

The Human Rights of Migrants in Japan Must be Realized

On July 28, 2011, a meeting inviting members of the Japanese Diet was organized in Tokyo by Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan, in cooperation with IMADR-JC. The meeting focused on the report of the official visit that UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on the human rights of migrants Jorge Bustamante had made in the previous year. This report was presented at the 17th session of UN Human Rights Council in June 2011.. As the SR noted in his report, a wide range of challenges are still to be addressed to guarantee the human rights of migrants in Japan. He also noted with concern that the integration of migrants in society is not part of the Japanese government's policy.

Welcoming the report, civil society groups held the meeting to highlight what should be done by the government to address human rights problems faced by migrants in Japan in accordance with recommendations made by the SR.

Before the six Diet members present, civil society groups urged the government, as well as the legislature, to take measures to address the problems.

Following the meeting, several civil society organizations, including IMADR-JC, prepared a joint letter of request to be submitted to the Prime Minister. The text is as follows:

Request for the Implementation of Recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants and their Families

Dear Prime Minister Mr. Naoto Kan,

Mr. Jorge Bustamante, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, presented a report about the human rights situation of migrants in Japan during the 17th session of Human Rights Council. The report was based on his official visit to Japan made in March 2010. It includes his critical findings and recommendations in regard to the situation and treatment of migrants in Japan in terms of their rights guaranteed under several UN human rights instruments.

In the report, Mr. Bustamante indicates his concerns and raises recommendations to address these problems including the following:

1. The lack of comprehensive immigration policies to ensure integration of migrants in Japanese society with the respect for their human rights.
2. No law to decisively prohibit racism, despite the manifestation of deeply-rooted racism and xenophobia in society.

3. The continuing exploitative practices over migrants, including technical trainees, in the labor sector.
4. The lack of effective intervention by the judicial and police authorities to protect the rights of migrants.
5. Continuous breaches of the international human rights conventions ratified by Japan as demonstrated in the practices of detention and deportation of undocumented migrants.
6. Difficulties faced by migrant children in receiving education at regular schools or schools for foreigners in Japan.

The above problems are long-standing issues. In our activities to defend the rights of the migrants, we have always confronted these problems and continued to urge the government on every possible occasion. The Special Rapporteur has made precise and specific recommendations regarding all these problems.

Many of the issues included in the report have repeatedly been taken up and given recommendations for by different UN human rights treaty bodies, including CERD. As a member of the international community, especially as a member of Human Rights Council, Japan is no doubt required to fulfill its responsibilities. The Japanese Government is urged to take immediate action to resolve these issues. We urge the Prime Minister to acknowledge the concerns and recommendations in the report, and develop necessary policies and programs to implement these recommendations.

Yours respectfully,

*** If you would like to refer to the Report, visit:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/migration/rapporteur/annual.htm>