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## FCCJ "Designated Secrets Bill" Protest Statement

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan views with deep concern the "Designated Secrets Bill" now under consideration by the Japanese Diet.

In particular, we are alarmed by the text of the bill, as well as associated statements made by some ruling party lawmakers, relating to the potential targeting of journalists for prosecution and imprisonment.

It is at the very heart of investigative journalism in open societies to uncover secrets and to inform the people about the activities of government. Such journalism is not a crime, but rather a crucial part of the checks-and-balances that go hand-in-hand with democracy.

The current text of the bill seems to suggest that freedom of the press is no longer a constitutional right, but merely something for which government officials "must show sufficient consideration."

Moreover, the "Designated Secrets Bill" specifically warns journalists that they must not engage in "inappropriate methods" in conducting investigations of government policy. This appears to be a direct threat aimed at the media profession and is unacceptably open to wide interpretations in individual cases. Such vague language could be, in effect, a license for government officials to prosecute journalists almost as they please.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan includes members who are both citizens of Japan and those who are not. But our venerable organization, established in 1945, has always viewed freedom of the press and free exchange of information as the crucial means by which to maintain and increase friendly relations and sympathetic understanding between Japan and other countries.

In that context, we urge the Diet to either reject the "Designated Secrets Bill" in total, or else to redraft it so substantially that it ceases to pose a threat to both journalism and to the democratic future of the Japanese nation.

**Lucy Birmingham**

President

Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

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