

Seoul Peace Prize to the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Why should we feel embarrassed while they know no shame?

In October last year, the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation chose Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, as the 14th Seoul Peace Prize recipient. The ceremony is to be held on February 22 and Modi is expected to visit Korea to attend the ceremony. We, South Korean civil society organizations, denounce awarding a 'Peace Prize' in the name of Seoul to Modi who is accountable for the murders of thousands of Muslims, and strongly assert that the Seoul Peace Prize cannot be praised as a prize established for the 'global peace'.

Seoul Peace Prize is awarded by the Seoul Peace Prize Foundation which is a private organization created after the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Since the selection of the controversial incumbent politician Mori as the awardee of this year, questions were raised about the identity of the prize which has the word "Seoul" in its name. Later it was also revealed that any human rights and peace experts were not participating in Seoul Peace Prize selection committee. Modi's winning of the prize was a problem not only in Korea but also in India. Although Seoul Peace Prize was presented by a private foundation, the Modi government has promoted loudly the decision of the Seoul Peace Prize. Indian civil society raised questions about the reason why the foundation decided to give the prize to Modi.

The fact that Modi does not deserve the Peace Prize has been getting clearer. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, the violence of the Hindu far-right militant has soared since Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014. The Modi government is abetting the violence against Muslims and the hate speech by government officials has been increasing.

This discrimination and suppression against Muslims were foreseen since the time Modi took the office. He has been criticized as a "murderer" for assisting the murders of thousands of Muslims during the period when he was a Chief Minister of Gujarat. The suppression by the Modi government is not limited to Muslims. Dalit, who are the victims of the caste system, human rights activists, and labor unions are also subject to Modi's suppression.

Already in October, right after the announcement about the winner of the prize, South Korea's 26 civil society organizations strongly requested the cancellation of the award, pointing out that giving the award to Modi has no difference to giving the award to Chun Doo-hwan, a military dictator in Korea from 1980 to 1988 who is accountable for the gross human rights violations committed during the Gwangju uprising. It is deplorable that Prime Minister Modi is nevertheless going to visit South Korea to receive the award.

The foundation said that Modi not only improved the lives of 1.35 billion Indian people but also contributed to world peace by promoting global welfare based on economic cooperation with countries around the world and promoted international solidarity through the active foreign policy promotion. Also it argued that Modi led the integration and economic growth of Indian society with his philosophy of "joint efforts and engagement growth" and succeeded in making cooperation with neighboring countries.

Awarding the Peace Prize to Modi is highly likely to be used in the political context. During the local elections last December, Modi's ruling party was defeated because of the opposition from farmers who had suffered from the economic policies of the Modi government. In January, Indian workers went on a general strike in protest of the Modi government's pro-business policies. It is not clear whether Prime Minister Modi will be re-elected in the general elections in May this year. Above all, the Modi government is not seeking a peaceful settlement for the ongoing violence and conflict in Kashmir. There are concerns that continued oppression and violence against Muslims will become

more serious throughout the Modi government ahead of the general elections scheduled for May this year. Such continued anti-peace and anti-human rights actions have left Modi in a disadvantageous position in the upcoming general elections. This is why Modi is already promoting this award actively in India.

It also infers South Korea's stand towards the people who are responsible for human rights violations in the international community. Awarding the prize to Modi gives the impression that South Korea supports anti-human rights and anti-peace policies, including the suppression against Muslims by the Modi government, to India and the international communities. What would the oppressed Indian people think of South Korea when the Indian press report Modi coming to Seoul and winning the Peace Prize awarded by "Seoul"?

The Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation, which is responsible for the incident, must take proper and prompt measures including dissolution. If not, the disgrace will remain eternally to the entire Korean society with the image of Prime Minister Modi, who stands the opposite from peace and human rights, receiving the 'Seoul Peace' Prize.

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Action for Youth Rights (ASUNARO)
Activists group for Human Rights 'BARAM'
Asian Dignity Initiative
Buddhist Human Rights Committee
Catholic Human Rights Committee
CHANG: Korea Human Rights Research Center
Committee to Support Imprisoned Workers
Dasan Human Rights Center
Disability and Humanrights in Action
Gwang-Ju Human Rights Center Hwal JJak
Human Rights Education Center 'Deul'
Human Rights Education Onda
Human Rights Movement Space 'Hwal'
Jeju Peace Human rights Center
Jeju peace human rights institute WHAT
Korean Coalition for Abolishment of Insecurity Employment
Korean House for International Solidarity
Korean Sexual-Minority Culture and Rights Center
Palestine Peace & Solidarity in South Korea
PINKS : SOLIDARITY FOR SEXUAL MINORITY CULTURES & HUMAN RIGHTS
Protesting against poverty discrimination & Solidarity for Human Rights
Sarangbang Group for Human Rights
Seoul Human Rights Film Festival
Solidarity against Disability Discrimination
Solidarity for Peace & Human Rights
The National Council of Churches in Korea Human Rights Center
Truth Foundation
Won Buddhism Human Rights Committee
(Total 28 Korean Human Rights and civil organizations)

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