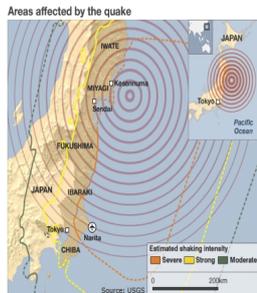


## Origins of the Crisis



On March 11, 2011, Japan was hit by the most powerful earthquake in national recorded history. The 9.0 magnitude quake struck off Japan's northeast coast and resulted in a massive tsunami that devastated several coastal cities such as Rikuzentakata, Kuji, and Sendai. The tsunami waves swept away cars, houses and other buildings, destroying almost everything in sight. The predicted total cost of the damages is US \$309 billion, which would make the earthquake the most expensive natural disaster in history.

On the same day the earthquake and tsunami struck, the Japanese government declared a state of emergency due to a cooling system failure in the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As a result, tens of thousands of residents living within 20km of the plant were forced to evacuate their homes due to concerns for the long-term health risks posed by exposure to radiation. The Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) has sprayed water on the plant's exposed nuclear reactors in an effort to cool them. Unfortunately, this cooling attempt has transmitted even more radiation into the air through steam and evaporated water. Japanese officials have downplayed the nuclear disaster, continually assuring Japanese citizens that they are not in serious danger. However, many fear that the situation is much worse than originally thought and are expecting to see a sharp spike in national miscarriage and cancer rates in upcoming years.

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### Internal Actors

### External Actors

- The Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)

- The United Nations (UN)
- Naoto Kan (Prime Minister of Japan)
- The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- The Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency
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## Current Situation/The UN's Stance



Recently, the Tokyo Electric Power Company indeed confirmed that the situation is much more grave than was first thought. After reviewing the crisis, TEPCO announced that the accident at the Daiichi plant likely released more radiation than Chernobyl in 1986, making this meltdown the worst nuclear accident to date. Japanese health officials also recently announced that unhealthy levels of radiation have been detected in packaged beef. While the Japanese government has called for a halt to shipments of cattle from areas near the plant, it is likely that much of the radioactive meat has already been eaten. Currently, the death count stands at over 15,000 while 7,000 people are still missing. An estimated 40,000 Japanese are still homeless.

The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has expressed

disappointment in the Daiichi plant's lack of preparation for the tsunami. According to IAEA, several of the country's plants are vulnerable to similar meltdowns experienced at Fukushima and have insisted that more precautions be taken in the future. At the same time, the UN has commended Japan overall, calling the government's response to the crisis "exemplary." Understandably, the Fukushima crisis has caused other nations to reexamine their stance on nuclear energy. Thus far, Germany has been the biggest industrialized nation to announce a complete end to their nuclear energy program, which will come in 2022. Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan has also suggested taking a step away from nuclear energy.

### More Information

- <http://www.voanews.com/spanish/news/international/Carne-radioactividad-contaminada-Japon-125510278.html>
- <http://www.sxminfo.com/15/07/2011/fukushima-il-y-a-4-mois/>
- <http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20110714p2g00m0dm009000c.html>