

## The Neoliberal Offensive and the Labor Reply in Osaka

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Osaka is the scene of some of Japan's most intensive struggles between neoliberal and progressives forces, especially since the emergence of Hashimoto Toru as the region's dominant political figure in 2008. The report first outlines the populist neoliberal agenda of Hashimoto and his supporters for weakening unions and shrinking the public sector. Then it outlines the activities of activists seeking to re-assert labor and social rights, especially in public services. The study focuses on the Suita City dispute, in which three women, supported by several labor and left-wing organizations, are suing the city government for illegal dismissal. Even as the national government proclaims its nominally liberal labor reforms, the Suita dispute (one of the highest-profile of many similar struggles) illustrates the difficulty faced by Japanese activists attempting to protect, much less improve, social and labor rights against a hostile legal and political regime.