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JAPAN: serious concerns over human rights bill

Amnesty International urged the government of Japan to make efforts to hold adequate and open debate on a set of Bills aiming at protecting human rights and personal information, which are being considered in the House of the Councilors. The organization said the Bills - one of which is a Human Rights Protection Bill - will not prevent human rights violations if they are not amended.

One of the bills proposes a new National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Amnesty International believes that NHRC should be autonomous, credible and effective to protect and promote human rights, and not established as a Justice Ministry affiliate.

According to Amnesty International the immigration and correctional facilities in Japan are subject of concern in terms of human rights violations.

"The Japanese government should think again about establishing the Commission as a Justice Ministry affiliate. Such an affiliation is likely to have an adverse impact on the Commission's ability to monitor and improve human rights conditions," the organization emphasized.

"The Commission cannot be expected to effectively fulfill its functions of monitoring and redress unless it is set up as an independent body. It should also be able to cooperate freely and unconditionally with domestic and international NGOs," the organization added.

"The NHRC should be established in accordance with international standards such as the *"Principle relating to the Status of the National Human Rights Commission"* (Paris Principle)," Amnesty International said.

"We urge Japan to amend the draft of Human Rights Protection Bill and implement all provisions of the international human rights conventions - to which Japan is a state party," Amnesty International said.

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