

April 21, 2014

His Excellency Barack Obama
President of the United States of America

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned members of the National Diet of Japan, welcome your visit to Japan and are united in our desire to see relations between our two countries, always marked by cooperation and trust, grow even stronger as a result of this occasion. We hope you will receive this personal letter in the spirit in which it was intended.

In his recent visit to Japan, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel held a joint press conference with our Minister of Defense Onodera. At this April 6 press conference, Secretary Hagel stated that:

"The United States welcomes Japan's efforts to play a more proactive role in contributing to global and regional peace and stability, including reexamining the interpretation of its constitution relating to the rights of collective self defense."

Secretary Hagel followed up this point during the subsequent Q&A by stating that the United States "encourage[s] and support[s] [the] effort" by some in Japan to re-examine its self-defense guidelines with an eye towards U.S.-Japan defense relations based on a new interpretation of the Japanese Constitution that allows Japan to exercise the right to collective defense.

We feel that these statements by Secretary Hagel have grown deeply problematic in terms of maintaining stability and trust in U.S.-Japan relations, which is no doubt contrary to his intentions. The only recognized way to enable the exercise of such a right is to amend the Constitution itself, and for over six decades, this interpretation has been established and reaffirmed in an ongoing process between we the legislative branch and the executive branch, as represented by the Cabinet Office. The fact is that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which renounces war and commits to non-maintenance of war potential, simply leaves no room for interpretation radical enough to allow Japan to exercise the right to collective defense.

In other words, reinterpreting the Constitution to allow the exercise of the right to collective defense is not simply a matter of our bedrock national policy of permanent pacifism. Such a reinterpretation strikes at the heart of Japan's constitutionalism and the continued existence of the rule of law.

We members of the National Diet are by no means the only ones deeply critical of Prime Minister Abe's maneuvers to enable the exercise of the right to collective defense—something

long agreed to be impossible except through constitutional amendment—using Cabinet decision alone, based almost entirely on a report submitted by the prime minister's private round-table discussion without the presence of a single mainstream constitutional scholar. The prime minister's actions have sparked an outcry among recognized constitutional scholars and political scientists, experts in Japan's security policy, major media outlets and most of all, the people of Japan.

Mr. President, as a member of the legal profession, a recognized expert in constitutional law and a former legislator, you can surely appreciate that a major friend and ally of the United States is in danger of becoming a nation bereft of constitutionalism and rule of law. This is an occasion for both understanding and judiciousness, and we are confident we may depend on you for both.

By the time you depart for Japan, the cherry trees along the Potomac River will no doubt have begun trading in their blooms for the fresh green of spring. Just over a hundred years ago, the Japanese cherry tree crossed the Pacific as a living symbol of the bond between our two nations. The seedlings from these Potomac cherries, sent in renewed friendship after World War II, are now full-grown trees along Tokyo's Arakawa River. They will be there to welcome you along with the people of Japan, on the occasion of your trans-Pacific visit.

Signed,

Members of the Japanese House of Councillors and House of Representatives
(See separate signature page)

Signature Page

AIHARA Kumiko	(Member of the House of Councillors)
ARITA Yoshifu	(Member of the House of Councillors)
FUJITA Yukihiro	(Member of the House of Councillors)
FUKUSHIMA Mizuho	(Member of the House of Councillors)
ISHIBASHI Michihiro	(Member of the House of Councillors)
KONISHI Hiroyuki	(Member of the House of Councillors)
MATAICHI Seiji	(Member of the House of Councillors)
MORIMOTO Shinji	(Member of the House of Councillors)
NAMBA Shoji	(Member of the House of Councillors)
NODA Kuniyoshi	(Member of the House of Councillors)
OGAWA Toshio	(Member of the House of Councillors)
OSHIMA Kusuo	(Member of the House of Councillors)
Renho	(Member of the House of Councillors)
SHINOHARA Takashi	(Member of the House of Representatives)
TASHIRO Kaoru	(Member of the House of Councillors)
TOKUNAGA Eri	(Member of the House of Councillors)
UBUKATA Yukio	(Member of the House of Representatives)
YOSHIDA Tadatomo	(Member of the House of Councillors)
YOSHIKAWA Hajime	(Member of the House of Representatives)