

# Saying no to racial profiling



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20240124204510648/>

NHK has learned that 3 foreign born residents living in Japan are planning to sue the national and local governments over alleged racial profiling by police. The plaintiffs say they had been repeatedly questioned by police and that such practice based on nationality, ethnicity, or appearance is discriminatory and in violation of the constitution. They aim to seek about \$20,000 per person in compensation.

One of the plaintiffs, Matthew, is of Indian descent. He's been living in Japan for more than 20 years and is married to a Japanese citizen. He says he's been stopped by police on the street many times and even hauled into a police station. One incident occurred in October 2021.

As I was driving to work, I passed by a police patrol car.

After being stopped, he asked if he was speeding or doing anything wrong. The officer replied saying it was unusual to see a foreigner driving in the neighborhood. Matthew said he didn't think that was a proper reason and felt that it was abuse of power. He said for awhile he was afraid of going out and instead, stayed at home.

I always felt like somebody is going to invade my privacy when going out... Somebody meaning police officers.

Racial profiling, the use of race, skin color, national origin, and other factors by police to target certain people for questioning or investigation, is a problem around the world. A United Nations committee has recommended that guidelines be set out to prevent such practices. The plaintiffs' lawyer says he hopes the lawsuit will get people to think about whether such police actions are in accordance with international standards.

This will be a lawsuit to fight against the illegality of police questioning based on racial profiling. I think this is the first trial in which this issue will be taken up head on.

In 2022 the Tokyo bar association surveyed more than 2,000 foreigners living in Japan and Japanese with foreign parents about being approached by police. More than 60% of the respondents said they had been questioned over the past 5 years.

There are other local people who are facing the same thing. I'm glad that somebody can take this matter ahead and find a solution for all of us through this trial.

The national police agency says its own survey confirmed 6 cases nationwide in 2021 of inappropriate questioning by officers based on racial or national stereotypes. The agency says it will provide officers with thorough guidance.

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Do you think it is OK for police to use racial profiling or stereotypes to question people they think are suspicious? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever been questioned by police for no reason? How did you feel? If not, how do you think you would feel?
3. Do you think police discriminate against people for reasons other than race?
4. What types of solutions are there for this problem?
5. Do you think it's OK for police to stop people randomly regardless of race or stereotype?