

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

**IMADR Oral Statement: 31st session of the Human Rights Council
Item 4: General Debate¹**

15 March 2016

Thank you Mr. President,

We would like to share our concerns on the situation in Okinawa, Japan. Okinawa hosts 74% of all U.S. military facilities in Japan, while it only constitutes 0.6% of the total land area. Due to the heavy militarisation, Okinawan people's rights have been infringed since the World War II.

Environment-related human rights have been violated by the large presence of U.S. military bases and the lack of access to information and remedy. Toxic substances including dioxins have been found in former U.S. military bases, contaminating soil and water. Clean up processes have been slow and in many cases ineffective due to the lack of proper mechanisms. Noise pollution by U.S. military aircraft continues to affect the health of local residents while the Japanese court declines to make decisions to bring about changes in the operation of U.S. military aircraft. We also regret the lack of transparency and scientific reliability in the process of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the construction of a new U.S. military base in Henoko.

Peaceful protesters against the construction of a new base have been subject to excessive use of force, intimidation, arbitrary detention and arrests. In 2015, at least 15 individuals were arbitrary arrested for allegations of violating the *Act on Special Measures Concerning Criminal Cases* or "*obstructing police officers from performing their duty*". The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders also expressed his concern in his report to this Council.²

Oppression against media outlets in Okinawa remains a concern. In June last year, the two major newspapers in Okinawa were singled out for forcible closure while a group of junior lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) discussed ways to "*punish*" media which are critical of the Government's policies. Furthermore, on 8th February this year, the Internal Affairs and Communications Minister referred possible suspension measures against broadcasters which are considered politically biased.

Although we acknowledge the recent move of the Government of Japan to halt the construction of the new base and resume the talks with the representative of Okinawa, we urge the Government to ensure the free, prior and informed participation of communities as recommend by the Human Rights Committee.³ Finally, we call upon the Government to refrain from any measure to undermine environmental rights, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Thank you Mr. President.

¹ For further information, refer our written submission to the 31st session of the Human Rights Council. Shimin Gaikou Centre and International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), "*Human Rights Violations in Okinawa, Japan (A/HRC/31/NGO/97)*"

² "*Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders - Addendum - Observations on communications transmitted to Governments and replies received (A/HRC/31/55/Add.1)*", paragraph 300

³ Human Rights Committee (2014), CCPR/C/JPN/CO/6, para 26