

The World is Watching: International Scholars, Artists, and Activists Petition to Prevent a New U.S. Military Base in Okinawa

International Scholars, Artists, and Activists Petition. World Eyes on Okinawa

By [Steve Rabson](#)

Global Research, September 03, 2015

[The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 13, Issue 35, No. 3](#) 2 September 2015

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Introduction by Steve Rabson

In Okinawa after three U.S. servicemen raped a 12-year-old school girl in 1995, the U.S. and Japanese governments sought to tamp down boiling outrage by promising to close a dangerous and noisy U.S. Marine airbase located in the center of densely populated Ginowan City. But there was a catch. The base would not close until completion of a new base at another location in the prefecture, Henoko in Nago City. Okinawans resoundingly rejected this plan, vigorously opposing it in local and prefectural elections, referenda, and in sustained public protests. For two decades they have stymied the governments of two powerful nations determined to force the base on them.

In addition to government intimidation, arrests, and violent attacks by Japanese riot police and coast guard patrols, Okinawans have also faced betrayals by their own elected officials. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, elected in 2009, received strong voter support in Okinawa for his promise to move the airbase out of the prefecture, only to capitulate under pressure from the U.S. and his own government a year later, acceding to its construction in Okinawa. Hirokazu Nakaima, governor 2006-2014, had supported the base, but in the days leading up to the election of November 2010, he started to call for its relocation outside of Okinawa in a bid to win re-election. Then, in December 2013, he abruptly caved in to pressure from Tokyo and signed the landfill permit to allow its construction. His broken promise became the central issue in the gubernatorial campaign of November 2014. Nakaima lost this election in a landslide to current governor Takeshi Onaga who had also changed from a previously pro-base to an anti-base position. During the election and since taking office, he has repeatedly pledged to “do everything in my power” to prevent its construction.

Governor Onaga has been in office for eight months. His most important action on the base to date has been appointment of a committee of environmental and legal experts to reassess procedures followed in filing the landfill permit. The committee’s report, filed in July, concluded that the landfill permit approved by former Governor Nakaima violates Japan’s Public Waters Reclamation Law by failing to “sufficiently take into account environmental preservation and disaster prevention” and by failing to meet the criteria for “appropriate and rational use of national land.” In short the landfill permit was legally flawed. The report was sufficiently damning that the Japanese government issued a one-month moratorium on base construction and entered negotiations with the Governor.

In January 2014 a group of over one hundred scholars, artists and peace advocates from the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe issued [a Statement](#) opposing the plan to construct a new base at Henoko and demanding the swift return of the existing Marine Air Station at Futenma. Again in January 2015, a smaller group, 15 scholars and activists, wrote to Governor Onaga in the name of “No New Bases in Okinawa! Global Voices” urging the Governor to take early action to cancel the license to reclaim Oura Bay for base construction purposes. Now, [August 2015](#), a group of 109 international scholars and peace activists has urged Governor Onaga to honor his commitment to the people of Okinawa. Their statement has received [considerable attention](#) in the Okinawan media. See the reports in the following:

[Ryukyū Shimpō, August 31, 2015.](#)

[Kyodo News, August 31, 2015.](#)

The world is waiting for Governor Onaga to act on the recommendations of the committee.

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August 29, 2015 □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

The Okinawan people for twenty consecutive years have made plain their overwhelming opposition to a proposed new U.S. Marine airbase at Henoko, on Oura Bay in the city of Nago. Since our January 2014 statement opposing construction of the planned base, local opposition has grown and intensified. People have rallied by the thousands and repeatedly picketed government offices in Okinawa and on the Japanese mainland. The sit-in tent at the Henoko fishing port is now in its 12th year, and the protest tent at the gate to the planned construction site, which has been a 24/7 action since January 2015, has continued for more than 400 days. Protesters are engaging in non-violent civil disobedience - using sea kayaks on the bay and blocking trucks with their bodies on the land - physically interfering with the construction process. Riot police and members of the Coast Guard have attacked demonstrators, causing serious injuries. Polls in the prefecture record 80% opposition to the base. For their part, the Japanese and US governments remain adamant in their determination to thwart the will of the Okinawan people.

