



Japanese Women Today

No.38
March 2015

New Japan Women's
Association

Address: 5-10-20, Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo JAPAN
Phone: +81-3-3814-9141, Fax: +81-3-3814-9441
E-mail: s-intl@shinfujin.gr.jp http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp

*70 Years after the End of War and the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
20 Years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action*

Women Speak Out and Act for a Peaceful, Just and Sustainable Society without Nuclear Weapons, Military Bases and War

Japan at a Crossroads of War or Peace

70 years after the end of war and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan stands at a crossroads of war or peace.

The atrocities against civilians including Japanese nationals committed by a radical armed group calling itself ISIS are totally unpardonable, but should be dealt with in accordance with international law. However, the Japanese government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo is exploiting the incident to enact permanent legislation allowing Japan to dispatch Self-Defense Forces overseas. Prime Minister plans to submit to Diet in May security-related bills designed to make it possible for Japan to exercise the right to collective defense, rushing forward with his reckless attempt to turn Japan into a nation that wages war abroad. Prime Minister for the first time specified the schedule for constitutional amendment with a plan to initiate the process after the House of Councilors election in 2016. In Okinawa, the government is pushing ahead with the construction of a new base in total disregard of the Okinawa people's strong opposition. As the government strengthens its control over education and the media along with all those militarization policies, Self-Defense Forces promotion and recruitment activities are becoming flagrant, and rightwing forces are intensifying their attempts to wipe out historical facts of sexual slavery by the Japanese military as well as to get local assemblies to adopt resolutions or statements urging the national government to revise the pacifist constitution.

Abe Cabinet's militarization policies undermine people's living. It has no will to address the widening income disparities and poverty, but vows to cut corporate tax while imposing on the general public consumption tax rate hike and further cuts in social welfare services when they are struggling to make ends meet against soaring prices and decreasing wages. It also aims to revise the labor laws to ease the regulations on working hours and the use of temporary workers killing the temps' chance to become full time staff. It also pushes what is called

agricultural cooperatives "reform" to facilitate the TPP negotiations, which will have a devastating impact on Japan's local economies. Worse still is that despite no substantial progress made in reconstruction of communities and livelihood after four years since the Great East Earthquake and Tsunami, the Abe Cabinet is set to terminate the subsidies for nuclear disaster victims as if the Fukushima is a dead issue. Internationally, the Japanese government faces criticism for slashing the CO2 emissions targets. The Abe administration formed by extreme rightists including PM himself is becoming more and more isolated both at home and abroad.

Women's United Actions Spreading Nationwide

Prime Minister boasts of "victory" in the general election last December saying he won "carte blanche" and pushes ahead with his runaway policies in the name of "greatest reform since the end of the war". However, every opinion poll shows that a majority of the people oppose his policies. Unified actions on single issues such as constitutional amendment, restarts of nuclear reactors, new base construction in Okinawa, and consumption tax rate hike are developing into a broad coalition against the Abe Cabinet. Women are leading the movement organizing actions nationwide saying, "No to Attempts to Make Japan a War Nation." On January 17, 2015, shortly before the opening of the Diet session, over 7,000 women dressed in red surrounded the Diet building voicing against Japan's use of the right to collective self-defense. The message "Red Card to Abe Cabinet"



were heard all around the country as women acted in solidarity. Women's united actions continue to grow at the grassroots level.

More than ever, Japan is called for to make the best use of the constitution's Article 9, Japan's no-war pledge to the international community that has helped to build trust with other countries including those in the Middle East. Through this, can we end the cycle of violence and carve out a path toward a society without terrorism and war as well as poverty and inequalities, where people of different religions and civilization can peacefully live in harmony.

70th Year of the Atomic Bombing / NPT Review Conference

Convention to Ban Nuclear Weapons Now!

As we commemorate the 70th year of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be held late April at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Japan's peace community is gearing up its effort to collect signatures in support of the petition calling on member states to agree at the NPT Review Conference on the commencement of negotiations on a convention banning nuclear weapons. NJWA members target at gathering 2 million and have reached 1.3 million. In every community they hold atomic bomb photo exhibitions and visit schools, fire stations, temples, churches and residents associations asking for their support. NJWA plans to send more than 180 members, especially younger generation, to NY where civil society organizations will gather together. NJWA, for the third time, will organize "No Nukes! Women's Forum in NY". Along with Hibakusha as well as the UN member states and civil society members who share the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, we say "nuclear weapons and humanity cannot coexist" to press the nuclear

weapons states clinging to the failed deterrence policy and the Japanese government unwilling to go out of the US nuclear umbrella despite being the only country to experience the nuclear attack.

