

Change the Japanese Immigration Control Act!

While preparations are under way in Japan for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020, foreign residents in Japan remain under a huge burden of a harsh residency control.

On July 9th, 2012, Japan's New Residency Management System was established, and "Residence Cards" and "Special Permanent Resident Certificates" were newly introduced. However, most of the criminal punishment clauses in the previous system were unchanged and simply transferred to the new Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Immigration Control Act). Foreign residents are obliged to carry their "Residence Card" at all times, and failure to do so is punishable by a fine of not exceeding 200,000 yen. In case of both "Residence Cards" and "Special Permanent Resident Certificates", it is an obligation to show the cards to police or immigration officers when requested, and refusal to show the card is punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or a fine of not exceeding 200,000 yen. Furthermore, there are a number of reported cases where residents who were not carrying their cards were subjected to insistent interrogation. There are even cases where they were taken fingerprints and DNA samples.

Also, the law has been changed so that the Minister of Justice can revoke the status of residence of a foreign resident staying in Japan as a spouse of a Japanese national or a permanent resident, if he/she has failed to "engage in activities as a spouse" for 6 months or more", or if a foreign resident who moves into a new place fails to report it within 90 days.

In fact, the Ministry of Justice has announced that it has revoked foreign residents' status of residence as spouse in 49 cases up until 2014. Research by private sector organizations has revealed that among those who were revoked their status of residence were victims of domestic violence. Despite our constant protests against such an expansion of the revocation system, the Government, in contrary, has recently submitted a bill to the Diet which would further broaden the target of revocation.

Furthermore, undocumented residents without status or residence have been excluded from the resident registration of local governments, causing difficult

situations where their Right to Life and access to public service related to health, labor and education are practically not secured for them.

We have pointed out all of these harmful effects of strengthened control against foreign residents and continuously expressed concern, ever since the bill regarding its establishment was submitted to the Diet in 2009.

Article 61 of the Immigration Control Act states that the Government shall review the situation of implementation of the new system by the 3rd year after its establishment, and if necessary, consider the provisions of the law and take necessary measures.

We strongly demand the Japanese Government to reconsider the “New Residency Management System” which will conclude its 3rd year this coming July. We especially demand the below 3 points:

- 1. Abolishment of the status of residence revocation system.**
- 2. Abolishment of the obligation to carry the Residence Cards at all times.**
- 3. Abolishment of the criminal punishment clause against those who failed to meet reporting obligations.**

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Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)

Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People
on the Move (JCaRM)

National Christian Coalition for Basic Law on Foreign Residents (Gaikikyo)

<http://repacp.org/aacp/changImmigrationControl/index.php>