

PROTEST AGAINST INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVATE SPEECH!

OUR EMERGENCY STATEMENT OF PROTEST AGAINST THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT

On January 19, the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform released the following statement of protest concerning the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry's recent denunciation of the books that APA Hotels of Japan places in their guest rooms.

We hope that all of the Society's members and patrons will support our statement.

EMERGENCY STATEMENT OF PROTEST AGAINST THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVATE SPEECH ON THE "NANKING MASSACRE"

January 19, 2017
Japan Society for History Textbook Reform

On January 17, the Spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry criticized Japan's APA Hotels for placing books that deny the so-called "Nanking Massacre" in its guest rooms. She insisted that, "some forces in Japan are still reluctant to look squarely at history", and "urged the Japanese side to educate its people with the right historical perspective and win the trust of its Asian neighbors with concrete actions."

It is highly unorthodox for a foreign government to interfere with the beliefs and comments of a private Japanese company, and it is wholly unacceptable for the Chinese government to issue its criticism in the form of a command. The Chinese government, which does not protect its people's rights to freedom of speech and freedom of thought, has been attempting to force upon Japan its outmoded societal norms rooted in a one-party communist dictatorship. We protest in the strongest possible terms this heavy-handed intervention by the Chinese government.

The incident in question started when a Chinese man and an American woman who had stayed in an APA Hotel guest room posted their criticism of the aforementioned books on the Internet. This ignited a furor online in China, and Chinese netizens responded by launching the "APA Hotels Boycott Movement". It was said to have garnered 77 million comments in the space of two days. Some believe that this incident is being exploited by the Chinese Communist Party to unify the nation with patriotic feeling in the run-up to its 19th National Congress.

However, the actions of APA Hotels are not in violation of any law. In order to criticize the reading materials provided by Japanese hotels, one would also have to denounce their long-term practice of providing such special conveniences only to certain religious groups. And yet, no one has ever raised concerns over that matter before, nor should it be subject to

controversy in the future. These two cases are the same. Guests who object need only select a different hotel.

In spite of foreign and domestic pressure, APA Hotels has, quite naturally, refused to remove the books in question. If APA Hotels were to take China's false charges seriously and submit to them, it might set a troubling precedent for the future. Ultimately, the most effective course of action is to reject such unreasonable demands.

Moreover, it is now clear enough from research carried out by numerous scholars that the "Nanking Massacre" that has raised so much controversy was in fact a complete fabrication. On May 5, 2008, the Committee for the Examination of the Facts about Nanking released an open letter of inquiry consisting of five questions about the "Nanking Massacre" that was addressed to the then President of China Hu Jintao. However, no response from China has yet been received. We would like to reaffirm at this time that the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, rather than attacking the actions of APA Hotels, should respond to the open letter of inquiry that they have been conspicuously ignoring for over eight years.