

Statement by Concerned Citizens to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of World War II

Sincere remorse, apology, and compensation based on correct recognition of history is the foundation of reconciliation and friendship.

This is the 70th year since the end of World War II. During this post-war period, how much has the Japanese Government faced the facts of the war, expressed remorse and apology, and fulfilled its responsibility to compensate based on correct recognition of history?

This coming August 15, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is set to make a statement marking the 70th anniversary of World War II's end. The content of the statement is under discussion by "the Panel for 21st Century Design," a private advisory body of experts set up by the Prime Minister. The chairperson of the panel has expressed his understanding on war responsibility as "It is not necessary to make an apology in the statement." In the joint meeting of the two Houses of the US Congress at the end of April, Prime Minister Abe made a speech touching on the 70th anniversary of the war's end. But he did not include an apology.

The Murayama Statement of August 1995, "On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End," clearly expressed that "during a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy" and "through its colonial rule and aggression" "caused tremendous damage and suffering" to the people in Asian countries. It also expressed "deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology." All subsequent administrations have followed the Murayama Statement, such as the statement issued during the visit to Japan by Korean former President Kim Dae Jung and Japan-Republic of Korea Declaration of Partnership (October, 1998), former Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration (September, 2002), former Prime Minister Koizumi's speech at the Asia-Africa Summit (April, 2005), an apology issued by Ichiro Fujisaki the Ambassador to the USA in the American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society (December, 2008, February, 2009), and former Prime Minister Naoto Kan's statement at the occasion of 100th Anniversary of Japan's annexation of the Korean Peninsula. The Murayama Statement has served as a foundation for building friendship with neighboring Asian countries.

In early 2015, Prime Minister Abe mentioned that he would uphold the

overall gist of the 1993 statements by Murayama and Kono. However, he has still not clarified whether he intends to include core parts of the two statements such as “colonial rule and aggression.”

Our Understanding of History (Two Acts of Assault)

Following a consistent policy of expansionism, modern Japan one-sidedly incorporated Ryukyu, placed Taiwan under colonial rule after the Sino-Japanese War, colonized Korea, and expanded its control in Micronesia and northeast China (Manchuria).

It is said that during the Fifteen Years War from 1931 through 1945 alone Japan took the lives of 20 million people. Aside from killing on the battlefield, the Japanese Army slaughtered and raped civilians, practiced forced labor, and looted food in various areas they invaded. In China, the Japanese Army carried out the Three Alls Strategy (burn all, kill all, loot all), and were feared by people as “Japanese devils.” The Nanjing Massacre and mass graves of Chinese laborers buried alive throughout the nation are symbolic examples of such deeds. Under colonial rule, numerous acts of aggressions were carried out, such as infringement of sovereignty, forced occupation, use of “comfort women” for the Japanese army, forced recruitment and labor, plunder of cultural heritage, forced change of names, and imposition of use of Japanese language. These are all included in “the first assault” by Japan.

After defeat in the war, in the era of Cold War between the East and the West, Japan joined the capitalist camp led by the USA, and took part in further conflict. Especially, the Korean Peninsula was divided into north and south, and experienced the miserable post-war period of the Korean War where people of the same ethnicity fought each other. Part of the blame for this tragedy lies with the colonial rule by Japan. Further, thanks to emergency demand during the Korean War, Japan was able to achieve post-war economic recovery.

The Japanese Government took part in stalemating the division of north and south by recognizing South Korea as “the only legal government” in the Korean Peninsula through the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1965. It has continuously denied apology and compensation for Japanese Army “comfort women,” forced laborers, and victims of conscription under the colonial rule, stating that:

“The High Contracting Parties confirm that the problems concerning property, rights, and interests of the two High Contracting Parties and their peoples (including juridical persons) and their claims..., have been settled completely and finally.”

The Japanese government has taken a consistently hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, The Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration made in September, 2002 by Kim Jong Il, Chairperson of National Defense

Commission, and former Prime Minister Koizumi aimed to normalize diplomatic relations. However, using issues such as abduction as excuses, successive administrations have not yet carried it out.

