

April 16, 2021

**Statement to Protest Paralympic Torch ceremony
at the institution for people with disabilities “Tsukui Yamayuri-en.”**

Japan Council on Independent Living Centers (JIL)
President Kozo Hirashita

We are organizations run by people with disabilities working for the realization of inclusive society where everyone is entitled for equal rights to live and participate in the community regardless of the severity of disabilities. JIL is an umbrella organization of Centers for Independent Living (CIL) nationwide with more than 110 memberships.

According to the press of March 21st, Kanagawa Prefecture, Sagami-hara-City and Kanagawa Kyodo have decided to hold 2020 Toyo Paralympic Torch ceremony at “Tsukui Yamayuri-en” and even reported that “the reason for selecting Yamayuri-en was to show the strong commitment for inclusive society.”

“Tsukui Yamayuri-en” is a large institution that hold more than 150 residents with disabilities. On July 26, 2016, ex-staff of the institution has murdered 19 people with intellectual disabilities, and 24 people with intellectual disabilities and 2 staff were also injured. This was the worst genocide since the World War II and people with disabilities around world feared with the horrifying fact that the eugenic thoughts are very much alive in our society. This was a very place which even encouraged such discriminative thoughts. Moreover, those 19 murdered people have not been revealed of their names – due to the will of their families or other reasons. Till now, even 5 years after the horrific case, the cries and shouts of those murdered have never been addressed and elucidation of truth is still unclear.

“Tsukui Yamayru-en” is known to have repeated abuse against people with disabilities even after the incident. Deprived of dignity and trampled on human rights, that is not a place to live at all.

The article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states: “Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.” No matter how openly managed to the community, it’s still contrary to the treaty as long as it accommodates a group of people with disabilities. Needless to say, nobody goes to the institution with his/her own will. Thus, institutions are far from inclusive society.

We just can’t understand at all and we are deeply disturbed by the idea of holding the ceremony of Paralympic Torch at “Tsukui Yamayuri-en”, site of genocide, where people are still being abused. Especially when Japan tries to address the importance of “diversity” after we had a controversial incident of sexism.

That horrific genocide and the Torch ceremony should never been mixed. It is just an attempt of deception to try to use an image of inclusive society.

Disseminating the intention of inclusive society both domestically and internationally in such a completely false way is an insult to people with disabilities in Japan, and it is like advertising to the world that Japan is a country that violates human rights. It’s simply a shame.

We urge concerned parties to take actions against eugenics thoughts, based on the understanding of the true meaning of Inclusive Society. For that purpose, we strongly protest against the idea of holding the Paralympic Torch ceremony at “Tsuku Yamayuri-en” and call for cancellation of such attempt.