

# Japanese Citizens' Appeal: Stop the Vicious Cycle of Territorial Disputes

Saturday 29 September 2012, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 28 September 2012).

**Japanese civic movements held a press conference and released the following statement on territorial conflicts between Japan, China, and Korea on Friday, September 28. This statement was initiated by a small number of activists of peace movement, intelligentsia, media people, and lawyers. So far, 1500 persons signed it, mainly independent peace activists.**

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1. Tensions in the area around Japan are heightening through issues related to the "Senkaku" and "Takeshima" islands. This is particularly unfortunate and saddening as it comes following the birth of the Democratic Part of Japan government in 2009 with its priority on East Asia and an equal Japan-US relationship, and the sympathy and empathy extended to Japan following the the March 11 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, whereby the Chinese and Korean leaders Wen Jiabao and Lee Myung Bak visited the disaster affected areas of Japan and greatly encouraged the survivors. Korea and China are both important friends for Japan, and partners in the creation of peace and prosperity for the region. The economic ties between the nations cannot be broken, and the importance of this relationship is certain to only become more important from now on. As citizens of Japan, we are deeply concerned by the current situation, and declare the following.

2. The current situation is said to be a conflict over "territory", however it must be remembered that in the background of both is "historical" issues (Japan's recent history as an aggressor in Asia). In the background of President Lee Myung Bak's visit to Takeshima/Dokdo is the issue of the former Japanese military "sexual slaves" known as "comfort women." In the summer of 2011, the Korean Constitutional Court issued a resolution on this issue. Based on this, at the summit held in Kyoto at the end of 2011 President Lee Myung Bak brought up the issue of the "comfort women", however Prime Minister Noda avoided responding to this directly - said to be at the root of the current issues. At his speech given on Korea's anniversary of liberation on August 15, following his visit to Takeshima/Dokdo, President Lee also called for Japan to take "responsible measures" in regards to the "comfort women" issue.

Japan's claims over Takeshima/Dokdo began in February 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War, at a time when the colonization of Korea was underway and diplomatic rights were already being lost. For the people of Korea, this is not an issue of a mere 'island', but a point of origin and symbol of the invasion and colonial rule. Japanese people must understand this fact.

Furthermore, the Senkaku Islands (known as Diaoyu in mainland China and Diaoyutai in Taiwan) were incorporated within Japanese territory in January 1895 as the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War could be seen, and three months later Taiwan and the Penghu Islands became colonies of Japan.

Both of these territorial claims were made within a situation where Korea and China were respectively at their weakest, and where it would have been impossible to make diplomatic claims.

**3.** This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, and many events to mark the friendship between countries have been planned and prepared. The cause for this friendship to be changed into conflict was the declaration by Governor of Tokyo Ishihara Shintaro to purchase the Senkaku Islands, and the Japanese Government's declaration of their intent to nationalize the islands as a response to this. From the Chinese perspective, it should not be surprising that these actions were seen to go against the tacit "agreement" to put aside the issue of territory since the normalisation of diplomatic relations, and seen as acts of provocation. It must be said that domestic criticism of Governor Ishihara's acts was weak. (Furthermore, Prime Minister Noda's announcement of the intent to nationalize the islands was made on July 7. This is the anniversary of the 'Lu Gou (Marco Polo) Bridge Incident' of 1937, which marked the beginning of Japan's comprehensive invasion of China, and is remembered in China as the 7.7 Incident. Thus, it must be noted that this is a date which cannot be forgotten by the citizens.)

**4.** Territorial issues rock nationalism in any country, and are thus utilised by political authorities as an outlet for domestic contradictions and frustrations. Action on one side leads to actions from another, this continues to escalate, and has the undeniable risk of developing into an uncontrollable situation such as an armed clash. We oppose any use of violence, and emphasise that the issue should be resolved through peaceful dialogue. The politics and media of each country involved has the responsibility to curb nationalism, and take calm measures. In such times as now where we are falling into a vicious cycle, the role of media to stop the escalation of nationalistic sentiments, reflect upon history, and call for calm is even more important.

**5.** In regards to "territory", consultation and dialogue are the only options. For this reason, Japan must revise its fictitious position that in "no territorial issues exist" (in regards to the Senkaku Islands). Without acknowledging the existence of this issue, no consultations or negotiations can take place. In addition, it must be said the concept of fixed "inherent territory" is not something that can really be true for any party.

**6.** During the period of consultation and negotiation at the very least, the current situation should be maintained and provocative actions from all sides should be curbed. Fundamental rules and boundaries of action related to this issue should be created. On August 5, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-Jeou announced the "East China Sea Peace Initiative." This called for self-restraint to prevent the escalation of tensions, putting aside fighting, not abandoning channels of dialogue, calling for consensus, and setting standards for activities within the East China Sea - extremely calm and logical recommendations. Such voices should be further shared and strengthened.

**7.** The marine area around the Senkaku Islands has been a place of both fishing, exchange and life for Taiwanese and Okinawan people, an ocean of production. The fishermen of Taiwan and Okinawa do not wish for the Senkaku Islands to become the focus of a conflict between states. We should respect the voices of those living and working in the area.

**8.** The most important point is for Japan to recognise, regret, and clearly express its own historical issues (its invasion of neighbouring countries). Reconfirmation should be made of agreements between Japan and its neighbours such as the 1972 Japan-China Joint Communiqué, the 1978 Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty, the 1998 Japan-Korea Partnership Declaration and the 2002 Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration; as well as its own statements regarding historical recognition such as the 1993 Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei, the 1995 Statement by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi, and the 2010 Statement by Prime Minister Kan Naoto. Following this, Japan should clearly express its intention to deepen reconciliation, friendship and

cooperation with neighbouring countries. The results of joint historical research on both the governmental and citizens' level between Japan and Korea and Japan and China should be once again revisited, as should the joint statement made between intellectual leaders of Japan and Korea in 2010 stating the invalidity of the 1910 Treaty of Annexation of Korea.

**9.** Joint development and use of the resources in the areas of "territory" now under dispute is the only way forward. While sovereignty cannot be divided, it is possible to jointly develop, manage and distribute resources in the area including fishing resources. Rather than clashing over sovereignty, the countries involved should pursue dialogue and consultation to come to an understanding over resources and share interests. We must shift the seeds of conflict which flare up territorial nationalism, and instead use them as a foundation for regional cooperation.

**10.** The burden on Okinawa must not be increased as a result of the current situation, through the strengthening of the US-Japan Security Pact in the name of the current tensions with neighbouring countries, or the deployment of the V-22 Osprey, the new type of vertical take off and landing transport aircraft.

**11.** Finally, we propose to create frameworks for dialogue on a non-governmental, citizens' level between Japan, China, Korea, Okinawa and Taiwan, with a view towards the future in good faith and with mutual trust.

September 28, 2012

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**P.S.**

\* <http://www.annie.ne.jp/~kenpou/seimei/seimei165en.pdf>