



CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
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Japan
(CEDAW/C/JPN/QPR/9)
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NGO Submission

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Our Statement regarding CEDAW/C/JPN/QPR/9 paragraph 2

The succession to the throne by a paternal male, as stipulated in Japan's Imperial House Law, is based on traditions and beliefs rooted in ancient folklore. Treating this as gender discrimination is an infringement on the "freedom of religion."

1. About us

We, the People's Alliance for Protection of Imperial Lineage by Paternal Male Succession to the Imperial Throne (PAPIL), are a Japanese civic organization, formed in October 2019. With the consensus of the Japanese people, we stand to protect the Imperial lineage as defined by paternal male succession, which has lasted over 126 Emperors, for more than 2,600 years.

2. The background of our statement

(1) Regarding the “List of issues and questions prior to the submission of the ninth periodic report of Japan (CEDAW/C/JPN/QPR/9)” dated March 9th, submitted to the Japanese Government, we have learned that the Paragraph 2 stated: “Regarding the Imperial House Act, the provisions of which currently exclude women from succeeding to the royal throne, please provide details on the steps envisaged to enable female succession to the throne.”

(2) We also read that a Japanese NGO, “Japan Civil Liberties Union (JCLU)”, stated that, “the exclusion of women to succeed the imperial throne under the Imperial House Law violates articles 1, 2 and 15 of the CEDAW Convention. It is deeply rooted in sexism, which reinforces discrimination against women in Japanese society.”

(3) Paragraph 2 of LoIPR and the NGO's statement violate our free expression of our religious beliefs and religious traditions which are rooted in timeless Japanese history and the Japanese people. The demand made of the Japanese Government, that “details on the steps envisaged to enable female succession to the throne” is absolutely pointless and goes against the free expression of religion as espoused by CEDAW of the UN.

3. Our assertions

(1) Succession to the throne by paternal male as stipulated in the Japanese Imperial House Act is a long-standing tradition inherited from the Japanese people since ancient times and has nothing to do with discrimination against women, which CEDAW is currently claiming without basis.

(2) Therefore, Paragraph 2 should have been deleted from LoIPR (CEDAW/C/JPN/QPR/9), and we strongly request CEDAW not to address this issue at the 89th session.

(3) We state the basis for our assertions below.

4. Grounds for our assertions

(1) According to the ancient book of Japanese official history Nihonshoki or Chronicles of Japan, written by Imperial order early in the eighth century, Japan was founded by Emperor Jinmu. Ever since the national foundation, Japan has existed as a state, without interruption, for 2,600 years. Thus, Japan is the oldest and longest lasting state in the world. Japan has never once experienced dynastic changes as often seen in other parts of the world.

(2) The fundamental power that has made this possible was passed on to the 126th Emperor during the imperial succession that took place in 2019, and lies in the continuity of the imperial line, which has played a role akin to a vertical thread throughout the long history of our nation.

(3) In Japan, the Emperor is esteemed and cherished as a treasure sent from heaven and the people respect Emperor as a divine priest who prays for the people's happiness and welfare. This close and long-sustained relationship between the Emperor and the people has no likes elsewhere in the world.

(4) The concept of Imperial succession lies in deep respect for succession by the paternal male, or going back via the father's side, ultimately leading to the first Emperor, Jinmu. Without exception, the lineage through the paternal male has been sustained.

(5) Among the one hundred and twenty-six Emperors, there were ten (two of whom reigned twice) female Emperors. However, all of them were Empresses or Princesses from the paternal line, whose paternal ancestors went back to the first Emperor Jinmu. These female Emperors were enthroned as a go-between, as when the previous Emperor died young or when the succeeding Emperor was too young to take the throne. Based on understanding of imperial history, the Imperial position and succession to the throne are religious matters rooted in the Japanese people's intrinsic view of nature. Therefore, intervening in this provision would violate the modern legal principle of religious freedom and absolutely should not be the subject of CEDAW.

(6) From another perspective, Catholic Popes, Cardinals and priests are exclusively men. They are not allowed to marry. Islamic Allamah is all male. The Dalai Lamas in Tibetan Buddhism are also all male. They hold their holy position only for a generation. In these cases, there is no biological transfer of religious "genes". On the other hand, the Japanese people recognized a long time ago the importance of passing on the Imperial blood from generation to generation.

Having overcome several crises along the way, the first Emperor's genes is passed on to his descendants to this day. This is truly a "spectacular bloodline", and there is nothing quite like it in all of human history. We believe that should there ever be a "World Heritage of Dynasties", Japan's long-lasting Imperial system would be the first to be so designated. We sincerely hope that your committee will realize that intervention in the Imperial succession in Japan is clearly racial discrimination and violates our freely expressed religious beliefs. To be fair, the Committee should take it up as the advice to the Vatican, Islamic states, and the Dalai Lama for their practices as well.

(7) Japanese Imperial throne succession all by paternal descendants means that civil males cannot be an Emperor by any means without exception. However, any civil females could be a candidate to be an Empress. Empress Masako is from general public. Any woman can be a member of the royal family, but no men are allowed to be.

5. Conclusion

The paternal male succession of the Imperial lineage in Japan is a rule established based on traditions and beliefs rooted in the unique ancient folklore of the nation. We strongly urge CEDAW to understand that this has nothing to do with gender discrimination and to refrain from treating it as an issue.