

13 February 2013

Ms. Ayako Sono, the author

Mr. Hirohiko Iizuka, Managing Director, SANKEI SHIMBUN CO.,LTD

Ms. Ayako Sono's column which appeared on the Sankei Shimbun morning edition on 11 February 2015, has inappropriate contents that cannot be overlooked. We, as an NGO which has had concerns about apartheid in South Africa and aspiration for harmonious coexistence of people with various roots within Japanese society, strongly protest against the author of the column as well as against the Sankei Shimbun for running the article.

In the column Ms. Sono, discussed the need to introduce immigrant workers who would provide nursing care for the elderly in Japan and wrote that she felt it extremely difficult to live with foreigners. She also wrote "Since learning about the situation in South Africa 20 or 30 years ago, I've come to think that whites, Asians, and blacks should live separately." (Translation by Japan Times, "Author Sono Calls for Racial Segregation in Op-Ed Piece," 12 February 2015)

"Apartheid" means "separation" in the local language of South Africans. Separating residential areas according to race was the foundation of apartheid policy. Apartheid was also a labor force management system, in which the privileged race deprived other races of their rights by using them as convenient labor. At the same time this privileged race did not let these races remain in their own areas. Arguing for a separate residential area for immigrant workers, as Ms. Sono does, is synonymous with calling for an apartheid system in Japan. It is abominable to defend apartheid, which has been strongly condemned by the international community as a "crime against humanity", and to argue for introducing a similar system in Japan. We strongly object to this opinion. It is a shameful act to express such views as a member of the world community.

Coincidentally, the day the column ran, 11 February 2015, was a 25th anniversary of the late Mr. Nelson Mandela's release from the prison. It was very disappointing that we had to find, on this memorable day, a column which negates the significance that South African people fought, risking their lives, for the end of apartheid and the realization of society without racial discrimination.

We demand Ms. Sono and the Sankei Shimbun retract this column and apologize to the people of South Africa. We also demand an explanation regarding the process in which the column went to press, and your view on human rights and racism. Please send us your written response to Africa Japan Forum (AJF) by 28 February 2015. Please be advised that we intend to inform other NGOs, the South African Embassy, international organizations, and various media companies of any response we receive from you.

Tsuyama Naoko, President, Africa Japan Forum