



To: Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan
Mr. Hirokazu Nakaima, Governor of Okinawa Prefecture

**We Call for Revision of the “U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)”,
and Unconditional Return of the land occupied by the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma**

Media reported on December 25th 2013 that Mr. Nakaima, the governor of Okinawa prefecture, would finally permit reclamation of Henoko bay, where precious coral reef and endangered dugongs inhabit, for the Japanese and the U.S. governments’ intending installation of a new military base including relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to the new base. The YWCA of Japan urges the Japanese government and the Okinawa prefectural governor Mr. Nakaima to pay serious attention to the Okinawan people’s opinion, which is to revise SOFA, an unequal treaty between Japan and the U.S., and complete and unconditional return of the land of Futenma area (Okinawa prefecture), where has been occupied by the U.S. military since 1945, to Okinawa people.

A number of municipal assemblies in Okinawa prefecture have passed position documents demanding early closure and dismantlement of the Futenma base. The documents reflect the collective opinion of Okinawan people which criticizes Japanese and the U.S. governments’ strategy of relocating Futenma base to Henoko bay—which does not solve the fundamental issue of military bases unless it is completely closed. The document also reflects Okinawa people’s rage against the Japanese government, which has imposed pressure on Okinawa statespersons to accept the base relocation and on Governor Nakaima to permit reclamation of the coral bay for the new base installation. On December 25th, upon hearing the news, 1500 local Okinawa residents besieged the Okinawa prefectural office and protested against the decision.

Under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, Japanese government has forced Okinawa to endure the U.S. military bases for decades. Even after more than 40 years since Okinawa reverted to Japan from the U.S.’s rule in 1972, 74% of U.S. military bases across Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, a small southern island prefecture, and the rate of crimes and traffic accidents committed or caused by U.S. soldiers are significantly higher than mainland Japan. We demand the Japanese government not to sacrifice Okinawa for the sake of Japan and the U.S. military strategy.

YWCA of Japan is an international women’s NGO working to realize a society where women and children can live in peace without threat or violence. It is clear from the testimonies of women in areas around the world with military bases including Okinawa, that the existence of military base itself destroys women and children’s peaceful living. The honorable contribution to the world by Japan should be an effort to create a world where people can live with dignity and peace, free from threat or violence. For this purpose, The Japanese government should prioritize the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights over the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, and negotiate with the U.S. government for the SOFA revision and closure of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa and the rest of Japan.

The YWCA of Japan requests the Japanese government to:

1. Respect the collective opinion of Okinawa people and make sincere effort for the achievement of unconditional return of the land to Okinawa, which has been occupied by the U.S. military since 1945.
2. Immediately revise SOFA, an unequal treaty with numerous problems including extraterritorial jurisdiction for U.S. military personnel and lack of any regulations against pollution of natural environment.

December 26th, 2013

Naoko Matano, President, Mikako Nishihara, General Secretary, YWCA of Japan