
JAPANESE PM REAFFIRMS WILLINGNESS TO RESOLVE TERRITORIAL ISSUE WITH RUSSIA

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Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has reiterated his commitment to resolving the territorial issue with Russia.

Japans upper house speaker urges peace treaty with Russia

"I want to continue an intense and active negotiation process, which will lead to solving [the problem]," Kyodo News quotes the Japanese premier as saying at a meeting with schoolchildren, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of former residents of the Kuril Islands, which Japan calls the "Northern Territories."

For their part, schoolchildren from Japans northern Hokkaido island asked the prime minister to spare no effort to make sure that former residents [of these territories] "could freely visit the four northern islands as soon as possible."

Russia and Japan have been in talks to sign a peace treaty since the middle of last century. The main stumbling block to this is the issue of the ownership of the Southern Kuril Islands. After the end of World War II the Kuril Islands were incorporated into the Soviet Union. However, the ownership of Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan Islands and the Habomai Islands is challenged by Japan. In 1956, the Soviet Union and Japan signed a joint declaration on ceasing the state of war, however no peace treaty has been signed until now. Moscow has stated on numerous occasions that Russias sovereignty over the islands could not be questioned.

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