



House of Councilors Election

With United Power of Women, Citizens and Opposition Parties, Let Us Foil the Attempt to Revise the Constitution Statement to the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women

Pro-revisionist Forces Fail to Retain a Two-Thirds Majority

In the House of Councilors Election on July 21, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party won 57 of the 66 seats up for grabs to hold 113 in total, failing to secure a single-party majority in the upper chamber. The votes cast for the LPD dropped by 2.4 million from the number it received in the previous election in 2016, and the ratio of LDP votes fell to 16.7%, the lowest rate for the party during Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's second stint at the helm of the government. Even combining the seats obtained by Komeito, the ruling coalition secured 71, 6 down from the previous number, and with 10 seats of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party), the pro-constitutional revision forces earned 81, falling short of a critical two-thirds majority of the Upper House, the level necessary to initiate constitutional revisions in the chamber.

This is a major achievement of the alliance between women, citizens and opposition parties. The Alliance became more solid to agree on the 13-point common agenda, confirming that they

work together on such issues as the Constitution, consumption tax rate and gender equality. The alliance fielded united opposition candidates in all the 32 single-seat constituencies and won 10 seats, a big leap from the two they had won in the previous election. The united efforts worked out well, as shown by the fact that in the 29 constituencies, the unified candidates garnered more votes than the total votes cast for the four opposition parties in the proportional representation constituencies, which suggests possibilities of further progress.

Women Still Underrepresented

The latest Upper House election was the first nationwide contest to be held since the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field took effect in May last year, and women's voices and movement pushed gender equality forward to become one of the main issues of the election. The result was, however, 28 women won seats, accounting for 22.6% of candidates elected overall. As for the LDP and Komeito, their female candidates' success rate remained at the 10% level respectively. Evidently, the ruling parties are responsible for stalling progress to achieve the government's goal of raising the proportion of female lawmakers to 30% by 2020.



“Gender” as one of the main electoral issue - Shinfujin Chiba Chapter members asking voters if they have seen or experienced what kind of disadvantages and discrimination, such as wage gap, low pension, forced use of the same family names after marriage, sexual harassment and so on. In a TV program during the election, PM Abe came forward as the only one among the political party heads to oppose the civil code amendment to allow the married couples to have different family names.

Voter turnout was only 48.8 percent and the turnout drops to 31.3% among teens, putting the foundation of democracy at stake. Japanese society should look into the way how the Prime Minister's Office distracted public attention from the issues while the media gave little coverage to them, and review the Public Office Election Law and campaign bulletins. We should also promote sovereign education to expand political participation of all generations.

With a call of “Go Vote! One Vote Matters,” the New Japan Women's Association (Shinfujin) dedicated its best effort to the victory of unified

opposition candidates in the single-seat constituencies. Jointly with the Civil Alliance for Peace and Constitutionalism and a wide range of people, we led the publicity campaign and dialogues with voters. Shinfujin promoted conversations among its members and readers about the election using our weekly *Shinfujin Shimbun*, and educate them about “etiquette” on political activities to encourage them to speak freely about their urgent wishes and about political parties, so that they can decide who to vote for.

After the election, Prime Minister Abe said that his government secured a mandate to steadily carry out its politics, and expressed his will to revise the Constitution during his tenure, to push ahead with the consumption tax rate hike to 10% in October. They have to deal with the demands of the US regarding trade negotiations and the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces troops to waters off Iran, and other controversial issues. All these will inevitably increase conflicts with opinions of women and the public.



Shinfujin members gathering in front of the Diet building with piles of signatures for No Constitutional Revision. They also holding signs such as Stop Consumption Tax Rate Hike, We Want Decent Pension Benefits, and No War.

