

1 March, 2024

Dr. Vernetta Myint Myint San
President, ABWU
Members of the ABWU Committee

Subject: Letter of Request Concerning the Issue of Carrying A National Flag
at ABWU opening ceremonies

Greetings from the Japan Baptist Women's Union with peace in Christ.

We are always thankful to you and all the members of ABWU Committee for your devoted service, praying that the Lord will bless your work to show the glory of Christ in Asia.

I am Michi Yoshitaka, President of Japan Baptist Women's Union (JBWU), and writing to you on behalf of the JBWU 2022-23 Officers Committee concerning the issue of carrying a national flag at ABWU opening ceremonies.

In this letter, we, the 22-23 Officers of JBWU, would like to make a request to you that the current practice of carrying a national flag at ABWU opening ceremonies be re-considered and discontinued, so that each women' union will have a freedom of using a convention flag instead. In short, at every ABWU meeting, the carrying of "Hinomaru," or the Rising Sun Flag of Japan, should not be forced as it had happened in the past few years.

In July, 2022, at "Young Women's Leadership Conference" held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the carrying of the "Hinomaru" flag was ordered by the ABWU President, and in spite of our delegation's refusal and protest, it was literally forced to obey the order with the remark that no country is allowed to take part in the procession without carrying a national flag.

Again in September, 2023, at the "14th ABWU General Assembly" in Jakarta, Indonesia, the same thing happened. The carrying of a national flag was obliged with each country at the procession, and in case of Japan, we had no option but to carry "Hinomaru," or the Rising Sun Flag.

Therefore, we, the JBWU, would like to make a request to you as President and to the members of the ABWU Committee to seriously re-consider and discontinue the practice in the future ABWU meetings and conferences.

Let us explain what "Hinomaru" means to us and our neighboring countries. It is the symbol of the World War II for many Asian countries invaded by the imperial Japanese military forces as well as for the people of Okinawa where the blood of more than two hundred thousand lives were shed as the sacrifice to save the mainland Japan. The symbol has a clear religious connotation of Japanese emperor worship which, through the raising of the flag, is associated with a form of idolatry.

Also, “Hinomaru” implies the mind-set with no sense of guilt and the lack of international insensitivity when carried by Japan, which had not shown any official apology and compensation to Asian neighboring countries. In this sense, “Hinomaru” is not merely a national flag, but the obvious hinderance to create relationship of peaceful coexistence in Asia. For these reasons, we cannot accept “Hinomaru,” or the Rinsing Sun Flag of Japan, as our national flag.

Therefore, please understand, dear President and the members of the ABWU Committee, why we cannot accept “Hinomaru” as a national flag to be carried at ABWU meetings and conferences; we hope you will become considerate enough to imagine the pains the Asian people might feel to see the flag, and also our sufferings of having to overlook the situation.

We believe that both ABWU and JBWU have maintained a very good mutual relationship, and that the bond will be continued in many more years to come. For this purpose, we do hope that you will understand and respect what we are trying to explain in this letter, by re-considering and discontinuing the current practice of forcing us to carry “Hinomaru” at any processions of ABWU meetings and conferences. If the carrying of a flag is needed, please allow us to have a freedom of using a convention flag instead.

We will look forward to hearing your response. Though our term of service will be soon finished at the end of March, the upcoming 2024-25 JBWU Officers will be glad to continue the dialogue with you.

Last but not least, thanking you once again for your services, sending our very best regards with prayers that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be praised and glorified among us the Asian Baptist women.

Sincerely yours,

吉高 路

Michi Yoshitaka, President

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