

Yasuo MORIKOSHI
President of Japan Teachers' Union
Nihon Kyoiku Kaikan Bldg., 2-6-2 Hitotsubashi,
Chiyoda-Ward, 101-0003 Tokyo, Japan

February 2008

Dear Yasuo MORIKOSHI,

We are writing in support of Sister Kimiko NEZU and Sister Junko KAWARAI and many other teachers in Japan who have courageously chosen the path of peace. The government of Japan, led by Prime Minister Yasuo FUKUDA stated in a speech on January 24, 2008 that Japan must play a responsible role in the international community as a "peace fostering nation" to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world. And yet, the government in Japan has enforced "Hinomaru" and "Kimigayo" at secondary school graduation ceremonies.

Hinomaru is the raising of the Japanese nationalist flag, a symbol of Japanese aggressive war, colonial domination and the oppressive state of the Emperor. And the words of Kimigayo mean that the reign of the Emperor may prevail forever. The Japanese teachers who have refused to stand up during the graduation ceremonies have suffered pay reductions, involuntary transfers with Sister KAWARAI threatened with a 6 month pay suspension and the firing of Sister NEZU. Japanese teachers should NOT be fired for refusing to comply with a militaristic mandate. How can it be, that Japan would punish teachers who are only affirming the Japanese constitution (Article 9) and who understand their important role as teachers to model to their students how to be peaceful citizens.

We join in solidarity with all the teachers in Japan who know the importance of resisting militarism in all of its forms. We join in solidarity with the teachers in Japan who know the importance of teachers fighting for the freedom of speech and conscience guaranteed by their Fundamental Law on Education.

We urge you to let these teachers teach and the unjust charges against them to be dropped, and their records cleared.

In peace,