Women’s Movement in Japan for a Nuclear-Free, Peaceful and Gender-equal Society

Standpoint of Women’s Movement in Japan

Shinfujin is a women’s organization founded 57 years ago and holds a special consultative status with the United Nations. It carries out grassroots activities to achieve the goals of eliminating nuclear weapons, opposing the adverse constitutional revision, preventing the resurgence of militarism, improving people’s livelihood, attaining Japan’s independence and democracy, promoting emancipation of women and international solidarity. Shinfujin set these goals based on the firm resolve for peace as women of

the country that perpetrated atrocities against its Asian neighbors by waging war of aggression and imposing colonial rules on these countries, and of the only country that suffered the use of nuclear weapons in war. Through the bitter experience of having been driven to cooperate in war with no rights granted, Japanese women came to organize the movement after the war, and the International Women’s Year Liaison Group, a network of 34 major women’s organizations in Japan, including Shinfujin, promotes joint actions rallying around the call of “Without Equality, No Peace,” “Without Peace, No Equality”.

Resisting the War-Glorifying, Anti-Gender Abe Government

Today, women in Japan stand against the government led by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, playing a vital role in the civil society to stop the move for revising the Constitution’s Article 9 and to achieve Japan’s ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In solidarity with the #MeToo movement, women are raising their voices and organizing actions against sexual harassment, sexual violence and gender-based discrimination.

The Abe government is more unpopular among women than any of its predecessors. A right-wing, constitutional revisionist paper *Yomiuri Shimbun* made a research on the support rate of Japan’s successive governments and concluded that Abe is so disliked by women because of his hawkish agenda represented by the enactment of war laws, constitutional revision and consumption tax rate hike. The draft constitution of his Liberal Democratic Party amends both “war-renouncing” Article 9 and Article 24 which stipulates “equality of both sexes.” The draft includes the language such as “family members support each other,” aiming to revive the anachronistic family system that confines women to their homes.

However, the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011 and the subsequent nuclear disaster in Fukushima prompted women and citizens of Japan to speak up against wrong, and it has become usual that people gather before the Diet building when something happens. In opposition to the forced enactment of war laws by the Abe government, women have carried on their struggle by organizing red actions, and young mothers are rallying around the call of “Let Nobody’s Child Be Killed”.

Shinfujin has been focused on collecting signatures in support of two peace petitions: No Article 9 Revision under PM Abe with the aim of collecting 30 million signatures and the

Hibakusha International Appeal for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. We have set the goals of gathering 1.5 million for the Article 9 petition, and 2 million for the Hibakusha Appeal, and have gathered almost 1.19 million for the former and 1.15 for the latter. Everywhere, the signature drive provides a good opportunity to reach out to many people who are concerned and frustrated about the Abe government's outrageous, war-mongering policies such as forcing of construction of a new US military base offshore Henoko in Okinawa, a buying spree of expensive weapons from US, and increase of the consumption tax rate. People come to sign the petition expressing their anger and worry, and the millions of signatures have been effective to prevent Abe from proposing a bill to revise the Constitution, despite his party holding the majority of the seats.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) stipulates in its preamble, "...the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security." With a call of "Protect children from a nuclear war," Shinfujin has continue to work actively with the Japan Council against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo), and we have submitted more than 16 million signatures to the United Nations since 1978. At the UN conference to negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons in June 2017, our representative delivered a speech on behalf of women of the atomic bombed country. We are convinced that we, together with the global civil society, have made a difference in international politics.

Success or failure of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) depends on our efforts to have the TPNW come into force and people's struggle in nuclear weapons states and their allies. Shinfujin is pressuring the Japanese government to play a role befitting the government of the country that knows the consequences of the use of atomic bombs. Our members are organizing in their communities gatherings where mothers and children hear the stories of the Hibakusha, atomic bomb survivors, atomic bomb photo exhibitions in public spaces including bank lobbies, and monthly signature drives talking with local people about all kinds of things. We also work on the local governments to have resolutions adopted urging the national government to sign and become party to TPNW. We are gearing up our grassroots actions to drive the Abe government to resign.



Shinfujin Gifu Chapter members holding the A-bomb photo exhibition in a Prefectural office asking visitors to sign the petition.