For the war victims in China and other Asian countries, the Japanese state has not made compensation to individuals, saying the issue has already been covered by the Japan-China Joint Communiqué and other bilateral agreements. For example, apology and compensation for the victims of forcible capture of Chinese laborers was started with a cabinet decision, and some companies reached out of court settlements with individuals. However, the government has not tried to fulfill any responsibility. Instead of taking responsibility, in December 2013, Prime Minister Abe beautified the Asia-Pacific War as a “just war for self-existence and self-defense” (holy war), and, in his official capacity as prime minister, visited Yasukuni Shrine where Class A war criminals are enshrined as “spirits of the war dead.” Leaving the issue unresolved without taking responsibility for Japan’s aggression during the Asia-Pacific War is the “second assault”.

The above is our citizens’ understanding of history.

Urgent Action and Appeal for Peace

Post-war Japan made a diplomatic settlement such that some militarists such as Hideki Tojo and others (Class A war criminals) took responsibility for aggressions, but the highest ranking responsible persons did not. Also, the responsibility of individuals including common soldiers has not been questioned.

“Taking responsibility” means taking actions to restore trust through apology and compensation, in order to fill the serious gap between Japanese and the victimized people. It is up to Japan to fulfill its post-war responsibility for “the first assault” committed up to the end of the war in 1945 and “the second assault” committed continuously since the war to this day.

Action for peace means feeling heartfelt remorse, apologizing, and making reparations based on correct historical understanding. Those who victimized others easily forget what they did, but those who were victimized will never forget. We citizens are committed to honestly face the history which brought such immeasurable sacrifice and to take action for peace with courage to settle the past.

The Japanese Constitution was born as a “sincere cry from the heart” to avoid repeating the same disaster caused by the war. Our current Peace Constitution is an eternal anti-war and non-war promise, whereby Japan vowed to the world that it shall not be/become a country causing war. In the spirit of this current Peace Constitution, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the war’s end, we herewith urgently appeal to Prime Minister Abe to heed the following five points. Taking responsibility for the country’s actions during and after the war will become the foundation for genuine reconciliation and friendship with people in Asia and the world.

Below is our **Statement by Concerned Citizens, Aichi, to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of World War II.**

<Urgent Appeal to Prime Minister Abe>

1. In the statement commemorating the 70th anniversary of the war, to be made by Prime Minister Abe, accurately recognize Japan's history of aggression as fact and uphold the core part of the Murayama Statement.

The Murayama Statement of August 1995 recognized the facts of Japanese aggression and colonial rule in Asia, and expressed apology and remorse using phrases such as: "following a mistaken national policy," "through its colonial rule and aggression," "deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology." The Prime Minister's statement on this special occasion of the 70th anniversary of the war's end should uphold the view of history expressed in the Murayama Statement.

2. Face the facts of history sincerely, recognize the internationally agreed definition of aggression, and express once again that the Asia-Pacific War was a war of aggression.

In the April 2013 plenary session of the House of Councilors, regarding Japan's colonial rule and aggression, Prime Minister Abe stated, "The definition of aggression is not yet established academically nor internationally. In the relationship between countries, it depends which side you look at." In the response to the Diet prospectus in October the same year, he expressed his view that "Various discussions are ongoing regarding the international legal definition of aggression, and therefore it is difficult to answer the question including giving an established definition."

However, a clear definition of aggression had already been recognized internationally in the War-Renunciation Pact (Non-Belligerency Pact) concluded in 1928 and the Resolution on the Definition of Aggression which the Japanese government also supported in 1974 at the United Nations General Assembly.

3. Offer state compensation to victims of the Asia-Pacific War and colonial rule immediately.

State compensation for individual victims of Japanese colonial rule and war of aggression should be offered immediately, based on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in the World Conference against Racism (Durban Conference) held in April 2001, and the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the United Nations General Assembly in December 2005.

4. Based on Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration, immediately make efforts for the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and PDRK.

Take concrete measures and continue close discussion as stated in the Stockholm Agreement in May, 2014, and immediately proceed with negotiations to normalize diplomatic relations based on the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration of September, 2002.

5. Make efforts to foster friendly relations with neighboring countries without depending on military power.

Reinforcement of Self-Defense Force deployment in the Nansei Islands, constructing a new base in Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa, and unconstitutional security legislation in the name of “proactive contribution to peace” by the Abe Administration are increasing tensions in East Asia. Stop the construction of a new base in Henoko, halt deployment and reinforcement of Self-Defense Forces in the Nansei Islands, and make full use of our pacifist constitution to maintain peace through diplomacy.

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Statement by Concerned Citizens, Aichi, to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of World War II

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[Attachment]

“Statement & Urgent Appeal by Concerned Citizens to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of World War II” (Names in the order of the Japanese alphabet)