



Japan Asia Africa Latin America Solidarity Committee (Japan AALA—JAALA) 会

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A fight for Japanese peace Constitution

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Dear friends

My name is Tsuyoshi Asao, a Japanese peace activist working for Japan Asia Africa Latin America Solidarity Committee (Japan AALA) which is a member organization of Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). On the occasion of the 18th NAM Summit Meeting, I would like to extend my sincere greetings to the peoples of NAM countries over the world and inform you a huge popular movement in Japan to defend Peace Constitution, best known for article 9, by which Japan renounce the sovereign right to war.

1. war -renouncing constitution

In 1945 the defeated Japan having accepted the Potsdam Declaration, was occupied by Allied Forces. The US Occupation Army (GHQ) immediately ordered the Japanese government to draft a new democratic constitution. Different from a number of proposition made public by civil society or private groups, the government draft was so conservative that General MacArthur rejected it and ordered his staff to make out completely new document.

The new draft was mostly written by American authors in the GHQ, quite rapidly almost 1 week, in reference to the proposals presented by the Japanese scholars and citizens. The new constitution was discussed at the Diet for more than a half year before it was promulgated on November 3, 1946. Since then no revision has been made at all for 73 Years.

Here is a part of the preamble and the article 9 of second chapter, which is origin of my lifework.

Preamble

We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society, striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.

Chapter 2 Renunciation of war

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

2. revising attempts

As the East-West Cold War intensified, the US not only kept large-scale US troops stationed in Japan even after Peace Treaty signed, but also pushed Japan to re-arm and cooperate with the US military. As early as in 1948, a move for constitutional amendment came out so that Japan could engage a war together with the US forces. Facing a strong public opposition, the government organized so called Police Reserve Force by law in 1950, which was renamed National Safety Force before it grew up to be Self Defense Forces in 1954.

The SDF has been strengthened for more than 50 years. Now it is ranked as one of the most powerful military in the conventional capabilities with the world's eighth-largest military budget. However, all the attempts to revise the constitution by different administrations have been thwarted by the popular opposition. Due to the restriction by the Article 9 of the constitution, SDF cannot openly engage in a war outside the territory.

Nevertheless, under new electoral system introduced in 1994, a number of legislators claiming constitutional amendment had been elected. Pacifist camp was extremely worried about the development. Nine progressive celebrities including the Nobel Laureate in Literature, Oe Kenzaburo, issued an appeal calling for a peoples campaign to prevent revision of the article9 of the constitution. The appeal got a great sympathy

and popular support. A grassroots organization called “Article 9 Association” to support the appeal has been set up throughout the country, the number of which exceeded 7500 nationwide in 2010. This movement was featured in high school social studies textbooks and was also attracting interest from overseas media.

In 2015 Abe administration bulldozed new legislation which allows in special cases SDF to engage in a war together with US forces outside the Japanese territory. A massive popular protest against the unconstitutional law led to form a wide range civil and political party front with the aim of invalidating the law. In 2017, the front called for a nationwide campaign against the constitutional amendment by P.M. Abe to defend the war-renouncing Constitution, aiming at collecting 30 million signature. The struggle is underway as a grassroots movement.



3. movement from the bottom

I stayed in Micronesia from April 2005 to March 2007 as a senior volunteer. One day the landlord of the house which I rented surprised me by saying “The constitution of your country is wonderful” I felt proud of the fact that Article 9 of the Constitution, was highly valued by people all over the world, and realized the importance of defending and utilizing it.

Immediately after returning to Japan in 2017, responding to the appeal from national “Article 9 Association”, I took part in a formation of local unit of the association in my hometown Nanbachi Tachibana district (approximately 40,000 inhabitants). Associates visited an individual homes of the people to get support for the appeal. Monthly newsletter was delivered to the supporters. A large signboard saying “Article 9 is a treasure for the world” was set up in the square. A

lecture meeting was held every month at city hall. Over the past 11 years the numbers of approval signature has reached 3000, and numbers of associates has exceeded 1200. More than 7 textbook for the lecture meeting have been issued. Associates have been inspired to hearing the peoples voice “never war again”.

Immediately after setup of the local unit, I participated in a prefecture level liaison organization of the Association, called “Gunma network of Article 9 Association”. Further, I took an initiative to form the unit of the Association at Maebashi City, capitol city of Gunma prefecture. In the city there was a department store which had survived the air raid during the war. When I was informed the store building was to be sold out to the municipal office, I started a campaign together with my neighbors for the building turn into a Peace Museum. Regrettably the building demolished, we launched an Association for founding a Peace Museum in Maebashi, which quite recently successfully forced the mayor to promise the construction within 2 years.

4. conclusion

I strongly believe that the war-renouncing Japan's Peace Constitution is born from an apology and reflection on the damage of the nations of the world, especially the Asian nations which the Japanese imperial forces inflicted, as well as Japanese peoples deep feeling and determination never to war again.

Against the will of the people, Abe administration has been strengthening the military alliance with the US, pursuing a policy for the SDF to engage in the war in corporation with the US forces all over the world. The constitutional amendment is a final challenge to fulfill. The power base of the Abe administration is nationalists who dream of revitalizing the past Japanese imperial empire. They are characterized by historical revisionism that Japan's past colonial rule and war of aggression were right thing to do.

We think that this road goes against the peace of the world as well as Japan, and makes Japan repeat the past mistakes again. We must stop it. It is the Japanese peace constitution which makes it possible. We are hoping that the spirit of the Article 9 spread to the world as an ideal for peace for which peoples of different countries united.

Thank you very much.

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