Resolve the Issue of Sexual Slavery by the Japanese Military

There is no time to lose in resolving the issue of the Japanese military "comfort women". It is the war crime and human rights violation committed by Japan, forcing many women into sex slaves during the war of aggression and colonial rule it imposed on Asian nations. Unless the Japanese government squarely faces its war responsibility to restore dignity and human rights of each victim and survivor, the issue remains unresolved. Shinfujin has been working since 1992 for the settlement of the problem; it set up the support fund for the lawsuits filed by survivors, and lobbied the Diet and the government to make references to the issue in the all the textbooks used in junior high schools. Identifying as early as 2003 the extreme rightwing pro-revisionist group called Nippon Kaigi, (Japan Conference) as the major player in the attacks on the "comfort women" survivors and the efforts to resolve the issue, Shinfujin started to strike back all over Japan.

After the governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea announced the agreement on the issue late 2015, the Abe government and the media reacted in an aberrant way, claiming that Korea should stop bringing up the issue that has already been settled over and over. Shinfujin has categorically criticized such arguments, on the ground that Japan is the country responsible for the damage it caused to the victims, and that it therefore should investigate and acknowledge the facts of atrocities the country committed, and apologize and compensate the victims and survivors for their sufferings. It should also include the reference to the facts in school textbooks, prohibit and refute abusive languages by public figures on the issue. Only when the government of Japan takes all these measures to show their sincere remorse, will the survivors and the international communities accept that dignity of the victimized women are finally restored.

This is another reason why it is essential to dislodge Abe's coalition government. Learning from the experience of the Korean citizens who succeeded in changing governments, Shinfujin continues to support the opposition alliance to replace the Abe government with a new one truly

committed to realizing nuclear-free, peaceful and gender-equal Northeast Asia as well as to playing an important role in the global efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Solidarity of Women in Japan and Korea Growing toward a Peaceful, Nuclear-Free and Gender-equal North East Asia

Building on 20 year's exchanges, the New Japan women's Association (Shinfujin) and the Korean Women's Association United (KWAU) came together with other peace, anti-nuke and civic organizations of Japan and Korea to hold the Japan-Korea International Forum for a Nuclear-free, Peaceful Northeast Asia in Seoul, May 30 and 31, 2019. The two women's groups co-organized the workshop on women and peace as well, deepening understanding about history, activities and views of each other.

Shinfujin sent a delegation of 9 members led by President Kasai Kimiyo. 6 of them participated in the 1389 Wednesday demonstration on May 29 in front of the Japanese Embassy calling on the Japanese government to resolve the issue listening to the voices of victims/survivors as well as of the international community. 2 Shinfujin members had a honor to deliver solidarity speeches to the two Halmonis, Japanese military sexual slavery survivors, and participants a large number of whom were school children.



Holding the banners at the Wednesday Demonstration and the Forum Plenary conveying the messages: : No! Abe's Constitutional Revision, No More Hibakusha!, Japanese Government Should Become Party to TPNW! , No to Women's Human Rights Violation!



The New Japan Women's Association (NJWA or Shinfujin) was founded on October 19, 1962. About 133,000 members are organized in some 8,600 groups in workplaces and communities all over the country. Shinfujin has a head office that unites chapters working in all the 47 prefectures and branches in 900 municipalities.

Under the five objectives, Shinfujin works to realize all kinds of women's demands concerning such issues as women's rights, equality with men, better working and living conditions, measures to support child-care, education, environmental protection, peace and abolition of nuclear weapons. The five objectives are:

- Protect the lives of women and children from the danger of nuclear war
- Oppose the adverse revision of the Constitution and the resurgence of militarism
- Work together for better living conditions, extended women's rights and children's well-being
- Win genuine national independence, democracy and emancipation of women
- Join hands with women around the world for building lasting peace



Shinfujin is opened to all women who agree with the above five objectives, irrespective of their thought, creed or political background. It publishes a weekly paper "Shinfujin Shimbun" with 210,000 readers, and a monthly magazine "Josei & Undo" ("Women & The Movement".)

Shinfujin is a member of the Japan Federation of Women's Organizations (Fudanren) and the International Women's Year Liaison Group (comprising 35 major Japanese women's organizations.) It holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.