

**A Call to Protect the Constitution of Japan and Bring About Peace
-- An Appeal to Brothers and Sisters in the Lord in Mennonite Churches and Other
Churches throughout Japan --**

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isaiah 2:4)
“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

The sole role model for us to follow in our faith and life is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the Lord of Peace, not the Lord of War.

What a joy it is that our nation has a Peace Constitution! It is with pride that we say “Our nation does not fight wars,” “In our nation we do not go to war as soldiers,” and “Our nation seeks peace forever.” It is also a message that reflects our repentance and aspirations to all people of the world, including our Asian neighbors to whom we inflicted horrible suffering in the past.

The possibility of a change in our constitution has quickly become more likely after the transition of power to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his cabinet. In April 2012, the Liberal Democratic Party announced a proposed draft of a revised constitution. It would make the emperor the head of state, set up a national defense force, and permit the right of collective self-defense to be exercised. Prime Minister Abe has already spoken about amending Article 96 of the Constitution (on January 30, in response to a question from a representative of the Japan Restoration Party). This would pave the way for parliament to debate a revision. Without a doubt, the intent is to change for the worse the entire Constitution of Japan, starting with (the war-renouncing) Article 9.

One journalist has said, “Perhaps Article 9 will in fact be changed and a national defense force formed before long. Such a feeling of tension has arisen in politics as a result of the landslide victory of Shinzo Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party and the rise of the Japan Restoration Party led by Shintaro Ishihara in the general elections.” (from article entitled “Time to Avoid Causing Irritation with a Constitutional Revision” in the January 12, 2013 morning edition of *Asahi Shimbun*).

With these developments at a time of unprecedented tensions, we as Anabaptists/Mennonites who have opposed all wars and have experienced martyrdom among more than a few members must acknowledge that we are being put to the test. As a historical peace church, now is not the time to close our mouths and keep silent. It is time to stand up by the power of our Lord Jesus and say that “War is the greatest of sins,” and “We must not open up any path that would cause our country to engage in war again.”

We also call on all Christians who hear and follow the words of the Lord Jesus to defend the Constitution of Japan and its Article 9. It is our hope that we transcend our denominational boundaries and unify to bring about peace, and with the leading of the Holy Spirit, combine our efforts so that we may be called children of God.

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(Translation from Japanese to English by Ken Shenk, a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, USA)

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