

Introduction

Dear ACHRE colleagues, associates, and all those interested,

Starting in August 2026, this newsletter will be distributed monthly by ACHRE Internship Team. I am Yotaro Inoue, the editorial project leader for this journal. I am a fourth-year law student at Chuo University in Tokyo, Japan, and during the 2023 academic year, I studied international human rights concerning Japan and Australia, with colleagues from ACHRE. As an intern at ACHRE since 2024, I have this year initiated this monthly newsletter and assumed the role of inaugural editor.

The main theme of this August issue is “women's human rights” from the perspective of Japanese university students. This month also features two significant UN-designated observances for this month; specifically highlighting the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9** and the **International Day against Nuclear Tests on August 29**. Regarding the former, this day cannot be overlooked, as it honors Australia's Indigenous peoples—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as Indigenous peoples of Japan—Ainu and Ryukyuan peoples. As for the latter, my awareness of the issues surrounding nuclear testing is rooted in the understanding and sense of responsibility I hold as a citizen of a nation that has experienced the effects of nuclear radiation.

This is the first issue of this journal to be published monthly as a newsletter based on selected themes, and I invite your ideas and contributions!

Yotaro

Topic 1 : What Japanese Students Think About Women's Human Rights

This month, I interviewed female students from the Chuo University Faculty of Law to hear their views on women's rights. The interviews were conducted with three female students from the same faculty, representing different departments and year levels.

Last year, Japan saw the inauguration of its 104th Prime Minister—the first woman to hold the office. This marked a milestone 140 years after the cabinet system was first established in Japan in 1885. Until the mid-to-late 20th century, Japan was characterized by a traditional patriarchal system that fostered a society valuing men over women; however, following the introduction of policies in the late 1980s to

promote women's participation in the workforce and society, the number of women working as corporate employees, civil servants, doctors, and lawyers has seen rapid growth. Nevertheless, in the latest “Gender Gap Index” (2025 edition) released by the World Economic Forum, Japan ranks 118th out of 148 countries—placing it last among the G7 nations. This is due to the deeply rooted mindset—particularly in many regional communities—that “men work while women handle the home,” as well as the scarcity of women in decision-making roles within the Diet and government administration, and the fact that the number of female politicians remains extremely low compared to other countries.

Given the growing interest in studying gender equality, many social science faculties at Japanese universities offer courses on women's rights and feminism. Today, a large number of university students—regardless of gender—engage with the realities of women's lives as part of their coursework at universities.

Honoka Yajima

*Second-year student at the Chuo University Faculty of Law,
Secretary of the Anglo-American Law Study Group.*

I am studying at the Faculty of Law, focusing my research particularly on women's rights and ways of life. Although female university enrollment has improved, structural barriers impact students even during their undergraduate studies. Facing premature anxieties over life events, many female undergraduates abandon further academic exploration and limit their potential before even graduating. Universities must actively address these early systemic pressures by showcasing diverse role models, ensuring female students never surrender their pursuit of knowledge or lifelong learning goals.

Honoka Seki

*Ph.D. student at the Chuo University Graduate School of Law,
Studied with ACHRE colleagues in 2021 through Chuo University's human rights program, SALP.*

My major is international human rights law (IHRL), and I research minority language rights from the perspective of how IHRL incorporates minority voices. Because research on women's rights has played a leading role in incorporating minority voices into IHRL, I studied feminist theory in graduate school. I learned that “gender” is socially constructed and that the diversity of experiences and voices within the category of “women” has increasingly been recognized. As the study of “gender” includes socially constructed categories “language” is no exception. In research on minority languages, it is therefore important to listen to linguistic minorities whose experiences have not been adequately captured by existing frameworks, including people who use Indigenous sign languages. I believe that the study of women's rights and feminism offers people a perspective applicable across fields: critically examining existing concepts and norms.

Sayaka Kozu

Fourth-year student at the Chuo University Faculty of Law,

Studied with ACHRE colleagues in 2023 through Chuo University's human rights program, SALP.

I have been conducting research on intersex people within the LGBTQ+ community. Through this research, I have learned that coming out carries significant risks, regardless of whether one identifies as male or female. Furthermore, because knowledge about intersex issues is not widely understood, there is a risk that misinformation will spread. To improve this situation, I believe that proper sex education should be provided in elementary and middle schools.

