

Japan Prime Minister Calls Nuclear Disaster 'Very Grave'

After what looked like good news earlier in the week, the Japanese government is signaling that the danger at Fukushima nuclear power plant is far from over.

In fact, Japanese authorities have called on residents who live within 19 miles of the plant to evacuate.

The concern is getting food and water into an area where the threat of radiation is persistent and growing. Radiation has already seeped into some food supplies and people there are being warned not to eat certain foods. The evacuation order is so far voluntary, but that could change if the crisis is not contained swiftly.

Naoto Kan, Japan's Prime Minister, took to the airwaves to address the nation. The Washington Post reports that Kan said: "I ask the people in the devastated areas to summon the courage to keep moving forward. I encourage the Japanese public to strengthen our unity and to work with our hearts as one to overcome this disaster."

According to the National Police Agency, the death toll in Japan has now climbed to more than 10,000 in the wake of the 9 magnitude earthquake and tsunami on March 11. More than 17,000 are still missing. Meanwhile, it's possible that damage to nuclear reactor number 3 is worse than initially thought and radiation could be leaking into the air, the Post reports.

"The situation at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant is still very grave and serious," Kan said. "We must remain vigilant. We're trying to prevent a deterioration of the situation and we are still not in a position where we can be optimistic. We must treat every development with utmost care."

Photo courtesy Samaritan's Purse.