



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

Dai33 Kyutei Bldg., 2-11-7 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN 160-0022

Tel: (3) 5363-3470 Fax: (3) 3357-6255 E-Mail: info@japan-aala.org Homepage <http://www.japan-aala.org>

Address to ICSPP Meeting in Moscow

Dr. Fujio Yamamoto
Permanent Director
Japan AALA Solidarity Committee

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Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Japan AALA Solidarity Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to President Talaa Alatlassi and Secretary General Anees Sweidan of the International Committee to Support the Palestinian People for kind invitation to this conference.

I also thank President Umakhanov and his staff of the Russian Society of Afro Asian Peoples Solidarity and Cooperation for hosting this conference and extending generous hospitality. I am truly honored to be here and speak on the International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People.

We also appreciate the warm solidarity messages from President Dr. Hadidi, of AAPSO, President Umakhanov and other people for our 54th Congress held in last August. At that time, Mr. Alatlassi and Mr. Sweidan wished to come over to Japan to participate in our congress. We were very glad and prepared to welcome their visit. To our disappointment, their visas were denied, by the obstruction from the Israeli and Japanese governments.

We strongly protested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan against such unfair decision. Both gentlemen sent us a passionate solidarity message, which was read out at the congress and inspired strong solidarity and gratitude among all delegates and attendees over one hundred with big applauds. Thank you so much again.

The incident reminded us of the harsh situation that the Palestinian people are in; deprived of freedom of movement. We strongly protest the Israeli government that violates

international law and the UN Security Council resolution, taking away all human rights and right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and continuing unlawful military occupation and blockade of Gaza Strip.

We also express strong protest and resentment to the U.S Trump administration which supports Netanyahu regime, violates international agreements and neglects implementation of UN resolutions. In particular we condemn the outrageous recent decision by the U.S government regarding the status of Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank.

Japan is geographically far from the Middle East, and frankly speaking, there are not enough interests and understandings about Palestine among most of Japanese citizens. However, Japan AALA together with other groups supporting Palestinians, have been conducting for these years a signature campaign demanding Japanese government and parliament to recognize the Statehood of Palestine..

You can find in the appendix major activities and events related to Palestine occurred in Japan and actions which Japanese citizens have taken in past 10 years. Here I would like to introduce you our latest campaign to stop an international weapons trade fair sponsored by the Japanese government in which Israeli defense companies took part in.

The Japanese government once formulated the three principles of arms export which prohibited export of weapons, based on the Article 9 of Japanese Constitution that stipulates renouncing war and possession of armed forces. However, the Abe Administration reversed the policy to allow export and joint research developments of weapons. Such move is in line with the ongoing reinforcement of Japan-US military alliances.

In 2014, when Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu came to Japan, both countries agreed on the importance of cooperation in defense programs. Based on this discussion, a joint research of reconnaissance drones was planned. This attempt was uncovered and abandoned because of strong opposition by citizens. However, last year, the Israeli military exposition was held near Tokyo. More recently, it was reported that the “Memorandum for the Protection of Confidential Information on Weapons and Technology” was signed when a senior official of Defense of Israel visited Ministry of Defense in Tokyo.

Under these circumstances, the DSEI 2019, the first full-size International Weapons Fair in Japan was held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on November 18th through 20th. The DSEI that is the largest weapons trade fair in the world, held every other year in the UK, has chosen Japan as its first overseas venue. Three Israeli companies exhibited at the show. One of them Rafael's salesperson told in a TV interview that the selling point of their weapons was that they had been used on the battlefield. He was even proud of the result in Gaza. It was really outrageous.

We have been working for over a year to stop this weapons show. We appealed to central and local governments to cancel the event, however to our regret, the fair was open. We organized a protest rally in front of the Messe in which 500 people in total gathered to raise their voices against the show. For this action, President Alatlasi and Secretary General Sweidan of the International Assistance Committee sent a kind solidarity message. Thank you very much.

Now, let me speak on current issues that Japan is facing. Japan relies almost 100% on imported oil, and 80% comes from the Middle East. Under such circumstances, in the midst of the oil crisis in 1973, Japan avoided pressure from the United States and introduced a new Middle East policy that advocated respects to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and also stipulated that unlawful occupation must stop.

These policies, coupled with the pacifism founded on the Article 9 of the constitution, gained a certain level of trust to Japan from the Middle East and African people, while East Asian countries had different views because they had suffered from invasion and colonialism by Japan during the World War II. However, such trust to Japan might have been fluctuated after 2003 when the government succumbed to pressures from the US administration and dispatched Self-Defense Forces to Iraq and Indian Ocean.