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The island prefecture of Okinawa, comprising 0.6 % of the nation’s land area and 1% of its population, already bears 74% of U.S. military bases in all of Japan. This burden represents close to 500 times that of the rest of the country. Okinawans understand this as blatant structural discrimination.

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- York at Binghamton
6. Adam Broinowski, Japanese historical and cultural studies, Australian National University
 7. Daniel Broudy, Professor & Chair, Graduate School of Intercultural Communication, Okinawa Christian University
 8. Alexander Brown, PhD Student, School of Humanities and Social Inquiry, University of Wollongong
 9. Michael K. Bourdaghs, Professor, University of Chicago
 10. Akiko Utu Cacaji, Veterans For Peace, Washington DC Chapter
 11. Jenny Chan, China Studies & Sociology, School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, University of Oxford
 12. John Chappell, Professor of History, Webster University
 13. Choi Sung-Hee, coordinator, Gangjeong village international team, Jeju Island, Korea
 14. Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 15. C. Anne Claus, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, American University
 16. Sam Coleman, Veterans for Peace, California State University, Long Beach
 17. Millie Creighton, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia
 18. Bruce Cumings, Swift Distinguished Professor, History Department, University of Chicago
 19. Kelly Dietz, Assistant Professor, Department of Politics, Ithaca College
 20. Mark Driscoll, Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at the Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
 21. Alexis Dudden, Professor of History, University of Connecticut
 22. Mark Ealey, Translator
 23. Daniel Ellsberg, Former State and Defense Department official
 24. Cynthia Enloe, Research Professor, Clark University
 25. Thomas Fazi, Writer and filmmaker (Italy), co-director of *Standing Army*
 26. John Feffer, Foreign Policy in Focus
 27. Norma Field, Professor Emerita, University of Chicago
 28. Max Paul Friedman, Professor of History, American University
 29. James Fujii, Associate Professor, University of California, Irvine
 30. Takashi Fujitani, Professor of History, University of Toronto
 31. Bruce K. Gagnon, Coordinator, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space
 32. Johan Galtung, dr hc mult Professor of Peace studies, Founder Transcend

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33. Joseph Gerson (PhD), Working Group for Asia-Pacific Peace & Demilitarization □□□
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 34. Subrata Ghoshroy, Research Affiliate, Massachusetts Institute of Technology□□□□
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 35. Andrew Gordon, Professor of History, Harvard University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 36. Mel Gurtov, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Portland State University □□□
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 37. Morton H Halperin, Former U.S. Government official (Departments of Defense
and State and National Security Council)□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 38. Laura Hein, Professor, Northwestern University, Chicago □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 39. Edward Heinrich-Sanchez, Coordinator, Veterans for Peace, Ryukyu-Okinawa
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 40. Julie Higashi, Professor, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 41. Katsuya Hirano, Associate Professor of History, UCLA □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 42. Christine Hong, Assistant Professor, UC Santa Cruz □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 43. Glenn D. Hook, Professor, University of Sheffield□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 44. Asato Ikeda, Assistant Professor, Fordham University□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 45. Masamichi (Marro) Inoue, Associate Professor, Department of Modern and
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 46. Vincent J. Intondi, Associate Professor of History, Montgomery College □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 47. Rebecca Jennison, Dept. of Humanities, Kyoto Seika University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 48. Paul Jobin, Associate Professor, Paris Diderot University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 49. David T. Johnson, Professor of Sociology, University of Hawaii at Manoa□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 50. Sheila K. Johnson (Mrs. Chalmers Johnson), writer□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 51. William Johnston, Professor of History, Wesleyan University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 52. Erin Jones, Researcher □□□
 53. John Junkerman, Filmmaker, Visiting Scholar at Waseda University□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 54. Kyle Kajihiro, a Board Member, Hawai'i Peace and Justice □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 55. Peter King, emeritus professor, University of Sydney□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 56. Jeff Kingston, Professor of History, Temple University, Japan □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 57. Joy Kogawa, author of *Obasan* □□□
 58. Pekka Korhonen, Professor of World Politics, University of Jyväskylä □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 59. J. Victor Koschmann, Professor, Cornell University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 60. Jeremy Kuzmarov, J.P. Walker assistant professor of history, University of Tulsa □□