Promote Gender Equality from the Bottom Survey on Female Local Assembly Members

The year to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference coincides with the 70th year of Japanese women gaining the right to vote, and the 30th year since Japan's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A year from now, Japan's 7th and 8th periodic report will be considered by the UN CEDAW Committee. Ranked 104th among the 142 countries according to the Global Gender Gap Index, Japan still lags far behind other states especially in terms of female representation in decision-making with women occupying 9.5% of the parliament seats. Facing the endless sexist remarks and acts by Cabinet members, lawmakers, politicians and other public figures, NJWA conducted a nationwide survey on the gender-based discrimination and contempt experienced by female local assembly members. Of 3,826 women lawmakers we were able to hand out the questionnaire sheet, 964 answered. 54% of the respondents said they felt uncomfortable or offended by physical or verbal abuses from their male counterparts or community members. The survey revealed the grave situation in the local assemblies and at the same time there were reports of good practices such as establishing rules. Based on the findings, NJWA issued a proposal of concrete measures to be taken by local assemblies, municipalities, political parties and national government to redress gender-based discrimination from the bottom. We will visit local assembly and municipal authorities to have dialogues, and strengthen cooperation with other women's groups to promote gender equality in our society.



Collecting signatures from Young People at the Coming-of-Age Celebration (left) and people visiting the temple (right)



Statement to the 59th Commission on the Status of Women / Beijing+20

**October 24, 2014
New Japan Women's Association**

Since 1962, with its 150,000 members working nationwide, the New Japan Women's Association has been committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and global solidarity of women for peace.

For the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Association, with other women's groups, presented opinions on the draft Platform for Action, and organized at the NGO Forum workshops on three themes: "Realities of Working Women," "Japanese Military Comfort Women", and "World without Nuclear Weapons". It has participated in review and follow-up processes of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action.

2015 is the 70th year of the end of Japan's war of aggression, of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of women's suffrage in Japan. The United Nations will celebrate its 70th anniversary, hold the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and define the Post-2015 Development Agenda to replace the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to contribute to advancing women's rights and gender equality in Japan, as well as to achieving a peaceful, just and sustainable world, the Association presents its view on major issues, their causes and solutions.

Shift away from neoliberal economic policies to create a society where both women and men can live humanly

Japan ranks at 105th under the Global Gender Gap Index. A factor keeping Japan in low position in terms of gender equality is the economic disparities between men and women.

Between 1995 and 2013, Japan has seen the increase of women in employment from 20.48 million to 24.06 million; and of the dual-earner households, from 9.08 million to 10.65million. But 55.8 per cent of working women are in non-regular employment and 60 per cent of female workers exit the workforce after giving birth to their first child still today. Women with full-time jobs earn 70 percent of what men workers receive, and the pay gap widens to 50 per cent if non-regular workers are included. Women raising children are paid 40 per cent of men, the lowest level among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. 43 percent of female workers are "working poor", who earn 2 million yen or less a year. While 80 percent of single mothers have jobs, the poverty rate of working single-parent families reaches 54 per cent. Shockingly, the child poverty rate hits the record high of 16.3 per cent, topping the national average of 16.1. Due to the wage disparities and reduced social security, more than 50 per cent of the elderly women live below poverty line. In Japan, a world economic power, poverty is increasing and women are hindered from becoming economically independent.

This situation is attributed to the financial circle's neoliberal strategy backed up by Government policies. They have increased low-paid and unstable non-regular workers with no rights, while adversely revising the social security system to deepen poverty and to widen the gap between rich and poor. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo keeps speaking of "utilizing female power" and a "society where women shine" and his cabinet approved a bill on promoting women's active participation. However, their aim is to make the best use of women as "resources" for "growth strategy", and the bill lacks concrete measures to redress the pay gap and to eliminate discrimination against women, including through increasing full-time employment and establishing equal treatment of all workers. It is unacceptable that the Government intends to amend the Worker Dispatch Law to lift regulations on the use of temporary agency workers, which will undermine the very basis for working women to be self-reliance.

