

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7060>



Japan

Statement Women's March Tokyo 2021 Organizing Committee

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV554 - March 2021 -

Publication date: Sunday 7 March 2021

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Marking the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 2020 was supposed to be an important year to have achieved progress on gender equality. Unfortunately, however, 2020 became overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has worsened existing inequality and women have suffered the most.

The sudden school closure followed by the declaration of the state of emergency had a devastating economic impact on the women who were already earning less, have fewer savings, and in unstable employment such as “irregular” positions. On top of that, school closures, working from home, and adopting new hygiene measures have created more unpaid labor at home and women are exhausted from taking most of the care and housework responsibilities. Due to the increased economic and social tensions and stay-at-home measures, the cases of women experiencing domestic violence have increased dramatically. Women make up a high percentage of medical and care professionals as well as vendors of daily necessities, yet their treatment and work environment are left without any improvement. UN Women has stated that Japan should take urgent measures to protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, yet these issues have not been addressed.

Despite the stay-at-home orders, there are no supportive measures for women who feel unsafe at home, or those without homes. In October 2020, the number of women who committed suicide surged over 80 % compared to the same month last year.

On December 25, 2020, the 5th Basic Plan for Gender Equality was approved by the Cabinet. Many of the goals set in the 4th Plan have been left unachieved as a result of those in power not addressing the issues of gender-based discrimination and violence. We also acknowledge that some of the contents of the statement to realize a gender-equal society, such as the introduction of the system to allow married couples to choose separate surnames, have been ignored due to the opposition of some members of the Diet.

In the statement of Women's March Tokyo 2019, we demanded the followings: (1) Stop the detrimental revision of the Constitution, (2) Fix the gender pay gap, (3) Stop forcing married couples to use the same surname, (4) Eliminate the period of prohibition of remarriage for women, (5) Take a victim-centered approach to address the damage caused by the forced sterilization carried out under the Eugenic Protection Law, (6) Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (7) Take a victim-centered approach to address the “comfort women” issue, (8) Stop the discriminatory treatment of Korean schools, (9) Guarantee the rights of foreign workers, (10) Guarantee the rights of sexual minorities, and (11) Stop the construction of new U.S. military bases. However, none of these issues have been addressed at this point.

The pandemic has revealed that the structural discrimination and violence existing in society increase in times of crisis. Steps should be taken to correct unequal institutions and practices, to accept gender equality and diversity, and to not tolerate discrimination and violence.

The transgender community faces severe discrimination and violence. While preparing for the Women's March Tokyo 2019, we learned about some internet posts mentioning the Women's March Tokyo and fueling discrimination against transgendered people. We disagree with the exclusion of transgendered people to safety and security. The Women's March Tokyo 2021 Organizing Committee will not tolerate discriminatory or violent signs or behaviors against the transgender community.

In the wake of this tragic pandemic, the Women's March Tokyo would like to ask everyone forming this society to

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think about the kind of society you want to live in and what systems need to be challenged. We call all of you to draw a new vision of society and express them.

Let's believe in ourselves and move forward.

February 3rd, 2021

Women's March Tokyo 2021 Organizing Committee

PS:

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