

As Trump Visits Asia, Civil Society in the U.S., South Korea, and Japan Call for Bold Shift in Policy to Avert War in Korea

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HONOLULU -- Today, hundreds of national civil society organizations from Japan, South Korea and the United States issued a joint statement calling for a diplomatic resolution of the crisis of belligerent rhetoric between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Based in countries whose populations could greatly suffer in the event of war, they call on their respective governments to take bold action now to safeguard peace and build long-lasting trust in the region.

“Washington is forcing a trilateral military alliance and provocative war drills on Tokyo and Seoul that threatens North Korea and the region,” said Christine Ahn, international coordinator of Women Cross DMZ. “The people of Japan, South Korea and United States oppose war. Our demands are an urgent pivot towards peace.”

“In Japan, Prime Minister Abe utilizes the U.S.-North Korea crisis to promote public hysteria and fear and encourage right-wing groups that call for Japan's militarization, including the acquisition of nuclear weapons for itself,” explains Yoshioka Tatsuya, Co-Founder and Director of Peace Boat, Japan's largest peace organization. “But we really have to understand that the joint military exercises by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea increase the risk of war in this region. Japan has the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We have to work to abolish nuclear weapons, but it's unreasonable to demand that North Korea be the only one to give up theirs. All of us, including the U.S. and Japan, must say no to them.”

“The South Korean public is highly critical of Trump for making threats of war and dismissing the gravity of its consequences as something ‘over there,’” says Choi Eun-a of the Korean Alliance for Progressive Movements, which is among the 222 South Korean civil society organizations from the Candlelight Revolution that have called for nationwide protest timed with Trump's visit to South Korea. “The war-threatening, weapons salesman Trump is not welcome here, especially as he demands that South Korea pay more to host U.S. troops and set aside land for useless weapons like the THAAD missile defense system.”

“Peace-loving people in the United States, Japan, and South Korea reject the war-

mongering policies of our governments and express our friendship and solidarity with the people of North Korea,” said Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director of the Western States Legal Foundation in California, and the National Co-Convener of United for Peace and Justice. “The U.S. government must end its policy of sanctions and military threats against North Korea, cease the deployment of more weapons of mass destruction to the Korean peninsula and the region, and halt large-scale military exercises that impede dialogue with North Korea.”

“It’s time for peace-makers, for diplomats, and particularly for the people of South Korea, Japan and the U.S. to demand a peaceful resolution from our governments,” noted Kevin Martin, President of Peace Action, the United States’ largest grassroots peace and disarmament organization. “While not excusing its behavior, North Korea has legitimate security concerns that need to be addressed in order to move toward an enduring peace on the Korean Peninsula.”

On 2 November 2017, American lawmakers announced new bipartisan, bicameral legislation to ensure that President Trump cannot attack North Korea without the consent of Congress. Under this legislation, Congress would be empowered to prohibit any expenditure of funds for such a strike. The [No Unconstitutional Strike Against North Korea Act of 2017](#) prohibits funds available to the Department of Defense or to any other federal department or agency from being used to launch a military strike against North Korea without the prior approval of Congress. The bill reflects the wishes of citizens seen in recent polls, which show that more than two-thirds of Americans oppose military action in dealing with North Korea.

Joint Statement

U.S., South Korean, and Japanese Civil Society Organizations Call for a Bold Shift in Policy for Peace in Korea and Northeast Asia

As U.S. President Trump travels to Asia, we civil society groups from the United States, South Korea, and Japan call for a diplomatic solution to the dangerous conflict between the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea). As those who would be directly impacted by the outbreak of such a conflict, we call on our leaders to take bold steps to ensure lasting peace.

Recent events have set the stage for a possible catastrophe on the Korean Peninsula and even throughout the greater Northeast Asian region. Any further escalation of tensions could rapidly degenerate into violence. In its 27 October 2017 report, the U.S. Congressional Research Service estimates that over 300,000 people would die in the opening days of a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula, even without nuclear weapons, and would ultimately claim 25 million lives.

Even as President Trump calls his predecessor's policy of "strategic patience" on North Korea a failure, he continues the same policy, i.e., intensifying U.N. and unilateral sanctions and military threats. Meanwhile, North Korea continues to escalate the pace and scale of its nuclear and missile tests. The Abe government, seizing on the crisis in Korea, has quickened the pace of remilitarization and revision of Article 9 of its constitution. South Korean President Moon Jae-in meanwhile, despite an unambiguous mandate from the South Korean people, who ousted his hawkish predecessor in hopes of a radical transition to harmonious North-South relations, instead continues to do the bidding of the United States as he assumes a hostile posture vis-à-vis North Korea. We therefore demand that:

1. The Trump administration boldly shift to a policy of peace by:

- Ending its policy of sanctions and military threats against North Korea;
- Ceasing the deployment of more weapons of mass destruction on the Korean peninsula and in the region, and withdrawing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system from South Korea as it only exacerbates tensions in the region; and
- Halting large-scale military exercises that impede dialogue with North Korea

2. The administration of President Moon Jae-in of South Korea honor the spirit of past North-South joint declarations for peace and reconciliation by:

- Assertively pursuing inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation;
- Halting future large-scale U.S.-South Korea combined military exercises to minimize the risk of confrontation ahead of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyongchang, South Korea; and
- No longer cooperating with investments in costly weapon systems with the United States and Japan, including spending on missile defense, which only exacerbates tensions in the region and diverts precious resources away from human needs.

3. The government of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe immediately cease all further moves toward military buildup and instead contribute to regional peace by:

- Abolishing the controversial "Conspiracy Law" and "State Secrecy Law," as well as the 2015 "Peace and Security Legislation" or war bills which permit the use of the so-called right to collective self-defense;
- Pursuing the normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea based upon the principles of the Pyongyang Declaration and the Stockholm Agreement; and
- Ceasing moves to change Article 9, the peace clause in its constitution.

These are among the hundreds of civil society organizations who have signed on:

Japan¹

- Citizens Association against Constitutional Revision (許すな！憲法改悪・市民連絡会)
- Femin Women's Democratic Club (ふえみん婦人民主クラブ)
- Japan-Korea People's Solidarity Network (日韓民衆連帯全国ネットワーク)
- Kyoto/Kinki Association against the U.S. X-band Radar Base (米軍Xバンドレーダー基地反対・京都/近畿連絡)
- Network of Religious Persons Making Peace (平和を作る宗教者ネット)
- Nipponzan-Myōhōji (日本山妙法寺)
- Peace Boat (ピースボート)
- Veterans for Peace Japan (ベテランズ・フォー・ピース・ジャパン)

South Korea

- Federation of Korean Trade Unions (한국노동조합총연맹)
- Korean Alliance of Progressive Movements (한국진보연대)
- Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (전국민주노동조합총연맹)
- Korean Peasants League (전국농민회총연맹)
- Korean Street Vendors Confederation (전국노점상연합)
- Korean Women's Alliance (전국여성연대)
- Korean Women Peasants Alliance (전국여성농민회총연합)
- Korean Youth Solidarity (한국청년연대)
- National Alliance of Squatters and Evictees (전국철거민연합)

United States

- Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security
- International Forum on Globalization
- Peace Action
- Task Force to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific
- United for Peace and Justice
- Veterans for Peace National
- Western States Legal Foundation
- Women Cross DMZ

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¹ This is a provisional translation