The Abe administration is stepping up the US-Japan military alliance, reinforcing Self-Defense Forces and expanding joint operations with the US Military Forces with improved functions of the US bases in Japan. Three years ago, the administration forced the new security legislation to enable Self-Defense Forces to participate in wars outside of the Japanese territory jointly with the US forces. Prime Minister Abe is pushing his way to amend Article 9 of the Constitution to promote his strategies. We believe that shift of Japan's Middle East policy towards Israel reflects strengthened Japan-US alliances.

Taking this opportunity, we wish to invite your attention to the construction of a new US military base in Okinawa Prefecture, and hope that you will join us to condemn their reckless attempt. There are more than 100 US military bases and facilities throughout Japan and more than 50,000 US soldiers, their families and staffs are stationed. Yes, Japan has the largest US offshore forces in the world! Please keep in mind that over 70% of the force are concentrated in Okinawa Prefecture, a small island of the size of Moskva City.

People of Okinawa strongly oppose to additional construction of bases because it means permanent occupation of their island by the US forces. The resentful opinion of citizens of Okinawa against construction of the new base are clearly and repeatedly shown in the results of elections and referendums over the past five years. The Abe administration have totally ignored such wills of residents and enforcing construction of the base together with the US government.

To our indignation, the US military forces stationed in Japan are protected under the Japan-US Status Agreement, which works almost like the extraterritorial right and severely violates Japan's sovereignty. US military aircrafts frequently cause accidents. US soldiers and employees ignore Japanese laws and repeat crimes. Under restricted sovereignty of Japan, they are free to do anything. We consider such position of current Okinawa is virtually a colonial state. Therefore, we believe it is rightful to oppose US military bases in order to restore Japan's independence, democracy and dignity.

In this respect, Palestinians are not just friend but comrades to Japanese, both struggling under unlawful occupation. In fact, we have been encouraged by the Palestinian people fighting against cruel military occupation and closures. The US government and the Abe administrations ignore results of elections and would not listen to the voice of people. They are expecting us to abandon hope and give up. If we yield to them, they will do whatever they want. The right to live in peace, independence and dignity belong to people, no matter how hard to get them. With prospect of hope and justice, there is a future. Let's work together and achieve common goal.

Thank you for your attention.

(END)

Appendix

In 2009, the internationally popular Japanese writer Haruki Murakami was nominated for the “Jerusalem Award”. People believed it was not appropriate for him to accept the award, therefore upheld a campaign to decline. At the award ceremony, Mr. Murakami referred to his criticism to Israel in his speech.

In 2010, MUJIRUSHI, one of major Japanese retailers, withdrew their plan to open outlets in Israel after receiving protests from citizens.

In 2012, a Japanese agency represented AHAVA agreed to the protesting group and stopped handling AHAVA product because they were produced in the Settlement.

In 2014, Soda Stream, another company based in the Settlement, cancelled their sales campaign in response to civil protests.

In this year, the Abe administration abolished the three principles of arms exports and made export of weapons possible.

Israel attacked Gaza Strip. Citizens gathered at Israeli Embassy in Tokyo to show their protests.

In 2016, the Japan-Israeli joint research on unmanned reconnaissance plane was uncovered. Later, the plan was ceased by protests.

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) canceled provision of venues to a wine event hosted by the Israeli Embassy.

In 2017, the Japan-Israeli investment agreement was signed. Citizens opposed the agreement because it included the occupied territory in the Israeli boundary.

“Mitsukoshi”, one of major department stores, faced with protest from citizens and withdrew wine produced in the Settlement.

In 2018, “Honda” a major automobile manufacturer, obeyed to international protests and cancelled a road race planned in the Settlement.

Daimaru Tokyo, another major department store, discontinued wines produced in the Settlement.

The Israeli Military Trade Fair held in Kawasaki City near Tokyo faced strong protests. Softbank Group had to withdraw from sponsorship and cancelled their exhibit booth.

Citizens protested the music concert celebrating 70th anniversary of Israel.

In 2019, Japan and Israel signed the “Memorandum for the Protection of Confidential Information on Weapons and Technology”. Citizens stood up to protests.

International Action Day to “Boycott Puma” took place in Tokyo and Osaka.

In November, DSEI 2019 JAPAN, the full-size International Weapons Fair was held at the Makuhari Messe in Chiba Prefecture..

Delegation of Japan AALA

Dr. Fujio Yamamoto head of the delegation. Professor Emeritus at University of Fukui, a scientist specialized in fluid mechanics and has been involved in movements upholding denuclearization and abandonment of nuclear power generation. He is also working on historical and conscientious reviews on the past Japanese war of aggression and colonial rule in Asia.

Ms. Rie Kanamitsu an active member of a civil movement objecting Japan's militarization and export of weapons. An organizer of campaign against weapon trade fair.

Mr. Yoshiaki Ohmura Professor of Law faculty Chuo Gakuin University, specialized in the international family law, especially in discrimination issues of nationality and family registration.