



Japanese Women Today

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New Japan Women's Association

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Statement to the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women

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New Japan Women's Association (NJWA)

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association, with its 150,000 members all over Japan, has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity of women around the world for peace.

Grave Situation Facing Japan's Agriculture and Rural Women

In Japan, those who make a living mainly by farming are aging very quickly, with 42 percent of them reaching 70 years of age and older, and rural communities are on the verge of collapse. The country's food self-sufficiency rate has dropped to 38 percent in 2016, the worst among the developed countries. All these are the result of the Government policy to abandon smaller-scale family farms as "inefficient", by liberalizing farm import and by consolidating farmland to promote large-scale farming.

Amidst the decline of agriculture, rural women are trying to sustain family farming, engaged not only in crop production but also in direct delivery from the farm, food processing or operation of farmer's restaurant. However, their status remains low, and according to the survey by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2016, women make up only 8.1 percent of the agricultural committees.

Sanchoku Movement to Protect Agriculture and Food Safety

Out of the campaign against the liberalization of beef and orange import in the late 1980s, the New Japan Women's Association picked up the slogans of "Safe Food from Japan's Soil," and "Protect Japan's Agriculture and Food Safety" to launch in April, 1990, together with the Japan Family Farmers' Movement (NOUMINREN), a Sanchoku (Direct Delivery) Movement in which consumers can receive products from producers on a regular basis.

In 2005, on the 25th anniversary of the Sanchoku Movement, the two organizations agreed on the "New Joint Goals", and are strengthening efforts to bring younger members in the movement. The New Joint Goals are:

1. Producers give top priority to safety in delivering fresh and good agricultural, livestock and marine products to consumers, who eat their products on their part to protect Japan's food, agriculture, food culture and the health of their families;
2. Both producers and consumers value opportunities to come together and get to know each other's faces and livelihood, for promoting Sanchoku Movement, which can generate reasonable returns to producers and can foster successors;
3. The two organizations hold regular consultations to develop Sanchoku Movement, so that it can contribute to the development of both organizations;
4. Through Sanchoku Movement, the two organizations work together to oppose "agriculture policy reform" and Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (TPP), to achieve "zero nuclear power", and to spread renewable energy, with a view to establishing food sovereignty, promoting reconstruction from the catastrophic disaster, preventing global warming,

and creating sustainable and recycling-oriented communities where everyone can shine. The two organizations also make joint efforts to have the State and the electric company to fulfill their responsibilities to restore production bases as well as food safety and security, which were severely damaged by the nuclear accident.



NJWA members of Kyoto taking part in rice harvest with children

With a growing interest in the safety of food, efforts have spread to provide local farm products to schools for lunch. Since the Sanchoku Movement enables producers to sell their products stably at a decent price, it has helped to foster farm successors. As the Government relaxed the labeling requirements for imported agricultural products and processed food, as well as the pesticide residue standards, different organizations and individuals raised money to introduce a genetically modified organisms analyzer and a pesticide residue analyzer to the Nouminren Food Analysis Center.

Amend and Improve the System Hindering Women's Economic Independence

The New Japan Women's Association is carrying forward jointly with other women's groups a petition campaign for revision of article 56 of the Income Tax Act, which makes it difficult for rural women to be independent. Japan's Income Tax Act Article 56 does not recognize the compensation paid to family members of farmers and self-employed individuals for their work as business expenses, and therefore the earnings of family workers, many of whom are women, are included in the income of the business owner. Without being recognized as income earners, these women are not able to obtain income certificate and face disadvantages regarding social security benefits and administrative procedure among other things. In March 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued recommendations to the Japanese Government, to reform the pension scheme in order to guarantee the minimum standard of living and to review the Income Tax Act Article 56.

Shift to Renewable Energy

After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, Japan has frequently been hit by natural disasters including earthquakes, volcano eruption and intensive rainfalls, with enormous damage inflicted on agriculture and local economies. Every time disaster occurs, the New Japan Women's Association launches support activities, and urges the Government to take drastic measures to deal with the damage. The Association members all over Japan go and check the conditions of evacuation centers, earthquake resistance and emergency stock at schools and other public facilities, evacuation routes, and contents of evacuation drills and disaster prevention education in their communities. They bring their findings to municipalities and have gained improvements.

More than six and a half years have passed since the nuclear disaster, 68,000 people of Fukushima Prefecture still live in evacuation, and the disaster is far from over with the whole picture of the accident yet to be uncovered. However, the Government is pushing ahead with the lifting of evacuation orders issued to areas once designated as no-go zones, and terminating the payment of compensation to evacuees. Furthermore, it forces through the reactivation and export of nuclear reactors. The New Japan Women's Association is reinforcing the movement for zero nuclear power, shift to renewable energy and global warming measures.

Call for Initiatives for Putting the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty into Effect

On July 7, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted and it has opened for signature with several countries ratifying it. The New Japan Women's Association brought signatures calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons to the United Nations, and its president had a privilege to deliver a statement at the Conference to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, thus making a contribution to the adoption of the treaty. There are growing concerns and criticism among the Japanese public toward their Government, which, despite being the only country that suffered the atomic bombing in wartime and being at the same time the country that waged war of aggression against its Asian neighbors, opposed the adoption of the treaty and is remaking Japan with the United States into a war-waging nation. The New Japan Women's Association will continue to urge the Government to play its role as the country having the Constitution that pledges in its Article 9 that Japan forever renounces war, and it will do its utmost to achieve a peaceful, just and sustainable world without nuclear weapons.

Resolved to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons and War, Women are Taking to Streets All over Japan, Urging the Abe Government to Step Down!

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, grilled in the Diet over a cronyism scandal that threatens to erode his influence, after documents released by a ministry failed to banish suspicion that some had been doctored.