The Association calls on the Government to implement all the recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and to display political will to break with the neoliberal strategy and to adopt policies that will guarantee equal opportunities and human rights for all.

Ban and eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce military spending to achieve a peaceful, just and sustainable world

With the Government under Prime Minister pushing ahead with militarization, Japan stands at a crossroad of war or peace. The Government of Japan glorifies the war of aggression and aims to make Japan a war-waging nation. It intends to revise the Constitution, targeting at repealing Article 9, which declares renunciation of war, no possession of war potential and denial of the right to belligerency. It has already enacted the Designated Secrets Protection Law, approved at the Cabinet meeting Japan's exercise of the right to collective self-defense, lifted ban on arms exports, drastically increased military spending, and is forcing through the new military base construction in Okinawa despite the opposition from the majority of the people. Prime Minister and all those in power including women ministers are from the group that idealizes the pre-war patriarchal system, denies the facts that Japan perpetrated atrocities including sexual slavery against Asian people, refuses to repeal the discriminatory clauses in

the Civil Code such as the obligation for the married couple to have the same family name, and denies women's right to sexual and reproductive self-determination. They even do not respect the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Japanese women are voicing for peace. In all opinion polls women by majority support Article 9, opposing the Designated Secret Protection Laws and the right to collective self-defense.

Calling for the start of negotiations on banning nuclear weapons to be agreed at the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the Association is redoubling its efforts to gather signatures in support of the "Appeal for a Total Ban on Nuclear Weapons," a petition endorsed by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. We aim to collect 2 million signatures to present to the Conference.

Any use of nuclear weapons, whether by accident or by intention, could destroy human beings, communities and the nature in an instant. Radiation emitted from these weapons would spread beyond national borders, affecting survivors and future generations. The understanding that nuclear weapons cannot be "deterrence" and their existence itself is a threat to humanity is gaining support, and at the United Nations First Committee in October 2014, a joint statement on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons signed by 155 countries was presented, calling for banning the use of and eliminating these weapons. The Association believes that the driving force of this development is the movement carried forward by the civil society together with the Hibakusha, Atomic bomb survivors, who have been voicing that nuclear weapons and humans cannot coexist.

The Japanese Government relies on the "nuclear umbrella" of the United States under the security treaty between the two countries, taking a position unbecoming of the atomic bombed country. It is also grave that the Government is pushing the restart and export of nuclear reactors, although it has not been able to effectively deal with the radiation contamination problem caused by the accident at Fukushima power plant.

Enormous money is being spent in developing and producing nuclear weapons. The world's military expenditure in 2013 is estimated to be \$1.747 trillion. All this money should be redirected to education, welfare and other human needs, which will help to eradicate causes of conflict such as poverty and hunger. The international community needs the money to tackle climate change as well. The Association underscores that agreement on banning and eliminating nuclear weapons will be a big step forward to change security discourse toward establishing peaceful solution-first security policies.

Resolve the issue of Japanese military "comfort women" to end sexual violence

To settle the issue of Japanese military "comfort women" is to restore dignity of the women who were forced into "sex slaves" and suffered the damage of serious human rights violation and war crimes. It is also a proof that Japan squarely faces its war responsibility, committing itself to addressing human rights violation and never to repeat the same mistake. Without doing so, Japan cannot earn trust from the international community.

However, the Government has refused to listen to the survivor's voices or to implement the recommendations from the various human rights bodies. Taking advantage of misinformation published in a major newspaper, Prime Minister, Cabinet members and many other political figures are now trying to deny the legitimacy of the "Kono Statement", in which the Government admitted the Japanese military's involvement, and the Government even requested Radhika Coomaraswamy, former United Nations Deputy Secretary General, to partially revise the 1996 United Nations Commission on Human Rights report on Japan's wartime sexual slavery system, which is totally unacceptable.

As the women's group of the perpetrator country, the Association urges the Government to resolve the issue immediately. We continue efforts to pass the historic facts on to the next generations.

20 years have passed since Beijing. Many agreements and commitments are in place; only to demonstrate political will to translate words into action. The New Japan Women's Association calls on all Member States to implement their commitments for "gender equality, peace and development" and act to realize a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

The New Japan Women's Association (NJWA or Shinfujin) was founded on October 19, 1962. About 150,000 members are organized in some 9,000 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 Shimbum" with 230,000 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 40 major Japanese women's organizations.) It holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.