

May11 , 2023

Letter to G7 Leaders Regarding the Great Kanto Earthquake Massacre

We express our respect for your efforts in the pursuit of world peace, prosperity of all nations, and the realization of people's happiness.

We are a citizens' group working to take to heart the massacre of Koreans and Chinese following the Great Kanto Earthquake, which occurred in Japan 100 years ago on September 1, and to take away lessons from that history. Many massacres have taken place throughout world history, and the Great Kanto Earthquake Massacre in Japan is one of them.

1. Prior to the end of World War II, the United States compiled several investigative reports ahead of its occupation of Japan. One of these, "Aliens in Japan" (R&A 2690, June 1945), contains the following statement: "The Koreans, with few exceptions, are a distinct minority group, with a low social position. They are looked down upon by the Japanese and were scapegoated on at least one occasion when a national disaster struck Japan."

It goes without saying that this refers to the massacre of Koreans following the Great Kanto Earthquake 100 years ago.

2. The following is recorded in the minutes of a plenary session of the House of Representatives on December 16, 1923.

Ryutaro Nagai, then a member of the House of Representatives, said to then Prime Minister Gombay Yamamoto, "You refer to the unseemly events that occurred immediately after the earthquake as if they were based on false rumors...If they were false rumors, doesn't the government feel responsible for the false rumors that the government itself spread, even though it should have been clamping down on them?...It is discourteous of you that when I asked you if you had any intention of expressing regret over the unseemly events that took place immediately after the great earthquake disaster, you did not say whether you did or did not have that intention." Prime Minister Yamamoto merely replied, "The government is currently investigating the matter that has occurred. Once a conclusion is reached, the matter may be explained in this chamber."

Unfortunately, we have seen no such discussion of the massacre in the minutes of the Diet to the present day.

3. Korea was already a Japanese colony at the time. The Japanese authorities blocked the investigation of the Korean victims, and Korean students barely managed to get a probe underway under the name of "The Condolence Team for Fellow Korean Victims." The *Tongnip Sinmun* (Dec. 5, 1923), a newspaper of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (Shanghai), reported that there were 6,661 victims, but their names are unknown. The Japanese government has not conducted any appropriate investigations.

China, on the other hand, was a sovereign nation with diplomatic relations with Japan, and a government delegation had visited Japan. In November 1923, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Treaty Bureau, Third Division, reported that it had studied 11 cases in other countries and found that under international law, in general, "the liability of states for illegal activity resulting from civil disturbances or riots" were "state reparations." Based on this, on May 27, 1924, Prime Minister Keigo Kiyoura and other ministers of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Justice, Army, and Finance jointly signed an agreement to pay 200,000 yen (at the time) in compensation to the Chinese victims, but there is no evidence that the payments were actually made.

4. In December 1999, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA) received a petition for human rights redress from those connected to victims of the massacre, requesting clarification of responsibility for the massacre and an apology. The JFBA's Human Rights Protection Committee compiled a report after three years of research into interviews with the petitioners, discussions by historical researchers, official documents and other historical materials, and criminal judgments punishing perpetrators of the massacre of Korean people.

On August 25, 2003, the JFBA recommended that then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (1) acknowledge the state's responsibility and apologize to the victims and bereaved families of the massacre, and (2) investigate the full extent and truth of the massacre and clarify its causes. For a summary of the report, please refer to the October 2006 issue of "*Hōgaku Seminā*" (No. 622). Twenty years have passed since then, but the recommendation remains ignored.

5. Japan is an earthquake-prone country, and a major earthquake of the magnitude of the Great Kanto Earthquake is expected in the near future. A March 2008 report by the Central Disaster Management Council's Committee on Lessons Learned from Past Disasters states the following: "In many cases, the term massacre was appropriate, as

many armed people assaulted and then killed unarmed minorities. Koreans were the most common targets, but there were also a not so small number of Chinese and Japanese victims. ... They accounted for one to several percent of the earthquake's death toll, and cannot be underestimated as a cause of human loss." The report concluded, "We would like to reaffirm the need for reflection on the past and efforts to eliminate ethnic discrimination."