Already fed up with his anti-people, military and big businesses-first policy, the public are becoming more furious than ever over lies and deceptions of Abe's government. Citizens' coalitions calling for changes are growing in every community in Japan. Women are at the forefront of actions, organizing protests and collecting signatures for defending Article 9 from PM Abe's attempt to repeal it, and for the Hibakushas' petition calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons.



NJWA members in Tokyo holding signs:
"Abe Government, Resign, Now!"
"Prime Minister, You Cannot Flee
Anymore!"

Comment

The Japanese Government Is Responsible for Resolving the Issue of the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" – Facing the New Developments concerning the Japan-Korea Agreement

January 20, 2018

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After the government of the Republic of Korea announced a new policy on the agreement with Japan over the Japanese Military "comfort women" (December 28, 2015), the Japanese government and the media have acted out of line, a behavior unbecoming for a country that inflicted atrocities on other Asian nations. We cannot overlook the current situation.

On January 10, 2018, Korean President Moon Jae-in stated, based on the outcome of the review of the 2015 agreement his predecessor reached with Japan, that while his administration would not seek the renegotiation of the deal because it was an official bilateral agreement. He also urged Japan to squarely face the truth of history and justice, and said a genuine resolution of the issue would come when the survivors forgive after Japan apologizes with wholehearted sincerity and makes efforts to avoid the recurrence of such atrocities. The Korean government would set aside its own 1 billion yen, the same sum provided by the Japanese government under the 2015 deal to fund the programs to assist the survivors, in order for all survivors to receive the money with no reluctance.

Japan's Prime Minister at once rejected the call from the Korean president, and has since kept protesting saying that the "deal was a promise between countries," and that his government "can by no means accept Korean's request for additional measures," as if to say that Japan has already apologized, paid money, so keep quiet. There is no other country like Japan whose government refuses in diplomacy to listen to its neighboring nation. Japan's mainstream media also criticize the Korean government en masse, using such headlines and phrases as "South Korean policy on 'comfort women' agreement hurting basis of deal," "the Moon administration displays a lack of common sense" (Mainichi Shimbun), and that the new policy "exposed contradictions" (Asahi Shimbun), and "Korea intends to water down the deal" (Yomiuri Shimbun).

Should ROK be the only one to be blamed for? The Japanese government and media claim that the deal is a promise between countries to be kept no matter what, but national policies may alter by a regime change, as is the case of the new US administration withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and from the Paris climate accord. A foreign policy expert also says that "It is Prime Minister Abe, who is accusing the Korea's policy review, is the one that has gone out of the way and lacks common sense."

In the first place, it is the Japanese government who is held responsible for resolving the Japanese military “comfort women” issue. The issue is about Japan committing a war crime and human rights violation by forcing women in Asian countries into sexual slavery during its war of aggression against and colonial rule over those countries. The issue cannot be resolved until Japan earnestly faces its war responsibility and makes sincere efforts to restore human rights of individual victims.

The Japan-Korea deal was purely verbal, and yet the Abe administration, which had consistently reiterated its position that the “issue had already been resolved,” is supposed to have expressed “most sincere apologies and remorse.” However, as the New Japan Women’s Association pointed out, the agreement was made without listening to survivors. Whether or not the issue is “resolved finally and irreversibly” is to be determined by survivors and the international community. And as the Japanese government made it clear that its contribution of 1 billion yen was not “compensation,” doubt remains if such financial measures can lead to the restoration of honor and dignity of the victims. Moreover, it was agreed to accommodate the Japanese concerns over the statue of a young girl put up in front of the Japanese Embassy. As such, the agreement was seriously flawed.

In February 2016, shortly after the announcement of the agreement, the Japanese government stated at the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that no confirmation was found that women had been forcibly taken away, and it challenged the claim that those women were sex slaves as false (statement by SUGIYAMA Shinsuke, head of the Japanese delegation to CEDAW). Prime Minister Abe rejected the request from the Korean foundation launched to support the survivors to write “apology letters” to those women, saying that he did “not have the slightest intention” of doing so. He has been protesting and obstructing the effort to build statues of a young girl or the “comfort women” memorials in various countries including ROK, the US, and the Philippines as a symbol of the wish for peace and human rights. No country would dare to demand that Japan should remove the war memorials built in the country. These kinds of insincere words and deeds of the Japanese government have hurt the survivors time and again, leaving the issue unresolved to this day.

We hear voices saying until when Japan should be blamed for, but the Japanese government will continue to be held responsible as long as it refuses to face the country’s negative history. Only when Japan determines and acknowledges the facts of damages it inflicted on the victims, apologizes and provides compensation to the victims, includes reference to the issue in school textbooks, and prohibits and rebuts abusive statements by public figures, can the victimized women and the international community accept that Japan has finally made a sincere apology.

As the surviving victims are aging, we have no time to waste. The New Japan Women’s Association strongly urges the Japanese government to take a step forward toward the earliest possible resolution of the issue. We also called on the media and educational institutions to take an active role to promote the settlement based on the truth of history. In order to ensure that there should never be another war, the New Japan Women’s Association welcomes the moves for reopening of Inter-Korean dialogues, and commits itself to foiling Prime Minister Abe’s attempt to revise war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution.

The New Japan Women’s Association (NJWA or Shinjufin) was founded on October 19, 1962. About 133,000 members are organized in some 9,000 groups in workplaces and communities all over the country. Shinjufin has a head office that unites chapters working in all the 47 prefectures and branches in 900 municipalities.

Under the five objectives, Shinjufin 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



Shinjufin 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 “Shinjufin Shimbun” with 220,000 readers, and a monthly magazine “Josei & Undo” (“Women & The Movement”).

Shinjufin 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.