

Statement against the Introduction of New Procedures for Revocation of Residence Status of Permanent Residents

The Government of Japan has convened the Ministerial Council on Acceptance and Inclusion of Foreign Human Resources today, and decided on the draft amendment of the Immigration Control Act to create a new system of worker development to take place of the Technical Intern Training Program. It has also decided to consider further clarifying the requirements for permanent resident status and revoking the residence status of permanent residents who no longer fulfill those requirements, in response to the expected increase in foreign residents under the Specified Skills Worker system, under which the visa holders may reside permanently. We are against this policy, as revocation of permanent resident status greatly destabilizes not only the status of foreign residents who currently hold the status of permanent residents, but of all foreign residents who may apply for permanent resident status in the future.

The residence status of permanent residents is granted to those who fulfill strict requirements, such as residing in Japan for a certain number of years and living a stable life. For most other resident status, status holders are required to renew their status each time it expires. Those with status for specific purposes may face the risk of not having their status renewed when their circumstances change, such as for those with status for employment in certain areas or for students, or for spouses when their spouse dies or they are separated. For foreign residents who have established their lives in Japan a stable residence status without such risks is necessary to feel safe in their daily lives. The status of permanent residents was supposed to be such status. However, examinations for permanent resident status have become increasingly strict, and a rising number of foreign residents are refused permanent resident status despite having lived in this country for many years.

The government has not disclosed the details on the grounds for revocation of resident status it intends to introduce. It is possible for anyone to fail to meet the requirements for permanent resident status as they live their lives in Japan after receiving a permanent residence permit. Meanwhile, revocation of a permanent resident status deprives the foreign resident of a stable livelihood that he/she has built over many years of hard work in Japan. If the status of residence could be revoked for reasons that could happen to anyone, such as being unable to satisfy the livelihood requirement because of illness, unemployment or social changes, or failing to pay taxes or social security payments because of decline in income or error during surgical operations, foreign residents would be unable to lead their lives feeling safe. It should

be sufficient to respond to tax or social security payment arrears, or minor infringement of the law that do not amount to grounds for deportation with reminders, seizures, administrative or criminal sanctions, just as with Japanese citizens. If only foreign residents are penalized with revocation of resident status despite having fully established their lives in Japan, it would amount to discrimination against foreign residents.

Under existing law, when false information is provided while applying, even permanent residents may have their status revoked, and they may be deported, when they violate certain criminal and other laws.

The introduction of the system for revocation of status of permanent residents will not only destabilize the lives of nearly 900,000 foreign residents who have permanent resident status (as of June 2023: 880,178, or 27.3% of all foreign residents), but will also cause concern among foreign residents who plan to apply for permanent resident status. This will go against the “realization of an inclusive society” that the government is trying to achieve. Also, if the child/children’s permanent residence permit is revoked in conjunction with the revocation of the parents’ residence status, it would have tremendous impact on the child/children’s career and future.

We strongly protest against the government policy that places foreign residents who have established their lives in Japan, and have chosen this country as their final abode under lifelong strict control and supervision, and that allows deprivation of the status even from those who were granted the most stable residence status.

February 9, 2024

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan(SMJ)