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61. Peter Kuznick, Professor of History, American University□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 62. Thomas Lamarre, Department of East Asian Studies, McGill University □□□□□□□□
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 63. Jon Letman, independent journalist, Lihue, Hawaii □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 64. Douglas Lummis, Visiting Professor, Okinawa Christian University Graduate
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 65. Catherine Lutz, Professor, Brown University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 66. Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace laureate□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 67. Janice Matsumura, Associate professor, Simon Fraser University□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 68. Gavan McCormack, Professor Emeritus, Australian National University □□□□□□□□
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 69. Jo (Yosi) McIntire, Peace Activist, Scholar of International Relations□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 70. Richard H. Minear, professor of history (emeritus), University of Massachusetts
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 71. Jon Mitchell, Journalist □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 72. Michael Molasky, Professor of Asian Cultural Studies, Waseda University□□□□□□□□
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 73. R. Taggart Murphy, Professor, International Political Economy, University of
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 74. Katherine Muzik, Marine Biologist, Kaua’i, Hawaii □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 75. Christopher Nelson, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University
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 76. Satoko Oka Norimatsu, Editor, The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus □□□□□□□□□□□□
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 77. Elin O’Hara Slavick, Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill □□□□□□□□
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 78. Peter B. Olney, Retired Organizing Director ILWU□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 79. Stephanie Ortoleva, Esq., President, Women Enabled International, International
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 80. Eiko Otake, Artist in residence, Wesleyan University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 81. Koohan Paik, International Forum on Globalization, San Francisco□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 82. Enrico Parenti, Filmmaker (Italy), co-director of*Standing Army* □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□
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 83. Charles Pellegrino, Deep Ocean Explorer/Astrobiologist/Forensic Archaeologist
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 84. John Price, Professor of History, University of Victoria□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
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 85. Steve Rabson, Professor Emeritus, Brown University □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
 86. Betty A. Reardon, Founding Director Emeritus, International Institute on Peace
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 87. Simon Robinson, Okinawa Christian University, Okinawa Sudbury School □□□□□□□□

88. David Rothauer, Filmmaker, “Hibakusha, Our Life to Live,” “Article 9 Comes to America
89. Jordan Sand, Professor of Japanese History, Georgetown University
90. Peter Dale Scott, Prof. Emeritus of English, University of California, Berkeley
91. Mark Selden, Senior Research Associate, East Asia Program at Cornell University
92. Franziska Seraphim, Associate Professor of Japanese History, Boston College
93. David H. Slater, Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Sophia University
94. Jeffrey St. Clair, journalist & editor, CounterPunch magazine
95. Oliver Stone, Filmmaker
96. Roy Tamashiro, Professor of Multidisciplinary Studies, Webster University
97. Miyume Tanji(Dr.), Australian National University
98. Vladimir Tikhonov, Professor at Oslo University
99. John Whittier Treat, Professor Emeritus, Yale University
100. Brian Victoria, Visiting Research Fellow, International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken)
101. David Vine, Associate Professor of Anthropology, American University
102. Vanessa B. Ward (Dr.), Lecturer in East Asian History, Department of History & Art History, University of Otago
103. David Webb, Emeritus Professor, Leeds Beckett University; Convenor, Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space; Chair, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
104. Piers R. Williamson, Specially Appointed Associate Professor, Research Faculty of Media and Communication, Hokkaido University
105. James Winter, Professor of Communication, Media & Film, University of Windsor, Ontario Canada
106. Lawrence Wittner, Professor of History Emeritus, State University of New York/Albany
107. Karel van Wolferen, Emeritus professor, University of Amsterdam, author
108. Dustin Wright, lecturer of history, University of California, Santa Cruz.
109. Kenneth H Young CD, Service Officer, Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #256 Nanaimo BC

(As of August 31, 2015. List of signers in alphabetical order of family names)

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The original source of this article is [The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 13, Issue 35, No. 3](#)
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