

PRESS RELEASE

Japan must respond to the UPR recommendations and act to end human rights violations in Okinawa

17th November 2017

The Government of Japan must show its commitment to human rights at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and take measures to improve the human rights situation in the country. All Okinawa Council for Human Rights (AOCHR), the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and Franciscans International urge the Government of Japan to end human rights violations in Okinawa and fully consult with people of Ryukyu/Okinawa based on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Japan has entered the third cycle of the UPR in 2017 to review the implementation of the previous UPR recommendations and address outstanding human rights issues. On the 14th of November, the Government of Japan presented its report to introduce adopted measures based upon the previous recommendations. In total, 106 countries took the floor to put forward questions and/or recommendations to the Government. In the outcome report adopted on the 16th of November, the Government of Japan received recommendations urging Japan to create an independent National Human Rights Institution, combat hate speech, and protect and promote indigenous rights.

We welcome the Government's continued commitment to the UPR process. However, we are deeply concerned by the Government's failure to respond to Peru which recommended the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights for the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa. During the review, two other key concerns were raised regarding the absence of a holistic anti-discrimination law and the freedom of expression.

It must be noted that the UN Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) have also expressed similar concerns regarding the situation of the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa and made recommendations to the Government of Japan. In this session, Germany, Australia and ten other States recommended the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. Therefore, we urge the Government of Japan to adopt legislation which also prohibits discrimination based on ethnic identity including the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa. Regarding freedom of expression in Okinawa, Mr. David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, shared his concern about the allegation of disproportionate restrictions on public protests in Okinawa. These concerns were detailed in his country report on Japan which was presented to the Human Rights Council in June this year.

We regret that the Government failed to take any effective measures against serious human rights violations caused by the existing U.S. military bases in Okinawa, which hosts more than 70 percent of the U.S military facilities in Japan. A string of incidents involving the U.S. military, including the latest crash-landing of a large Marine Corps helicopter and the rape and killing of a local 20-year-old woman by a former U.S. Marine,

highlight that the right to life, as well as the right to physical and mental health of the residents, have been severely infringed. We are deeply concerned that the construction of the new U.S. bases is causing even more severe human rights violations.

As a Member State of the UN Human Rights Council, the Government of Japan has declared that it will uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Government must take concrete steps towards preventing serious human rights violations in Okinawa by genuinely consulting with civil society to improve the country's human rights standards.

Finally, we urge the Government of Japan to accept the recommendation from Peru, to take effective measures to realize the economic, social and cultural rights of the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa and to end the human rights violations in Okinawa. We request that the Government ensure meaningful cooperation with the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa.

The end.