

5.24 APPEAL FOR REPEAL OF IMMIGRATION LAW REFORMS

In March the Japanese government submitted three reform bills to the Diet -- the Basic Resident Registration Law, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, and the Special Law on Immigration Control. These bills are currently under discussion in the Committee on Internal Affairs and Communications, and the Committee on Judicial Affairs.

We, foreign residents and Japanese attending this assembly from all over the country, strongly oppose these three reform bills, especially the reform of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, for the following reasons: the bills would require documented residents who stay in Japan longer than three months to carry a new residency (zairyu) card at all times, and would oblige foreign residents to notify authorities of any change of address, or of changes regarding the institutions to which they belong, such as schools or companies. Failure to notify can mean a criminal penalty or cancellation of visa status. In addition to notifications by foreigner residents themselves, the bill would oblige private institutions like schools or companies to report foreigners' personal information, as well as make local municipal offices report foreigners' records on the Basic Residents' Registration to the Ministry of Justice. Thus all personal information related to foreign residents would be centralized at the Immigration Bureau. Such a system of strict control ignores the reality of foreigners' life and residence, and allows for arbitrary annulment or non-renewal of visas by the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, under the reform of the Basic Resident Registration Law which is connected to the new control system, residence records of asylum seekers and undocumented people would be deleted from Basic Residents' Registration. So these people will be rendered "invisible", preventing access to social security or education.

Regarding the Industrial Training Program and Technical Internship Program, which have been internationally criticized due to widespread abuse, human trafficking, and slave labor, we consider these reforms to be makeshift remedies glossing over the real problem. Moreover, these so-called remedies would entrench the programs and their framework as Japan's way of accepting foreign laborers, thus bringing more workers with limited rights into the country. We believe that these alleged remedies will prevent Japan from accepting workers as workers, and facilitate a structure of human trafficking as well as slave labor.

We, foreign residents and Japanese at this assembly, present the following joint demands to the Diet:

1. In accordance with principles of democracy, the Diet should arrange opportunities to listen to the opinions of foreign nationals who are affected by these reform bills;
2. The Diet should carefully examine the problems with the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act bill, and repeal it;
3. The Diet should repeal the amendments to the Special Law on Immigration Control and the Basic Resident Registration Law which are connected to the new control system under the amendments of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, and;

- (1) enact a “Basic Human Rights Law” which clearly gives all foreign nationals living in Japan status and rights as “residents”, and status and rights as “ethnic minorities” as provided in international human rights treaties;
 - (2) reform the Special Law on Immigration Control so as to clearly admit Japan’s historical responsibility, and literally guarantee “permanent residency status” to all people living in Japan who are from former Japanese colonies or countries invaded by Japan and their descendants;
 - (3) repeal the Alien Registration Act, and reform the Basic Resident Registration Law to cover all foreign residents; and
 - Include all foreign residents regardless of their nationality or visa status.
 - Ensure that local municipal offices not use or release information on foreign residents except for imposing taxes and providing services to the residents.
4. The Diet should strictly monitor and operate the Industrial Training Program, abolish the Technical Internship Program, and create a new system to accept laborers as laborers.

We as people living together in Japan society adamantly reject the amendments of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.

What is required now in Japanese society is not a wall separating foreign nationals and Japanese, but a legal system under which we can live together for the common good. We will continue fighting make this a reality.

May 24, 2009

Executive Committee for the May 24 Assembly Against Immigration Law Reform
Statement of all attendees