

January 24, 2011

Mr. Shintaro Ishihara
The Governor of Tokyo
Tokyo Metropolitan Government
8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku 2-chome
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-8001
JAPAN

Email: International Affairs Division: S0000573@section.metro.tokyo.jp

Dear Governor Ishihara,

I am writing on behalf of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, a 20-year old organization with offices around the world, including Asia to express our concern with homophobic comments that you made recently. Hate speech from someone with your level of influence fuels the vilification of those who are most vulnerable. We urge you to publicly apologize for these statements.

On December 3, 2010 when speaking to the Parent Teachers Association in Tokyo, you referenced the Tokyo Metropolitan Ordinance on Healthy Youth Development, and said, "It's not just for the kids, homosexuals appear on TV as if it was no big deal. In Japan, things are way too uncontrolled. I will see to it [the revised bill's passage] with a sense of mission."¹ A few days later, on December 7, at a press conference at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office, you similarly stated, "I feel there's something missing [in them]. Perhaps it's because of their genes. I feel sorry for them for being a minority."²

In protest of these statements, Japanese human rights defenders have sent letters to your office to request a retraction of your statements and a public apology. To date, your office has failed to respond to their communication and offered no public retraction.

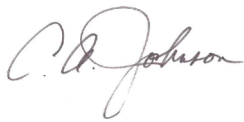
Japanese lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face discrimination in the workplace, bullying in schools, rejection from families, and incredible social pressure that forces many of them to live double lives in fear and shame. They depend on your office to address the very problems that your remarks contribute to – namely homophobic stigma, discrimination, hardship, and potentially even violence.

Significantly, your actions contravene the commitments the Government of Japan has made in international arenas. In 2008, during its Universal Period Review before the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Japanese delegation said, “The government believes that any human rights violations based on sexual or gender identity cannot be ignored, and it seeks to eradicate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation through educational activities.”³ In that session, it also indicated that activities were underway “for the purpose of eliminating all forms of discrimination including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, [and] the human rights organs of the Ministry of Justice are

conducting awareness-raising activities for human rights, human rights counseling, and the investigation and resolution of human rights violation cases.⁴ Furthermore, just last month, the Government of Japan distinguished itself in the UN General Assembly vote to explicitly acknowledge the vulnerability of LGBT people to extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.⁵

We urge you to honor the commitments made by the Government of Japan to uphold the full spectrum of human rights and both retract your statements and issue a public apology. We also recommend that your office use the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law In Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity as a guide to moving forward in public policy and community relations. We would appreciate the opportunity to dialogue with you about these matters.

Sincerely,



Cary Alan Johnson
Executive Director

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¹ *Mainichi Shimbun* Tokyo Wards Edition, December 4, 2010. English translation of comments [ishiharakougi.blog137.fc2.com/blog-entry-17.html].

² Reported by major Japanese language dailies: *Mainichi Shimbun*, [http://mainichi.jp/photo/archive/news/2010/12/07/20101208k0000_040122000c.html]; *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo Edition, December 8, 2010; and *Tokyo Shimbun*, December 21, 2010, which noted with irony that the comment was made during Human Rights Week in Japan.

³ UN General Assembly Human Rights Council, 8th Session, Report of the Working Group on Universal Periodic Review of Japan, A/HRC/8/44, May 30, 2008, Para. 29.

⁴ UN General Assembly Human Rights Council, 8th Session, Report of the Working Group on Universal Periodic Review of Japan, A/HRC/8/44/Add.1, June 17, 2008, Para.8.

⁵ <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/pressroom/pressrelease/1291.html>