

As Trump Visits Asia, Civil Society in the U.S., South Korea, and Japan Oppose War in Korea

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Ahead of Trump's arrival in South Korea as part of his 13-day tour through Asia, hundreds of civil society organizations from Japan, South Korea and the United States issued a joint statement denouncing his policy of sanctions and war threats against North Korea and demanding a halt to military exercises that impede dialogue. The joint statement also calls on South Korea's Moon Jae-in administration to assertively pursue inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation and Japan's Abe government to cease moves to change Article 9, the peace clause of its constitution.

"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.”

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:

Japan[1]

- Citizens Association against Constitutional Revision (市民連帯会)
- Femin Women’s Democratic Club (女性民主クラブ)
- Japan-Korea People’s Solidarity Network (日韓市民連帯ネットワーク)
- Kyoto/Kinki Association against the U.S. X-band Radar Base (京都市/Xバンドレーダー基地反対会)
- Network of Religious Persons Making Peace (宗教者による平和ネットワーク)
- Nonviolent Peaceforce Japan (非暴力平和力日本)
- Peace Boat (平和船)
- Veterans for Peace Japan (平和を望む元軍人)

South Korea

- Federation of Korean Trade Unions (韓国労働組合連帯会)
- Korean Alliance of Progressive Movements (韓国進歩連帯会)
- Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (韓国労働組合連帯会)

- Korean Peasants League (한국농민조합)
- Korean Street Vendors Confederation (한국거리상인회)
- Korean Women's Alliance (한국여성연대)
- Korean Women Peasants Alliance (한국여성농민연대)
- Korean Youth Solidarity (한국청년연대)
- National Alliance of Squatters and Evictees (국민주거연합회)

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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