

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

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On October 17, 2013, Osaka Hannan University Professor Shimoji Masaki spoke at [Berkeley](#) on the efforts of anti-nuclear activists in Osaka to fight against government plans to burn radioactive waste from Fukushima. He also detailed his arrest and detention by Osaka police. Shimoji was arrested in December 2012 and held without charge for 20 days for speaking publically and handing out educational material on the dangers of radiation. He sees the arrest as a sign of the increased use of the police and arbitrary arrest to bully and intimidate anti-nuclear activists into silence. No criminal charges were brought against Shimoji, but this incident and other examples of harassment of activists by the police and other agents of the state are having a chilling effect on public discussion of the health effects of radiation and the state of Japan's nuclear infrastructure.

Shimoji offers an account of his experience in Japanese [here](#). He was arrested at home, in

front of his wife, by a gang of seven police officers. Shimoji was told that while speaking in public in front of Osaka Station two months earlier, he had refused to leave when ordered to do so by security and engaged in "forcible obstruction of business". He describes this as a "naked lie", highlighting the ability of police in Japan to fabricate stories in order to justify what are essentially arbitrary detentions - no formal charges or presentation of evidence is necessary to hold a "suspect" for up to three weeks. On the day in question, Shimoji spoke in front of the station, but was accused instead of organizing a large and disruptive demonstration inside. While this could have been easily confirmed or dismissed by using surveillance camera footage from the station, Shimoji argues that police were far more interested in detention than investigation. He believes he was targeted because he had previously protested what he describes as illegal police interference in peaceful public demonstrations as well as the arbitrary arrest of demonstrators in circumstances similar to his own. Shimoji had also spoken out against wasteful spending and graft during the reconstruction of the northern coastal communities devastated by the 2011 tsunami. He believes that the government, abandoning its responsibility to provide accurate information to the public on radiation, the spending of relief funds, and other issues, has instead decided to use the police to silence dissent. He worries that out of the public view and without adequate media scrutiny, the police have continuously abused their powers and that his own case is only the tip of the iceberg.

Shimoji is drawing attention to his case and the

pattern of abuses of which it is a part just as the Abe government has tabled [new secrecy laws](#), suggesting two simultaneous lines of assault on the human rights to know and to speak out in protest. He argues that in an environment in which the media is doing little apart from slavishly repeating police press releases, that it is necessary for concerned citizens and NPOs to come together and drag these hidden cases of abuse into the light. It is not only the anti-nuclear movement that is being targeted. The Japanese police have a long history of using arbitrary arrest and even outright violence against the left and other proponents of social change, anarchists, anti-war demonstrators, unions and the labor movement, NIMBY protestors, and many others. Shimoji warns of a vicious cycle in which “The police as an institution, rather than reflecting on their unjust actions ... seek instead to ruin the lives of the very citizens who would protest these injustices, wiping them away as if they are mere ‘problems’....” It up to concerned citizens, he adds, to continue to stand up and say “Something is very wrong.”

A video of Professor Shimoji's speech at Berkeley has been posted to Youtube:

Asia-Pacific Journal articles on related themes include:

Noriko Manabe, [Music in Japanese Antinuclear Demonstrations: The Evolution of a Contentious Performance Model](#)

Nicola Liscutin, [Indignez-Vous! ‘Fukushima,’ New Media and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Japan](#)

David McNeill, [Using a Sledgehammer to Crack a Nut: Japanese Police Crush Peaceful Protestors](#)