

# OKINAWA (RYUKYUS)

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## Statement by the Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus (Kiyomi MATSUSHIMA) Item 5

My name is Kiyomi MATSUSHIMA from Okinawa. I am honored to make a statement in relation to Item 5, on behalf of the Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus/ Uchinanchu.

Long ago, our ancestors created a peaceful culture and society, based on a unique trade system between the Ryukyu Islands and our neighbors in East and South East Asia. This society also had such a strong value of non-violence, that it had no need for any military stronger than local police to maintain social order. This belief in non-violence has been passed down through the generations of Uchinanchu, and we are very proud of it.

Our history, however, has often run counter to our peace-oriented philosophy. This includes the invasion of the Ryukyus Islands by the Satsuma clan, led by the Japanese feudal lord Shimazu, in 1609, the annexation of our islands by Japan's Meiji government in 1879, and the confiscation of our lands by the Japanese military during its wartime mobilization after 1944. One-third of the total Okinawan population died in the Battle of Okinawa. Our history also includes the plunder of our most fertile lands, sea coasts, and coastal waters for the construction of military bases and military operations of the United States beginning in the 1950s, and intensifying with the onset of the Korean War.

Despite such an oppressive and tragic history, we, the Uchinanchu, still hold dear our traditional value that keeps us peace-oriented and non-violent. Reflecting on this value, we constructed *Heiwa no Ishiji*, which is a monument to peace. Here we offer prayers so that our peaceful land will never again hold war victims.

On this monument are nameplates engraved with the names of *all* the war victims killed at the Battle of Okinawa, without discrimination regarding race or nationality. We see many Okinawans, Japanese, Americans, British, Koreans from both north and south, and Taiwanese visiting the monument to find the names of their family members, honoring their memory with tears and grief. We, the Uchinanchu, regret the victimization of so many people in the past, as well as in future, anywhere on this planet.

As the result of the post-war occupation of Okinawa by the United States, and the discriminatory policies of the Japanese government after 1972, 75% of the US military bases are located in Okinawa, which is a mere 0.6 % of the total Japanese land. This situation presents a serious psychological contradiction for the peace-oriented Uchinanchu. While the Futenma military base is in fact scheduled to be returned to us, we are forced to pay a huge ransom. A new base will be built offshore, on our beautiful coral reefs. So, the number of military bases is not reduced, they are merely moved to another place in Okinawa. Why do we have to victimize the sea-life to get back our land confiscated by the United States military and Japanese government?

I would like to call your attention to the following facts:

- 1) The Okinawan people, the Uchinanchu, had our land taken and used for military purposes by foreign powers, which *includes* the Japanese government.
- 2) The traditional peace-oriented value of the Uchinanchu has long been ignored and insulted.
- 3) The post-war confiscation of our land by the U.S. military clearly violates the Hague Treaty.
- 4) According to international law, the governments of Japan and the U.S. are responsible for addressing and correcting this violation.

I have a dream that my grandchildren will share a peaceful world with all of your grandchildren, free from the fear of war.

Thank you.

A.I.P in the Ryukyus / Uchinan-chu

Kiyomi MATSUSHIMA

e-mail 5971114@oki.ac.jp

Ryukyus



Home/1-9-29 Matsugawa Naha Okinawa  
JAPAN 〒902-0062  
TEL +81-98-853-4060