



To Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan,

19th August, 2013

### Letter of Protest against Cabinet Members' visit to Yasukuni Shrine

On 15th August, the anniversary day for the end of the World War II in Japan, cabinet ministers, namely Yoshitaka Shindo, Internal Affairs and Communications Minister, Keiji Furuya, National Public Safety Commission Chairman, and Tomomi Inada, Administrative Reform Minister, officially visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Moreover, although Prime Minister Abe refrained from making an official visit himself, he accepted his cabinet members' visit to the shrine, and sent his special aide Koichi Hagiuda to visit the shrine and make a donation under the name of "Liberal Democratic Party Leader" on his behalf, which was considered as disrespect for the principle of separation of religion and politics. In addition, in his speech in the Government-sponsored Memorial Service for the War Dead, Prime Minister Abe did not make any mentions about the damages caused on the Asian countries by the Japanese military, or Japan's regret about the aggression, or the "pledge not to engage in war again", which were continuously included in the speeches by previous Prime Ministers. We, the YWCA of Japan, strongly protest against these moves.

Yasukuni Shrine had once been a spiritual pillar of Japan's militarism and its invasion to Asia. Such fundamental spirit has not changed as of now. Yasukuni shrine also has an aspect of being a religious institution for the military, and during the war, it served as a center of the State-sponsored Shinto religion, enhancing and stimulating people's will toward war. It must be said that the ministers' official visit to this shrine is an act to glorify and justify Japan's invasion. Further, it is a violation of the duty to abide to the Japanese Constitution, namely "denouncement of war", "freedom of religion" and "separation of religion and politics". The official visit of the cabinet ministers symbolizes the current cabinet's shift to the right, as well as the actions by the Prime Minister Abe, who states that it is his lifetime mission

to change the Japanese Constitution. These moves are totally unacceptable.

The YWCA of Japan has deeply reflected on its failure to work as a brake to stop the Asia Pacific War in its history. After the WWII, it sincerely faced the history of Japanese aggression, invested heavily on building peace for the next generations through youths' visits to other Asian countries and exchange and cooperative programs, and worked to protect the Japanese Peace Constitution. Upon this standpoint, the YWCA of Japan believes that the Japanese Government has the responsibility to officially apologize and compensate for the aggressions during the Asia Pacific War in order to regain the lost trust from the international community and come back to the starting point, and to work on building peace in a non-violent way because that is the true feature of the peace-building described in the preambles of the Japanese Constitution. The Japanese Government is in the position to realize it.

Therefore, The YWCA of Japan strongly protests against the official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by the Cabinet Ministers and the actions of Prime Minister Abe, and urges the Japanese Government to return to the true recognition of history and address state affairs accordingly.

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