

Governmental measures toward foreigners

(Information from Akira Hatate, Japan Civil Liberties Union,
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1. US Visit, the Japanese version

Japan is the second country in the world to adopt a system collecting biometric data such as fingerprints and photographs of the face from almost every foreigner entering the country. This system will be implemented by Autumn 2007. It is supposed to be a measure against terrorism, but there is no evidence that any terrorist has been caught by this system in the US, and its effectiveness as an anti-terror measure has not been affirmed. Additionally, this is a system that will forcibly collect extremely personal information (biometric information) from foreigners and keep it for 70-80 years. This system demonstrates a complete loss of reason and balance when it comes to considering means vs. ends. It also prompts discrimination and prejudice against foreigners by considering all foreigners as terrorists.

2. Terrorist recognition system

The terrorist recognition system has already been implemented at the immigration authorities in Japan. The Japanese government refuses to provide information whether an individual has been identified as a terrorist or not. The criteria on recognizing terrorists are extremely vague, and the system cannot avoid arbitrary application by the government. Moreover, the minister of justice, who is authorized to recognize terrorists, has no authority to conduct investigation concerning terrorism, and makes decisions according to information provided by relevant ministries and agencies. This is an extremely distorted recognition system, and lacks credibility. Consequently, misrecognition owing to discrimination and prejudice against people from certain countries would be inevitable.

3. Distribution of biometric information

The biometric data that the government will obtain through the newly amended immigration law (US-VISIT, Japanese version; automatic gate system) will be provided to governmental institutions other than the immigration authorities upon inquiry, after review. Moreover, it will also respond to inquiries from foreign governments, leading to a situation where extremely personal information (biometric data) is very easily distributed. This is clearly an infringement of privacy.

Annex : Law for Partial Amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan)

Related Articles and appeals

Reuters: Japan to take fingerprints, photos of foreigners

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUST10748320071026?sp=true>

Fri Oct 26, 2007

Reuters: Japan fingerprints foreigners as anti-terror move

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUST23858020071120>

Tue Nov 20, 2007

Appeal by Amnesty International Japan and Solidarity network of Migrants

Japan

http://www.jca.apc.org/migrant-net/English/whatsnew/071027appeal_e.html

Appeal by Japanese bar association

<http://www.nichibenren.or.jp/en/activities/statements/071011.html>