

Japan: Anti-hate speech march parades in Osaka. Foreign correspondents share opinions

Monday 22 July 2013, by [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 15 July 2013).

Contents

- [Foreign correspondents share](#)
- [Anti-discrimination groups \(...\)](#)
- [Fewer than 10% of legislators](#)

OSAKA — A counter-march against hate speech-fuelled rallies targeting ethnic Koreans and other foreign residents was held here on July 14, with around 600 people parading down a main street.

The parade was titled, “Osaka Against Racism Nakayoku Shiyoze (let’s get along).” Beginning in Nakanoshima Park in Osaka’s Kita Ward, the participants marched to music and chants such as “Stop racism!” as they traveled around 3.5 kilometers down the city’s Midosuji Street.

A 40-year-old man from Yao, Osaka Prefecture, who was at the march said, “Just because relations between the countries are bad doesn’t mean people should make racist attacks.”

Hate speech marches have been held weekly in Osaka and other cities in Japan. The counter-rally was organized by volunteers as a full-force rejection of racial discrimination.

Mainichi Shimbun, July 15, 2013(

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130715p2a00m0na003000c.html>

Foreign correspondents share opinions on Japanese hate speech marches

The *Mainichi Shimbun* interviewed foreign reporters at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (FCCJ) in Tokyo on July 9 for their opinions about the hate speech-filled anti-Korean marches that are continuing in Japanese major cities.

A U.S. reporter for Shingetsu News Agency, Michael Penn, who first came to Japan 16 years ago, says the marches are the first of their kind he has seen in the country. He said that while the U.S. has discrimination and hate speech, previously Japan did not, and 10 years ago the marches never would have happened.

He added that the reasons for the marches are complex and likely include anxiety over the economy and educational problems, as well as worsened relations between Japan and its neighbors China and

South Korea. He also speculated that, as the bonds of Japanese society have weakened in recent times, the growth of the Internet may have allowed extremist views to gain traction. Still, he had reservations over outlawing hate speech, saying there is a balance to maintain between regulations and freedom of speech.

Joel Legendre of French broadcaster RTL said he was stricken by Japanese people's indifference to the hate speech marches. He said that while most Japanese are peaceful and very smart, marches by ultra-conservative minorities are causing Japan many political and economic difficulties. The discriminatory marches were discussed during a July 1 meeting of Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers. Legendre said he thinks it is the Japanese people's indifference that allows the marches to continue.

Meanwhile, Nancy Snow, a writer for the *Huffington Post* and a professor at California State University, Fullerton, commented that while Japan received the world's sympathy after the Great East Japan Earthquake, its image is now rapidly changing. Snow, who has been traveling between the U.S. and Japan for the past 20 years, says one reason for the change in Japan's reputation is a video taken of a 14-year-old Japanese girl in Tsuruhashi, Osaka, home to many ethnic Koreans, as the girl threatens that she and others will enact a "Tsuruhashi massacre" of its inhabitants.

Snow pointed out that the video has found its way around the globe through the Internet, and viewers may think that thousands of other Japanese students share the same opinion as the girl.

There were around 30 people gathered for the July 9 discussion at the FCCJ. Guest speaker Kunio Suzuki, adviser to the neo-right-wing political group Issuikai, said that the discriminatory protests are done by weak people, who say what they usually can't say and fantasize themselves as constituting a powerful nation when they join the marches. Yoshifu Arita, a Democratic Party of Japan member of the House of Councillors who supports placing legal restrictions on hate speech, said the protests were the most unusual in the 68 years since World War II, and for some serve as places of venting frustration.

Looking at anti-hate speech laws in other countries, they can be generally classified into two types: those that punish offenders, and those that provide aid to victims. There have been cases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere of people being prosecuted for hate speech, and a 1990 ruling in Canada found a high school teacher guilty for saying in his class that Jews were evil. On the other hand, the United States Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that regulations against hate speech were unconstitutional.

Japanese law covers threats and slander, but according to Shizuoka University professor Junko Kotani, it "does not apply to hate speech against general groups of people." She was also reluctant to support a law to aid hate speech victims, saying, "The speech and actions governed by such a law tend to grow in scope, potentially posing a serious threat to freedom of speech."

Mainichi Shimbun, July 10, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130710p2a00m0na009000c.html>

Anti-discrimination groups calls for law banning hate speech

TOKYO (Kyodo) — An association of civic groups campaigning against racial discrimination has stressed the need for a law banning hate speech at a meeting to discuss demonstrations against Koreans recently seen in Tokyo.

At the gathering on Thursday sponsored by Jinshu Sabetsu Teppai NGO Network, an official with a support group for Korean residents of Japan, the Korea NGO Center, said some ethnic Korean students have stopped speaking in Korean on public transport. Children of ethnic Korean origin have also been hurt by abusive words such as “Get out (of Japan)!,” the official said.

Kyodo News, June 21, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130621p2g00m0dm031000c.html>

Fewer than 10% of legislators respond to NGO survey on hate speech

Fewer than 10 percent of legislators responded to a survey that a nongovernmental organization conducted on intensifying hate speech in Japan — highlighting the lawmakers’ low interest in the issue.

Only 46 among the total of 717 members of both Diet houses — or 6.4 percent — responded to the fax-based survey. The results were announced during a rally held at the House of Councillors offices on June 20 by the Jinshu Sabetsu Teppai NGO Network, a group of NGOs working to eliminate racial discrimination that spearheaded the survey.

Yasuko Morooka, a researcher at the Osaka University of Economics and Law who played a leading role in conducting the survey, criticized legislators who refused to respond. “They’re not just uninterested in the issue; I suppose they also fear harassment from organizers of hate speech campaigns,” she said. “They have failed to fulfill their duty as legislators.”

Among the lawmakers that did respond, 43 agreed that the Diet should discuss legal regulations on discrimination, while also pointing toward the need for the national government to take measures against hate speech that is directed toward people including Korean residents in Japan. Among the 43, 41 also indicated that the government should investigate the details of such campaigns.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 21, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130621p2a00m0na009000c.html>
