

June 11, 2024

OPEN LETTER

to University of Tsukuba President Kyosuke Nagata
from University of Tsukuba Students in solidarity with Palestine

Palestine has been under Israeli military occupation for 76 years, and from October 2023, Israeli army started indiscriminate attack against Gaza. Palestinians are forced to leave their homes, facing starvation and dehydration, and randomly killed. More than 35,000 citizens were killed, and over 1,900,000 citizens have left their homes; Many of them are women and children. Also, the West Bank area including Jenin Refugee Camp is now being attacked. Academic and Education systems are main targets, over 80% of Schools in Gaza (and ALL the Colleges and Universities) were destroyed. Destruction of their future and learning opportunities is definitely an attack on a group, which is known as a crime of Genocide; it “means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, racial or religious groups, as such: / Killing members of group, Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, Forcibly transferring children of the groups to another group”(Quoted from “Genocide Convention” Article II . Article III says “The following acts shall be punishable, Genocide”) Needless to say, Israeli army is violating the International Humanitarian Law.

In March 2022, at Russian military invasion against Ukraine, University of Tsukuba rendered the following message under the name of President Nagata. “This change in the status quo by force, following the annexation of Crimea, is in clear violation of international law, threatens the peace and security of the international community, and must not be accepted.”(Quoted from “Seeking the Restoration of Peace in Ukraine”, Kyosuke Nagata, University of Tsukuba) However, the University is keeping silence on the Israeli Genocide at the date of June 2024. President also wrote “As an academic institution, the University of Tsukuba holds the values of freedom, including academic freedom and freedom of speech, to be supreme, and desires that all people of the world live freely under law and in peace.” in the same message titled “Seeking the Restoration of Peace in Ukraine”. Then why don’t they also seek the restoration of peace in Palestine, condemn the ongoing genocide, and demand an immediate ceasefire now; when many of Palestinian lives are facing the violence of genocide, eroded their liberty, destroyed their educational institutions.

In light of the above, we, University of Tsukuba Students in solidarity with Palestine submit the following questions as an open letter. We believe that the question of Palestine is calling into question the way our university exists as an institution of higher education and the way academic activity takes place within it. We demand an answer which will endure future, historical reevaluation.

NOTION

Reply Deadline; Friday, July 5, 2024

Reply Style; Written Document

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QUESTIONS

First, the devastation of Gaza is a violation of the International Humanitarian Law, saying "Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other case, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion or faith sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria." And the attack by Israeli armed force is A GENOCIDE defined in the Genocide Convention Article II . President Nagata, please explain your point of view on the matter, and will you render some messages about it representing the University of Tsukuba?

Second, there is a Starbucks Coffee in our campus, the central office of the company US Starbucks Corporation is now one of the targets of BDS; the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement(You can see the detail of this movement in bdsmovement.net). The reason why the company is a target is that they are oppressing the labor union which appealed solidarity for Palestine. Such pro-Israel companies should be condemned, and investing to them equals to taking a hand in the Israeli genocide. Please explain about relation between the company and the university, and tell us if there is an investment on the company by "Tsukuba Futureship".

Third, University of Tsukuba is currently planning to hold events with Tel Aviv University (workshops and lectures by emeritus professors of Tel Aviv University). Tel Aviv University is one of Israel's military research bases and has extremely close ties with the military. We know that there is currently no partnership between the University of Tsukuba and Tel Aviv University, but if a relationship is established in the future, we cannot help but believe that the University of Tsukuba endorses the genocide committed by the Israeli military. Based on the above recognition, please explain the background of this event and the relationship between the University of Tsukuba and Tel Aviv University.

Fourth, At the time of the aggression by the Russia against Ukraine, the University of Tsukuba expressed its support for Ukrainian students and has actively accepted them. The establishment of an extremely prompt support system is admirable, and we deeply sympathize with the philosophy of the University of Tsukuba, which states, "As long as you love learning and respect freedom, we will continue to guarantee you a place to study and conduct research as before, and we will not allow you to harm each other due to differences such as nationality, and we will respond appropriately to any problems or disadvantages you face, including psychological support." However, despite this philosophy, the University of Tsukuba has yet to express its support for Palestinian students. Do you have any plans to provide support for Palestinian students?

Fifth, though President Nagara wrote "the University of Tsukuba holds the values of freedom, including academic freedom and freedom of speech, to be supreme, and desires that all people

of the world live freely under law and in peace” in “Seeking the Restoration of Peace in Ukraine”, there are students who were made to stop their pro-Palestinian act by university officials. The students were explained that officials “never allow specific political activities with a political purpose on campus.”(Quoted from University of Tsukuba Student's Guide 2024, page nine,) However, we suppose that condemning the genocide and calling for the immediate ceasefire are not based on some particular political parties, but just on our moral. Thus we guess any political action is “never allowed” by the university. So please define what is “specific political activities”, specifically. And explain validity of the contradiction between “holds the value of freedom” and “never allow specific political activities”.

Finally, “the right to freedom of opinion and expression” is guaranteed for everyone by “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and also by “Constitution of Japan” . We demand an explanation that “never allow specific political activities with a political purpose on campus” is not a violation of these two documents.

Footnotes.

First, Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19 says “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Second, Constitution of Japan Article 21 says “Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. /No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.”

Sincerely,
University of Tsukuba Students in solidarity with Palestine