Through bioaccumulation in the marine food chain, these substances pose a grave threat to the fishing regions around Great Britain, Norway and Ireland. Even increased levels of radionuclides such as cesium-137, cobalt-60 and americium-241 were found in soil samples around the complex, suggesting radioactive contamination of agricultural products for human consumption. In 2002, a British study found that children of Sellafield workers have a nearly doubled risk of developing leukemia or lymphoma.

Outlook

The U.S. Institute for Resource and Security Studies has called Sellafield “one of the world’s most dangerous concentrations of long-lived radioactive materials.” Sellafield is vulnerable to a variety of risks: natural catastrophes could compromise the cooling systems, human error and negligence could cause fires, explosions or other types of accidents. The compound could be the target of a terrorist or a hacker attack, and even a computer virus could potentially trigger a catastrophe. Following the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns in 2011, the British government decided to at least cease producing MOX at Sellafield, but with no way of disposing of the spent fuel, Sellafield is more and more turning into a radioactive waste dump. The health concerns of the local population, exposed for decades to high levels of radioactivity, are continually being ignored by the government, and meaningful scientific research is not being undertaken. The people of Sellafield are also causatives of the nuclear industry — their health has been compromised in order to produce nuclear weapons and fuel for nuclear reactors. They are also Hibakusha.

References

2. Dolley S. “Ploughshares or swords? Why the MOX Approach to Plutonium Disposition is Bad for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control.” Nuclear Control Institute, Washington DC, 28.03.97. www.nci.org/i/ib32897a.htm