In January 2020, a New Year's postcard was sent to the Kawasaki City Fureaikan" (a community center in an area heavily populated by Zainichi Koreans in Kanagawa Prefecture) with the message "Let's eliminate Zainichi Koreans from the world." From July to August 2021, there was a series of hate crimes, including arson attacks on Zainichi Korean-related facilities, including the Zainichi Korean residential area Utoro, in Kyoto. It was fortunate that no human casualties were reported. At the same time, however, the exclusion of Korean high schools from the free high school education system at the national level and the exclusion of Korean schools from subsidies provided by local governments in Tokyo, Osaka, and other areas have stayed in place.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its concluding observations following its examination of the report of Japan in September 2018, stated in paragraph 8 that "The Committee...urges the State party to adopt specific comprehensive legislation prohibiting direct and indirect racial discrimination," and in paragraph 22 that "The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CERD/C/JPN/CO/7-9, para. 19), that the State party ensure that Korean schools are not discriminated against with regard to funding from the High School Tuition Support Fund." But the Government of Japan has not responded in any way to these recommendations.

6. Still fresh in our minds is United States President Joe Biden's visit to Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 31, 2021, the site of a massacre of Blacks by Whites 100 years ago. There he said, "[J]ust because history is silent, it doesn't mean that it did not take place. And while darkness can hide much, it erases nothing," calling on people to reflect on and mourn the Tulsa tragedy. He also stated, "We honor the legacy of the Greenwood community, and of Black Wall Street, by reaffirming our commitment to advance racial justice through the whole of our government."

In addition, current Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum posted an apology on Facebook on May 31, 2021, writing that "Tulsa's city government failed to protect Black Tulsans from murder and arson on the night of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, and from

discrimination in subsequent decades."

https://www.facebook.com/gtbynumfortulsamayor/photos/a.1597023863959669/2840515949610448/?paipv=0&eav=AfY_IIRTAYLkSx2Lyqs8EGF1um8ypsqe7K3n5qzzHm mwb9Rxzu9hzSyPXFJ5jk-Sbxg&_rdr (BBC News Japan June 2, 2021)

Meanwhile, since 2017, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike has not sent a memorial address to a memorial service for the victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake Massacre organized annually by a citizens' group on September 1.

7. Earlier, we mentioned that we have seen no discussion of the Great Kanto Earthquake Massacre in the minutes of the Diet to the present day. In Japan, there is a system whereby each member of the Diet can submit a document titled "Statement of Questions" to the government through the speaker of the House to which he or she belongs, and the government responds to the submission with a written answer titled "Reply." This system is not a face-to-face exchange, but rather a one-way exchange of documents, which is frustrating. We found that a total of eight written questions have been submitted on the massacre.

The earliest was submitted by then House of Councillor member Mieko Kamimoto on February 18, 2015, and then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's reply was dated February 27 of the same year. The latest one was submitted by House of Councillors member Hideya Sugio on December 6, 2022, and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's written answer is dated December 16 of the same year. The first written answer by Prime Minister Abe states, "As far as we have investigated, it is difficult for us to answer your inquiry because we have not found any records within the government that would enable us to ascertain these facts." Incidentally, the last written answer by Prime Minister Kishida states, "As far as we have investigated, we have found no records within the government that would allow us to ascertain these facts, so it is difficult for us to answer your question about the views you have requested." No wonder the answer was given promptly. We can detect no sense of responsibility to history on the government's part.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who was in office just prior to the Tulsa Massacre, was famous for his 14-point vision for world peace. One hundred years later, President Biden is still mourning the massacre and has not looked away from political errors.

We hope that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who claims to hold the same values as the rest of the G7 leaders, will not stop at appealing to the world

to share the pledge that humankind will never cause the tremendous suffering generated by nuclear weapons as the G7 chair, but will accept advice from the rest of you on the importance of sharing the same values about confronting history with sincerity. We hope that you will kindly understand and accept our sincere request for your assistance.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee for the 100th Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of the Great Kanto Earthquake Massacre of Koreans and Chinese

P.S. After several preliminary events, we are preparing to welcome the families of the Korean and Chinese victims of the massacre and hold a memorial service in Tokyo on August 31, a candlelight vigil in front of the Diet on September 2, and an international exchange symposium on September 3. We have enclosed a Call to Action flyer that we produced in February 2023.