



22nd May, 2016

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

Statement of Protest

In May 2016, an ex-Marine soldier admitted to raping and murdering a woman in Okinawa prefecture, where 74% of U.S. military bases and facilities in Japan are located. The YWCA of Japan expresses strong protest and anger against both Japanese and U.S. Governments, which are reluctant to withdraw U.S. military bases which have continuously contributed to the repeating cases of such a painful incident.

71 years ago, Okinawa was a battlefield. While a vast number of lives were lost, the biggest number of victims was that of the local residents of Okinawa. After Japan was defeated in 1945, the adversarial Japan-U.S. relationship turned into an alliance. Yet again, it was Okinawa which was given away from Japan to the U.S. as a price for the newly-tied alliance. During the 27 years when Okinawa was under the rule of U.S. forces before being returned to Japanese rule in 1972, local residents were forcibly displaced for the construction of military bases. And now, after 44 years since the Okinawa's reversion to Japanese administration, the Japanese and U.S. Governments are imposing further huge burden on the people of Okinawa, by the attempted construction of new military bases.

What is happening daily because of the presence of military bases is the sexual assault on women. Even confined to the incidents with an official record, countless number of women and girls including a 9 months-old infant have become the victim of sexual assault by U.S. military personnel.

We recognize there will always be violence against women unless the complete withdrawal of military bases is achieved. The YWCA of Japan stands in solidarity with the women of Okinawa, and strongly demands that the Governments of Japan and United States withdraw all of military bases from Okinawa in order to never let such a brutal incident happen again.

Participants of Central Committee Meeting, 2016

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