

INTRODUCTION

From November 21 to 27, 2005, a Fact Finding Mission was organized by the Catholic Council for Justice and Peace of the Episcopal Conference of Japan. We, participants, represented the following Catholic organizations.

India	National Commission for Justice and Peace
Pakistan	National Commission for Justice and Peace
Philippines	Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission – Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines
Hong Kong	Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples
South Korea	Korean Catholic Human Rights Committee
Japan	National Catholic Council for Justice and Peace
New Zealand	Catholic Justice and Peace Office of Auckland, New Zealand
Netherlands	Justitia et Pax (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace)
USA	Pax Christi International/USA

The main objective of the Fact Finding Mission was “to identify a way to consolidate and strengthen a justice and peace network in the region and beyond in collaboration with different actors working for non-violence, peace and reconciliation. “

The places we visited were:

- ◆ The Yasukuni Shrine and the War Museum in Tokyo to experience the reality of growing militarism and exclusive nationalism promoted by the present government
- ◆ The Okinawa island where 260,000 lives were lost during the Second World War and 75% of the US bases in Japan are located today
- ◆ Hiroshima to be exposed to the horror of the atomic bomb by visiting the Peace Museum as well as by listening to the stories of two Hibakusha (AB survivors)

In Tokyo, Okinawa and Hiroshima, we met people of these communities, including resource persons and people actively involved in peace building. Motivated by Article 9 these people work in Anti-Bases and Anti-Nuclear movements looking for ways to help bring about a world without violence.

OUR OBSERVATION

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution states that “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.” Thanks to this article, Japan has not waged war for 60 years.

Japan is struggling to come to terms with its own military and war history. The meaning of war is a very current issue in Japan today. Historical awareness and the history textbook issue have become serious problems. We experienced the Yasukuni Shrine and the Tokyo War Museum as glorifying war in contrast to the strong message for peace promoted by the Okinawa and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museums.

The United States is incorporating Japan in its new security strategy. It is realigning the position of its military forces to maintain its military and economic dominance and to address what it perceives to be threats to its security. These threats are named as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and rogue states.

The Japanese government supports and finances US presence on its territory and openly justifies the development of military power. It considers Article 9 of the Constitution as a hindrance to this development and therefore it holds that article 9 should be revised. After the September 2005 election, the Liberal Democratic Party acquired the absolute majority which is needed to propose such an amendment.

The US-Japanese relationship and long standing historical issues threaten Japan's relationships with the neighboring countries. These countries have suffered from Japanese military aggression in the first half of the 20th century. Their opposition to the current increasing militarism is ignored by the Japanese government.

Peace and democracy are the principles for the peace movement in Japan, based on Article 9 of the Constitution. Christians and people of other faith, in solidarity with other peace-loving people, are trying to protect Article 9, promoting a culture of peace and absolute denial of violence to solve conflicts.

CHALLENGE AND HOPE FOR FULLNESS OF LIFE

Today the world is in the grip of fear of random terrorism from non-state actors. Our review of World War II from the perspective of the victims made clear to us that this terrorism can be traced back to a particular act of state terrorism of the United States, the unleashing of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This evil act changed forever the meaning and reality of war. Humans can now destroy all life on earth.

From this perspective, Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan is a sign of hope, a prophetic statement to other nations that still rely on military superiority as the means of security. We understand that the accelerating buildup of U.S. military presence in Japan is unconstitutional. This buildup does not contribute to genuine human security. Rather, it engenders a sense of fatalism and is financed at the expense of hundreds of millions of the peoples of the world whose genuine needs are sacrificed to the development of ever more efficient technology of killing. In this context, we commit ourselves to work towards the eight millennium development goals (MDG) that make concrete the Millennium Declaration adopted by our governments in 2000.

Our ongoing collaboration is in solidarity with our sisters and brothers everywhere who are working for a universal culture of peace rooted in justice. This is our response to the dangers facing the peoples of Asia and Pacific expressed in the national security policies of the present governments of Japan and the United States. We will continue to educate ourselves and others within the broader society on specific political issues that we experienced in our Fact Finding Mission. Grounded in our concern for human dignity and the integrity of creation, we will collaborate in advocating policies of justice and peace within the Church and before our governments.

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