

(Informal statement)
We Protest the Cabinet Meeting Decision Approving the Exercise of the Right to Collective Defense

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Although many Japanese citizens opposed the change in the current interpretation of the Constitution and loudly called for the preservation of Article 9, the Abe Government through a Cabinet Meeting made it possible for our country to exercise the right to collective defense. This change of interpretation in fact might transform Japan into a country that goes to war. ZENKYO expresses its strong anger at and protests the outrage of the Government that undermines the essence of the Constitution.

Despite the anti-constitutional “Cabinet Meeting Decision”, the fundamental principle of the Japan’s pledge not to go to war remains valid. The liberations on the draft law concretizing that decision will still be restricted by the relevant constitutional provisions. ZENKYO is doing all possible efforts to stop this dangerous move of giving a perilous twist to the Constitution and to ensure that all basic principles embodied in the Constitution will be observed and thoroughly applied.

The exercise of the right to collective defense does not protect either Japan or the lives of its citizens. On the contrary, it means that Japan can now support militarily the US in the bloody wars they initiated such as the retaliatory war in Afghanistan (2001) or the aggressive war on Iraq (2003). It means that the blood of young Japanese will be shed in the wars fought by the US. Combined with the “Specially Designated Secrets Protection Act” instituted forcibly against the massive protests and the “Three-Principles on Arms Exports” revised this spring, it will further integrate Japanese armed forces in the American war machine.

The interpretation of the Constitution was established after many years of deliberations in the Diet. It clearly set out that “the exercise of the right to collective defense is not allowed under Article 9”. We do not accept the change in this interpretation that is aimed at allowing Japan to send its troops abroad and make war as it was made without taking into account the criticisms and concerns manifested by a majority of the Japanese people, without any serious discussion in the Diet but only consultations behind the close doors among the parties of the governmental coalition. The Cabinet that has the obligation to respect the Constitution must abide by it and ensure the administration of our country in accordance with it. The Government must not “change the interpretation of the Constitution by using its administrative power” as it claims to do.

We should not forget that in the Asia-Pacific War, about 20 million people in Asian countries in addition to 3.1 million Japanese lost their precious lives due to the Japanese aggression. Out of this tragic experience, Japan adopted the current Constitution after the war. It constitutes a pledge of our country to the world not to initiate any war again. Under this Constitution, young Japanese have lived in peace for 69 years without any danger of being killed or forced to kill other people. And this peaceful existence has inspired schools and teachers as well as children and provided the basis of an education that treasures human lives. We should not ignore the fact that the postwar education was born out of a painful history and has evolved under the current Constitution to become what it is today.

During the postwar period, our predecessors have upheld the slogan “Do not send our children to the battlefield again” and worked to provide democratic education to all, ensuring

them sound growth and development and making them cherish the Constitution as a treasure. We teachers of today have tried to carry their wish and efforts. We have talked with children about peace and horrors of war. We told them that peace is the condition for building their future. We have endeavored for the school, education and society that observe and give life to the Constitution as well as the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The change of the interpretation of the Constitution to pave the way towards an “aggressive nation” is counter to our aspiration and daily practice for the sake of peace. The “restoration of education” promoted by the Abe Government is a part and parcel of this dangerous move. We must not let the children go to war.

People all over Japan are now voicing their severe criticism against the outrage of the Abe Government and the movement is rapidly spreading to stop it. ZENKYO is confident that this movement will surely develop into a nationwide struggle. It will further build ties of cooperation and joint action with the parents and the Japanese people to lead a strong movement to prevent the enactment of any pernicious laws that run counter to the constitutional principles