

A Statement of Opposition to Japan's Security Policy that Will Lead to Increased Numbers of Refugees

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The two pieces of legislation which collectively make up Japan's proposed "Security Policy" are currently under discussion in the House of Councillors. The governing party is attempting to use its majority in order to force these pieces of legislation through the legislative process.

If the new security policy becomes law, it will become possible for the government to arbitrarily determine when the Japanese military can be used, even when the country is not under attack. It will also become possible for Japanese forces to provide combat service support in wars being fought by American and other forces. Governments will be enabled to take such action in the case of an extremely vaguely defined "existential threat".

RAFIQ is an NGO that is committed to finding lasting solutions to issues of asylum. We are also involved in ensuring that refugees whose human rights cannot be guaranteed in their countries of origin are ensured of these rights in Japan. We oppose this security policy, for the following reasons.

1. Wars Create Refugees

According to UNHCR's Global Trends Report for 2014, there are currently around 60 million people who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict or persecution. This is the highest ever figure, and it has quadrupled in the last five years. It means that, of the whole world's population, one in every 122 has been driven from their home. The conflict in Syria which started in 2011 is a major contributing factor to this figure. Furthermore, in the past 5 years, 15 separate conflicts have started (or restarted) worldwide, and almost none have come to an end. This means that more and more people are displaced all the while.

According to UNHCR's report, over half of these refugees are children. These children are taken away from their homes and families to live a life of fear, with little hope for the future. Even when they manage to escape a conflict, there are no guarantees that they will be able to live an adequate lifestyle or have access to education. Such children often are vulnerable to becoming involved in child labour and child militias, and these children also become a target for enforced early marriages and sexual violence.

War is therefore the main reason that people become refugees. It also claims creates an especially high number of child refugees.

What is more, for those who are forced to become refugees and leave their countries, it takes an average of 17 years before they can resume a "non-refugee" life.

As an NGO which seeks lasting solutions to issues of asylum, we cannot accept a security policy which will allow Japan to participate in such conflicts.

2. War is the Biggest Cause of Human Rights Abuses

Wars cause human rights violations: many people lose their lives, suffer health problems, or have their dignity infringed upon.

For example, hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed in the Iraq War which started in 2003. Furthermore, as a result of religious conflicts and the rise of ISIL (Islamic State), around 3 million people have been internally displaced within the country, forced to live in very harsh conditions. Inhumane weapons such as cluster bombs and white phosphorous shells were also used in the Iraq War, along with munitions which used depleted uranium, spreading radiation throughout the region. Indiscriminate attacks and massacres took place in Fallujah and Ramadi, as well as numerous other cities.

If the new security policy becomes law, then Japan will be allowed to provide combat service support to American and other forces which perpetrated these atrocities.

As supporters of human rights, we are opposed to wars fought in the name of so-called “just” or “moral” causes, and we cannot accept a security policy that will allow Japan to become involved in such wars in the future.

3. Accepting Refugees is a the Responsibility of the Entire International Community, and a Step Towards Peace

The Japanese government has said that it will use the new security policy as a deterrent, in order to keep Japan safe. However, creating a “deterrent” by boosting defence spending and increasing military activity will serve only to increase international tensions. Furthermore, assisting the USA in its military activities may well lead to Japan becoming involved in reprisals.

The most effective method of creating a truly peaceful society, is to focus on “Human Security” (a concept defined by the UN). This means transcending national borders. In 2014, the Japanese government received around 5,000 applications for asylum, and accepted only 11 of them. In the same year, South Korea accepted 87 refugees, Germany 33,310, the UK 10,725 and the USA 21,760. Comparing these figures makes it apparent that Japan’s efforts are not enough.

What Japan’s government should do, in order to ensure Human Security, is to accept refugees into the country. It should also strengthen human rights within Japan by ratifying the international protocol on human rights. This will allow it to show the world that Japan is a country in which human rights are protected.

For these three reasons, RAFIQ strongly opposes the security policy, and we implore our national parliament to reject it outright.