

Declaration of the Assembly of Christians for 100-year Remembrance of Victims of the Massacre against Koreans and Chinese after the Great Kanto Earthquake

Purpose of the meeting

Upon the "100-year Remembrance of Victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake Genocide against Koreans and Chinese," we, who hold various citizenships, nationalities, cultures and languages, gathered as the Lord's people, who serve Christ and have citizenship in heaven, to face the fact that more than 6,000 Koreans and Chinese were massacred 100 years ago in the Great Kanto Earthquake, and to shoulder together the heavy task of questioning the way we are today.

History of the massacre = State responsibility / Responsibility of the people 1

What is clear from the examination of history is that the rumors that were the source of the massacres were spread at the behest of the government, military, and police. Many citizens testified that the source of the unfounded rumors was police officers. Furthermore, highest-level officials of the Ministry of the Interior started to consider declaration of martial law, which is not expected in the event of a natural disaster, on the very afternoon of the earthquake and, without consulting the Privy Council, approved and declared it in the name of the Emperor at noon on the following day, September 2. Martial law is an emergency measure that entrusts full power to the military, and is premised on the occurrence of riots that need to be "subdued". On the next day, the 3rd, rumors of "futei senjin" (insubordinate Koreans), which had no basis in fact, were transmitted as an official message from the Funabashi Naval Transmitting Station to senior local officers nationwide in the name of the head of the Police Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior. As a result, the massacre of Koreans spread throughout the Kanto region, carried out not only by martial law forces and government officials, but also by vigilante groups organized under instructions from above.

History of the massacre's cover-up / Press control = State responsibility 2

Furthermore, the government of Japan consistently concealed the facts of the massacre against more than 6,000 Koreans and 700 Chinese, evaded responsibility by destroying evidence of the disposal of the bodies of genocide victims, and by controlling media. The military and police who instigated the massacre were never held accountable, and all vigilantes who were tried as perpetrators of the massacre were acquitted in January of the following year, by a special amnesty granted upon the marriage of the Crown Prince. Thus, no one was brought to justice for the massacre.

Historical background leading to the massacre

The massacre against Koreans did not begin at the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake. It occurred upon a line of events extending forward from 1894, when the Imperial Army of Japan "subdued (annihilated)" the resistance movement of Korean people demanding independence against the colonization of Korea by the Great Japan Empire, calling it the "Korean mob." Similarly, hostility spread across Japanese society when the Governor-General in Korea thoroughly suppressed the March 1st independence movement of 1919, which was labeled the "Great Riot of insubordinate Koreans." The term "insubordinate Koreans" was used from around this time and, through the press, a sense of hostility, contempt, and fear toward Koreans spread throughout Japan society, providing the pre-history that became the

basis for the massacre of Koreans in the Great Kanto Earthquake. The Korean genocide was the result of hostilities and prejudices that were fostered in Japanese society over many years of colonial domination.

Responsibility of the people / Responsibility of the church (Negligence and Silence)

Along with the Japanese citizens who carried out the massacre, or permitted atrocities through their silence, the churches of Japan must be questioned about their responsibility. The attitude of the Japanese church toward the massacre has consistently been that of a bystander. For example, on the day after the earthquake, Masahisa Uemura's sermon, "The Manifestation of God's Work," made no mention of the massacre, and Kanzo Uchimura wrote in his diary about the gratitude and respect he felt for the army and the night watchmen. In Sakuzo Yoshino's "On the Korean Massacre Incident" (*Chūō Kōron*, November 1923) and in Gien Kashiwagi's *Jomo Kyokai Geppo*, there are words about the sin of the massacre and calls for repentance, but these voices did not spread. Compared to the Japan Tokyo Chosun YMCA and Seoul Central YMCA, who cooperated to investigate the massacre and acted to help victims, Japan's Christians were clearly indifferent. The fact that Japan's churches remained silent for 100 years, without sharing the pain of the genocide, must be questioned before God, as bystanders and accomplices in the massacre. Efforts are being made to know the facts, but these are still not enough. We must continue to fight and overcome the hate that dwells within us, while we continue to demand more accurate investigations and public accountability from the Japanese state.

Lack of questioning by the governments of Japan and Metropolitan Tokyo about their historical responsibility

Just as Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike stopped sending "memorial address" to the memorial ceremony for Korean victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 2017, there is no change in the stance of public authorities to forget history and deny responsibility. The government of Japan continues to ignore recommendations of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, which called for an investigation and apology for the massacre in 2003, and it continues to deny responsibility even in 2023, when, during the ordinary session of the Diet, it refused requests for another investigation based on existing materials, saying, "no [records] are found" and "no further investigation is considered."

The history of genocide (100 years ago)— Suppression and disregard (across 100 years) — Unending hate in the modern era

In the course of many study sessions, we learned how, with the words "insubordinate Koreans" that spread throughout Japanese society until the Great Kanto Earthquake, "official hate" spread "public hate" by leaps and bounds and lead to genocide in the end. We were made to think about how we, as human beings, can lose what is precious when the state and society fail to sincerely face the mistakes of past history, when they try to conceal those mistakes and hide responsibility, and we realized that the persistent hate crimes against Koreans in Japan and discrimination against foreign migrants and resident in Japan are occurring as a result of such history.

Theology of the remembrance of genocide victims, and missional issues of the church

Even in Japanese society of today, prejudice against Korea and hostility toward China are as widespread as they were 100 years ago, and hate crimes continue to occur. Each of us, who

are called by the resurrected Lord and sent into the world as " salt of the earth and light of the world," will return to the Lord's Cross to face the history of the Kanto genocide and carry on the work of mourning. And now, amid heightened anxiety about war, we will not be silent about the violence that enmity and discrimination create, but will follow the Lord who brings true reconciliation and peace, and will walk the path of mission to live with life "the smallest" (Matthew 25:40). As a church, and as Christians, who are sent into such a society, we will continue the work of inheriting memory. While repenting of our sin of acquiescence to reality, we will continue to fight against the state of society that excludes minorities, to create a world where we can live together beyond differences of ethnicity, culture, and language.

September 3, 2023

Assembly of Christians for 100-year Remembrance of Victims of the Massacre against Koreans and Chinese after the Great Kanto Earthquake

(Created by the Executive Committee of the " Assembly of Christians for 100-year Remembrance of Victims of the Massacre against Koreans and Chinese after the Great Kanto Earthquake ")