

June 30, 2020

Statement on the Issue of Racism in Response to the U.S. Incident in May 2020

Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University

On May 25 in the U.S. city of Minneapolis, a black man died after a white police officer held him down by his neck. The images were disseminated on social media and the protests spread across the United States, expanding to foreign countries including Japan where, as well known from the daily reports, numerous sympathy demonstrations and other events have been occurring. Underlying the protests is a long and deep history of racism in the U.S., as well as President Donald Trump's inadequate handling of the situation that added fuel to the fire.

If we position this movement more broadly in the course of world history, it can be seen as a call for a rebuilding of the current world order and domestic order built upon racism, colonialism and imperialism into one based on the equality of human life and dignity. In that sense, it is considered to be a fundamental issue that forces us to reconsider world history and the current world order. We are called to embody the purpose of the 2001 Durban Conference (World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance) as 2020 could be like 1945 in a sense: a turning point in world history.

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University understands the concept of "peace" not as "absence of war" but as "absence of violence" in which "violence" is "a reason that human capacities are prevented from full development." There is no question that the issue of war is still the primary problem for peace, but we reaffirm that achieving social justice based on the equality of human life and dignity as well as respect for human rights especially are of paramount importance. We are greatly concerned about this incident in the United States and sincerely hope that it will serve as a new starting point for dispelling the remnants of racism, ethnic discrimination, and colonialism in American society and around the world.

Since the incident originated from illegal acts against a black man by white police officers, "Black Lives Matter" is being used as the rallying cry of the demonstration; however, discrimination is not limited to black people. It is no wonder that protests are spreading all over the world because each country and region has its own racism and discrimination problems. In Japan, cases of discrimination against refugees have recently been reported, but the problems of discrimination against Koreans in Japan, one of the manifestations of colonialism, and discrimination against Okinawa, the Ainu, and the buraku people are issues that we should certainly address as our own problems. It is important for us to sincerely face the historically formed discrimination deeply entrenched in modern society and our own subconscious "discrimination."

The May 25 incident in the United States violates all thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which was designed with strong U.S. involvement in the first place) and should not be tolerated at all. Also, it should be condemned in the light of other various international human rights treaties. Today, as human rights issues are no longer exclusive to a single nation, the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University, as a member of the international community, expresses its full objection towards this incident and strongly protests against President Trump's violent response.

November 6, 2020

We Welcome the Achievement of the Condition Precedents by the Countries Ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University

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The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons coming into force marks a turning point in the history of nuclear disarmament.

In addition to prohibiting the development, possession, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, the treaty also prohibits ratifying countries from “assisting, encouraging and inducing” the use of nuclear weapons. In other words, it also prohibits the so-called “nuclear umbrella,” in which non-nuclear weapon states rely on the nuclear weapons of the nuclear powers.

The criticism that “the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is ineffective because the nuclear powers and their allies are not joining it” is a one-sided statement. While it is true that countries that have not ratified the treaty are not directly bound by it, the fact that the fifty countries necessary for it to come into effect have ratified the treaty calling for a total ban on nuclear weapons, taking into account the voices of the citizens of the world who sympathized with the heartbreaking cries of the atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were victims of the actual use of nuclear weapons, has a significant deterrent effect against the threat or temptation to use them in actual warfare.

While reserving conclusions on the threat or use of nuclear weapons in the event of a crisis of national survival, the International Court of Justice had already issued an Advisory Opinion on July 8, 1996 stating that “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict.” The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a landmark move by UN member states to outlaw the threat or use of nuclear weapons. We welcome the achievement and call for the nuclear powers and their allies who are turning their backs on the treaty to change their nuclear security policies.

Above all, we call for a change in the “nuclear umbrella” policy. The constitution of Japan, the only country to have been bombed with atomic weapons, is based on “pacifism,” which demands the minimization of reliance on military power in resolving conflicts, maintaining security, and building peace. Its spirit is incompatible with the formulation of a security policy that relies on U.S. nuclear weapons. The citizens of Japan under the Japanese Constitution must cooperate and present a united front with the global efforts of civil society that includes the atomic bomb survivors that contributed to preparing, enacting, and bringing into force the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and with the governments that have ratified the treaty such as New Zealand, South Africa, Mexico, Austria, etc.

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University, while further disseminating information on the inhumane reality of the use of nuclear weapons through exhibitions and related projects, will collaborate with the International Network of Museums for Peace, the Association of Japanese Museums for Peace (of which the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum are members), as well as the Japanese Citizens’ Network of Museums for Peace, and here declare that we will work even harder to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world.