

Under a “disaster-level” crisis, we urge the government to immediately cancel the Paralympic Games and act with firm determination to save all lives.

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Infection disease experts at the metropolitan government’s meeting to monitor COVID-19 said on August 2 that Tokyo is in “a disaster-level emergency situation in which coronavirus infections are raging.” Japan is now facing the worst situation since it started its responses to the pandemic.

Medical facilities throughout the country are struggling to treat COVID-19 inpatients, respond to an influx of outpatients with fever, administer vaccines, and expand PCR testing while maintaining general emergency care. However, situations are only getting worse. Many medical professionals are voicing their painful situations: “We had to turn down nearly 40 patients in one night because our general and COVID-19 beds were all occupied”; “No critical care beds are available locally. Even if patients’ conditions worsen, they have no place to be transferred”; “Responding to one hospitalization after another, frontline nurses are pushed to the limit of their mental health”; and, “I am overwhelmed by anxiety and fear of keeping patients at home even if their conditions deteriorate.”

Amid the explosive growth in infections, some lives that could have been saved are not being saved.

There is no sense of urgency in remarks made by Prime Minister Suga and his cabinet members regarding the “out-of-control” surge in new infection cases and the shortage and collapse of the medical care system. They have failed to convey any messages effective to solve the problems. We have to point out the desperate gap in awareness between frontline workers and the government.

During the Olympic Games (July 23 - August 8), which was forcibly held despite the opposition of 80% of the public, the number of new infection cases per day increased 3.4 times and continues to rise after the event ended. As shown by a large number of people cheering along roads and gathering around event venues, people’s awareness of the need to restrain their behavior was relaxed because of the holding of the Olympics. This is what many citizens recognize. There is no doubt that the hosting of the Olympics, coupled with the replacement with the delta variant, was a contributing factor to the current crisis.

In addition, with the failure of the infection-control “bubble method”, more than 500 infection cases were confirmed among athletes and others involved in the Olympics.

Such folly of the Olympics must not be repeated.

The “out-of-control” infection situation in Tokyo becomes even worse than during the Olympics. This is not the time to hold the Paralympics.

Tens of thousands of infected patients have been kept at home due to the government’s policy change from “hospitalization in principle” to “home in principle”. Support services for those

staying at home have collapsed due to the explosive growth in infections. Unable to receive treatment that is expected to prevent serious conditions, home patients are tormented by fear of worsening of symptoms.

We urge the government to give shape to “opinions for further strengthening of time-limited emergency measures” presented by a subcommittee on COVID-19 measures and present its policies to the public as soon as possible. We also make the following requests:

1. The government should cancel the Paralympic Games (August 24 - September 5) and take lead in imposing the most effective measures to respond to the disaster-level emergency.
2. The government should ensure the right to fair treatment for infected people who are forced to stay at home or accommodation facilities. To this end, it should establish appropriate medical standards and systems and take urgent measures to promptly provide necessary treatments, including administration of medicines expected to prevent serious conditions.