

## **Joint Civil Society Network Statement on Japanese Constitutional Amendment Referendum Law**

A coalition of 32 Japanese civil society groups issued a joint statement on February 14, 2010 to call for the continued freeze and eventual abolition of the new referendum law, and are now calling for more signatories to join the statement.

Former Prime Minister Abe's referendum bill to allow easier revision of the Constitution was railroaded through the Diet on 14 May 2007. In order to cool down the opposition from various directions the new legislation was put on ice for three years. The supposed implementation is on 18 May this year (2010) and civil society is working for the continued freeze and eventual repeal of this law.

There are a number of problems with this legislation, including vagueness about voting age; restrictive effects on freedom of expression especially for teachers, civil servants and the media; fairness of advertisement; and valid vote counts. If the legislation is implemented, it will pave the way to the LDP's revised version (of the constitution) that could facilitate Japan's involvement in armed conflict.

In August 2009 a new government was elected after half a century of LDP rule and a series of polls and surveys show that the majority of people do not wish for constitutional revision. What people want is the resolution of "life" related problems, and the referendum law does not allow fair reflection of people's views.

For this reason, a coalition of 32 Japanese civil society groups is now calling for the continued freeze and eventual abolition of this law. With 32 initial signatories, the statement was adopted on February 14 at a national gathering of the citizens' network against constitutional amendment. The statement and list of signatories will be submitted to Diet members on February 28, March 15, March 31 and April 15, and the final version will be made on April 30.

The full statement can be seen online here (Japanese only):  
HTML: <http://www.annie.ne.jp/~kenpou/seimei/seimei131.html>  
PDF: <http://www.annie.ne.jp/~kenpou/seimei/kyodoseimei.pdf>