Topic 2 : International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

According to United Nations Information Centre (UNIC Tokyo), more than 370 million Indigenous people live in approximately 90 countries worldwide. August 9 is designated annually as the UN International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, a day marked by commemorative events to promote and support Indigenous Rights globally.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the Economic and Social Council in 2000. The Forum works to deepen understanding of Indigenous issues, integrate and coordinate activities related to these issues within the UN system, and disseminate information concerning indigenous peoples. It also addresses Indigenous issues in a manner that supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizing that paying attention to indigenous communities in many countries contributes directly to meeting the 2030 targets.

In 2007, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration outlines the rights of indigenous peoples—both as individuals and as collectives—including rights regarding land, territories, resources, culture, identity, language, and education. It emphasizes that indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures, and traditions, and to pursue development in accordance with their own needs and aspirations. Reflecting a global consensus, the Declaration establishes minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being of indigenous peoples worldwide.

In September 2014, a high-level meeting known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held. The outcome document, adopted unanimously, sets forth a series of commitments aimed at achieving the objectives of the Declaration.

In Australia, the Indigenous population consists of two primary groups: Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Regarding history and terminology, respectful terms such as “First Nations people” and “Indigenous Australians” are increasingly being adopted.

In fact, when I visited Australia in 2008, guidebooks from Japanese publishers referred to the site as “Ayers Rock” rather than “Uluru.” At that time, it was also possible to climb to the summit of Uluru as part of a tour. However, when I revisited in 2024 and heard stories about the site, the name “Ayers Rock” was nowhere to be found and Indigenous leaders had banned tourist climbs of this sacred site.

With regard to Japan's Indigenous peoples, see a student's comment below:

Ayumi Okada

Fourth-year student at the Chuo University Faculty of Law,

Studied with ACHRE colleagues in 2023 through Chuo University's human rights program, SALP.

I have been researching the rights of Indigenous peoples in Japan and Australia.

In Japan, the Ainu people and Ryukyuan people are focused on when people discuss Indigenous rights. Both peoples have their own cultures and languages, but these identities have been hugely influenced by the government's assimilation policies.

When it comes to the Ainu people, they were officially recognized as an Indigenous people in 2008, and the Ainu Policy Promotion Act was enacted in 2019 against the background of recommendations from the international community. However, these seem not enough to protect rights to self-determination, land and natural resources, and participation in decision-making.

In contrast, the Japanese government does not officially recognize the Ryukyuan people as an Indigenous group. There is also no specific legislation protecting their rights. International human rights bodies have called for their recognition, however, opinions within the Ryukyuan community itself remain divided over Indigenous recognition.

Topic 3 : International Day Against Nuclear Tests

"We mark this important international day once again amidst rising geopolitical tensions and growing nuclear risks—an unsettling atmosphere where the resumption of nuclear testing is even being discussed. We must never forget the dark legacy of the more than 2,000 nuclear tests conducted over the past eight decades. Nuclear testing forces displacement and contaminates land and oceans. It sows the seeds of long-term health crises, including cancer and other chronic diseases. And it deepens the cracks in the foundations of global trust, stability, and peace."

— UN Secretary-General António Guterres (2025 Message)

Annually, August 29 is a date in the international calendar that calls for education and advocacy around the horrors of nuclear weapons testing. In Japan the date is poignant. Approximately 140,000 people lost their lives in Hiroshima on August 6th, and about 70,000 people died in Nagasaki, on August 9th, 1945. Countless more, fell victim to the long-term aftereffects of radiation exposure and severe burns.

The Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) was awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its contributions to establishing a "nuclear taboo" through decades of campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the sharing of testimonies from survivors.

Hiroshima is a popular destination for school trips among Japanese junior high and high schools. In addition to visiting the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum, students often participate in talks—known as "Atomic bomb experience lectures"—where they listen to the stories of war survivors and hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors). This represents human rights education in practice.

However, as many 'hibakusha' are now over the age of 85 or 90, opportunities to hear their invaluable, harrowing, eye-witness accounts are diminishing year by year. The dwindling number of people who can recount the tragic yet rare experience of radiation exposure means it is becoming increasingly difficult to convey the horrors of nuclear weapons to future generations through firsthand testimony. We, the younger generation who have had the privilege of hearing these accounts directly, bear the responsibility of passing those lessons on to the next generation.

Today, the nuclear threat has reached a state of heightened tension in the post-Cold War world. In the current heightened state of international tensions in 2026, it is essential for ongoing education and advocacy for a nuclear-free world as a global human rights issue, to be discussed further in our next issue of *Human Rights Matter*. That is precisely why, now more than ever, it is vital to strive for dialogue rather than division.

Thank you for reading the newsletter!

(August 31st, 2026; Editor, ACHRE Intern: Yotaro Inoue)