

# Ukraine in Brief

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## Ukraine to send humanitarian aid to disaster struck Japan

Last week President Yanukovich released a statement expressing his condolences to Japan. Ukraine has prepared a rescue team of 45 individuals ready to leave for Japan to assist in searching for people trapped under the rubble after the earthquake. The rescue squad will come prepared with hydraulic rescue equipment, metal cutting equipment, and heavy lifting gear.

Ukraine has also ensured that the rescuers will be dressed appropriately should they encounter any areas with high levels of radiation. After the Chernobyl disaster, workers understand better how careful they must be when working in areas with high concentrations of radiation.

Scientific experts from the Chernobyl Center for Nuclear Security, Radioactive Waste, and Radio-Ecology have said that there will be significant differences between any Japanese nuclear power plant explosions and Chernobyl. Based on the modernization of reactors after Chernobyl, it is highly unlikely any explosion today in Japan could rival the disaster struck by Chernobyl.

Additionally, Valeriy Hlyhalo from the center stated that "these reactors are designed specifically for quake-prone areas," and that "there should not be consequences as serious as during the accident at the Chernobyl power plant." April 26, 2011 will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

## Ukraine's pre-trial detention is human rights problem

With the arrests of members of the political opposition last year, Ukraine drew criticism of political persecution. The imprisonment of several of those opponents prior to their trials has brought new questions of whether Ukraine's practices

concerning pre-trial detention violate human rights.

As of late last week, more than a dozen former officials in the previous government still are in prison pending trial.



*Former Minister Yuriy Lutsenko  
(Photo: Kyiv Post)*

Several well known individuals include former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko, former acting Defense Minister Valeriy Ivashchenko, and former deputy head of Naftogaz Ihor Didenko.

On Feb 28 the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union and the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group released a report about these cases. They believe that the arrests and imprisonment of so many former government officials signal political persecution. Not only are there questions about the intention behind the charges filed, but the lengthy pre-trial detention worries human rights groups.

## WikiLeaks says Putin has no respect for Ukraine or Yanukovich

According to a WikiLeaks cable that was released, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has little respect for a free and independent Ukraine, and has a low opinion of President Yanukovich.

The document discusses Putin's dislike for former President Yushchenko

and also mentions the fact that Putin is not fond of Ukraine's current president, Yanukovich. Also revealed in the document is the idea that Putin would like to see a Ukrainian leader in power who favors Moscow's interests above those of Ukraine.

The WikiLeaks report also highlights that Putin does look more favorably upon former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. A political consultant, Vadym Karasyov, speculates that the reason Putin favors Tymoshenko over current and former leaders may have something to do with her desire to remove oligarchs from power. Putin himself took similar action in Russia.

The Ukrainian government, is refusing to comment on anything mentioned in this WikiLeaks document. They have a policy of not commenting on releases of this nature, but Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleh Voloshyn, did stated that the views are well-known and have not changed.



*Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin  
(Photo: Top News)*

Oleskandr Sushko, an expert in a Kyiv-based organization for Euro-Atlantic cooperation stated that the release of these documents show that Russia is unhappy with an independent Ukraine and would much prefer Ukraine to be subservient to Russia.