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RESIDENTS PAYING BACK FUKUSHIMA COMPENSATION

By North Asia correspondent Mark Willacy, ABC

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Nearly two years on from the meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear plant, there are accusations the nuclear industry is evading its responsibilities.

The disaster has mostly dropped out of the news in Japan and its victims remain largely hidden after being placed in tiny, so-called temporary apartments across the country.

The ABC has learned that TEPCO, the operator of the Fukushima plant, is handing out what are called "temporary compensation" payments - money handed out to victims of the meltdowns, but which must be repaid.

Yukiko Kameya used to live in the town of Futaba, close to the Fukushima nuclear plant, until the tsunami on March 11, 2011.

The 68-year-old was born and raised in Fukushima but knows she will probably live out her days in a tiny public housing apartment in Tokyo's colourless urban sprawl.

Ms Kameya was initially given \$18,000 in compensation from TEPCO, but of that, \$11,000 was temporary compensation, meaning once a final settlement was reached, that money would have to be paid back.

"We were living just 1.2 kilometres from the plant, and we escaped with nothing but the clothes on our back," she said.

"We had that money deducted from our compensation. I was surprised, so I called TEPCO and said that they were using dirty tricks, that they were using fraud.

"Why did they give it to us to if we had to pay it back?"

'Completely protected'

A report by Greenpeace, due to be released today, points out the firms that helped design and build the Fukushima reactors, such as General Electric, Toshiba and Hitachi, are not required to pay a cent in compensation.

Aslihan Tumer, Greenpeace's international nuclear project leader, says some of the companies are continuing to profit from the reactor.

"Nuclear suppliers are completely protected from accepting any liability or being held accountable in case of an accident," he said.

"GE designed Fukushima Mark 1 reactor, and both GE, Hitachi and Toshiba built and continued servicing the reactor, and they are also still making, in some cases, money out of the cleaning efforts, as well as the contamination."

With the operator TEPCO effectively nationalised, the Japanese taxpayer is now picking up most of the compensation bill for the disaster.

Ms Kameya's testimony is one of , which claims the tens of thousands of victims of the meltdowns are still denied fair compensation two years on from the disaster.

TEPCO has told the ABC that because it takes time to calculate the exact compensation each evacuee is entitled to, the company decided to advance them money to tide them over, and the money would be deducted from the final compensation.

For victims like Fukushima resident Ms Kameya, no compensation will ever be able to return her to her home.

"We've been back to our home four times for a quick visit. The roof has leaked and no-one can repair it because the radiation is too strong. So everything inside has become rotten," she said.

"So that, plus the radiation, means we can never go home again."

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