

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR The Results of the Okinawa Referendum to be Respected, Immediately Stop the Reclamation Work at Henoko Coast and Renounce the Construction of a New US Forces Base

On February 24 of this year, a referendum was held in all of the municipalities across Okinawa Prefecture regarding the land reclamation for the construction of a US Forces base in Henoko. This prefectural referendum was held based on the stipulations of Article 74 of the Local Autonomy Act, and with direct demands from the prefectural citizens in the 92,848 signatures collected. The method of the referendum was for the voters to select from three alternatives of “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Neither Agree nor Disagree” in regard to the reclamation of Henoko coast for the purpose of constructing a US Forces base.

The results of the referendum showed that among the 1,153,600 eligible voters, 52.48% or 605,396 of the citizens voted, with 434,273 (71.7%) ballots toward “Disagree,” 114,933 (19.0%) ballots toward “Agree,” and 52,682 (8.7%) ballots toward “Neither Agree nor Disagree.”

Through elections such as the gubernatorial election and others, the people of Okinawa have repeatedly demonstrated their clear will against the reclamation of the Henoko coast for the construction of a new US Forces base, but the Government of Japan has forced through with the construction, ignoring the will of the Okinawan people, stating, “elections have various issues and public opinions.” However, this past referendum showed that 71.7% of Okinawan voters are adamantly against the reclamation of Henoko coast, and this will of the people simply cannot be denied.

Okinawa Prefecture’s ordinance on the referendum states that the Governor is to respect the referendum results, and at the same time, to promptly notify the results to the Prime Minister of Japan and to the President of the United States of America. To respect the results of a prefectural referendum held in response to the direct demands of the citizens based on the Local Autonomy Act, and to comply with the results is only to be expected in a democratic nation.

However, despite the clear demonstration in the referendum of the people’s will against the reclamation, the Government of Japan forced through with the construction the very next day, and on March 4, started the construction of a new seawall in Henoko. Furthermore, on March 5, in response to questions in the National Assembly, the Japanese Minister of Defense stated, “the continuation of the project was decided in advance. Reports to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe were conducted sequentially and had obtained his consent.” During a time when Okinawa was under the absolute and oppressive control of the US military, High Commissioner Caraway commented, “autonomy is a myth.” The statement by the Japanese Minister of Defense and the comment by High Commissioner Caraway are equivalent to saying that local autonomy and democracy do not apply to the people of Okinawa, and this is not acceptable. We strongly protest the multiple acts of aggression by the Japanese government in denying the will of the Okinawan people, the local autonomy, democracy, and consequently the Constitution of Japan.

Moreover, as the US Government is directly involved by having their US Forces bases in Okinawa, it is not acceptable for the US to take a stance that “this is a domestic issue of Japan,” and continue to reject involvement in this issue. The US Government must also take the results of the prefectural referendum very seriously. Okinawa is not a colony of America. We, the people of Okinawa Prefecture, desire friendship with the people of America, but we do not wish to be submissive.

To that end, on receiving the results of the prefectural referendum, we, the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, strongly call for the execution of the following two items.

1. To respect the will of the people demonstrated in the prefectural referendum against the reclamation of the Henoko coast for the purpose of constructing a US Forces base, and to immediately cease the reclamation work at Henoko coast and to renounce the construction of a new US Forces base.
2. The due date agreed between the Government of Japan and the Okinawa Prefectural Government on ceasing the operations at MCAS Futenma within five (5) years have already passed. We call for the immediate stop to the operations at MCAS Futenma, and for its closure and withdrawal.

The above is resolved as stated on this 27th day of March, 2019.

Okinawa Prefectural Assembly