

## **Pacific groups call out Japan to stop nuclear pollution**

*By Brittany Nawaqatabu  
USP Journalism Student*

The anti-Fukushima nuclear wastewater protest in Suva last week was a momentous event. It marked the first time in 16 years that such a massive march was permitted in Fiji. Over 400 people gathered in the streets to vehemently oppose Japan's decision to release Fukushima nuclear wastewater into the Pacific Ocean.

In solidarity with simultaneous protests across Asia, the United States, and the Pacific region, many demonstrators condemned Japan's actions as a grave offense against humanity and the environment. This solidarity march, organized by DIVA for Equality Fiji, received broad support from a coalition of civil society organizations throughout the Pacific and the general public in Suva.

Japan initiated the release of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear wastewater on August 24th, triggering a wave of concern among Pacific islanders who feared for the future of our ocean and future generations.

Pacific Conference of Churches General Secretary Rev James Bhagwan said the march was an act of democracy in the country.

“We are marching through the streets of Suva today in celebration of democracy to protect our oceans, our future generations, the future of life in the oceans and in solidarity with the people around the world to STOP Fukushima Nuclear Waste being dumped in the Pacific Ocean”, stated Rev Bhagwan.

DIVA for Equality Founder, Noelene Nabulivou expressed that she was encouraged to hear at the MSG meeting that leaders should listen carefully to the will of the people.

“The will of the people is very clear. This is one of the issues that I think that everyone I’ve spoken to in the past few weeks is concerned about”.

Founder and current board chair of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) Dr. Claire Slatter joined in on the march. Dr. Slatter is one of the initial anti-nuclear activists from the University of the South Pacific. An activist for over 40 years, Dr. Slatter said that there’s solidarity in the rally for our oceans health.

“If you’re a country that agrees to use nuclear power, take care of your waste on your shores! It’s the whole principle of polluter-pay!”

“It is absolutely unquestionable what Japan is doing and how dare they get our leaders to agree to them doing it. Shame on those leaders that actually said yes or agreed that it is safe when we know it’s not safe.”

“Japan is one of the biggest financial contributors towards the IAEA. Japan, you take care of the work on your shores, there are safer ways to do it!”

Dr. Slatter further argued that Japan should heed the safer recommendations provided by the Pacific Island Forum Panel of experts, which suggested concentrating nuclear waste in concrete and using it in applications with no human contact.

### **Keep it out of our oceans!**

Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN) coordinator, Lavetalagi Seru noted that Pacific leaders need to have good judgment as this is an issue that does not only concern the wellbeing of people today but concerns the future generations.

“Our concern is that the alternative report from the independent experts commissioned by the Pacific Island Forum has made it clear that the data provided is inconsistent and far from safe”

“The people are really concerned because this issue is something that is dealing with their livelihoods. This is not a decision for any country to unilaterally make because the Pacific Ocean surrounds the whole of the Pacific and we need to take a stronger and regional position against Japan's plan”

Youngsolwara Pacific's poet and activist, Luisa Tuilau said, “we are not nukes for peace scientists, but the Pacific will not be radio-silenced on this.”