

President's Statement Calling for an Immediate Ceasefire in the Armed Conflict in the Gaza Strip and Expressing the Hope for Lasting Peace Between the People of Israel and Palestine

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Kei Noro

President, Sendai Bar Association

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The Gaza Strip, subjected to prolonged occupation and blockade by Israel, faces poverty due to a scarcity of fuel and supplies, and high unemployment. Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups based in the Gaza Strip carried out indiscriminate attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023. It is reported that these actions have led to the deaths of over 1,200 Israeli citizens and foreigners, with several hundreds taken hostage. These acts by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups are in violation of international humanitarian law.

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Since that day, Israel has intensified its attacks on the Gaza Strip, including large-scale aerial bombings. These attacks have targeted hospitals and schools, and, as of December 20, the death toll exceeds 20,000 (according to the Gaza authorities), with about 70% believed to be women and children.

The conflict has also forced many civilians to be displaced, leading to a shortage of medical and essential supplies due to poor conditions at their new locations.

In view of this situation, Israel's actions are considered serious violations of the principles of distinction (targeting only military objectives and prohibiting indiscriminate attacks), proportionality (limiting collateral damage to civilians and civilian property), and precautions (obligations to prevent indiscriminate attacks and minimize harm to civilians and civilian property), such as stipulated in the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, and may constitute international crimes such as war crimes and genocide.

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The Constitution of Japan declares that "We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth." Furthermore, it states that "We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want." This pacifist principle of the Japanese Constitution should be shared within the international community.

Although there have been temporary ceasefires in the armed conflict, an immediate ceasefire is essential to ensure the fundamental human rights of life, body, health, and property of citizens. Furthermore, increased humanitarian access (allowing personnel from neutral organizations like the UN to enter conflict zones for humanitarian aid) should be enforced immediately for assisting the impoverished citizens of the Gaza Strip.

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We, Sendai Bar Association, express condolences to all who have perished and extend our thoughts to those currently living in fear and deprivation, strongly hoping for lasting peace. We also express solidarity with those working towards a peaceful resolution without military means, and urge the Japanese government to expand this solidarity and intensify diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire and resolve the humanitarian crisis as soon as possible.