



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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19 January 2026

Excellency,

I write to you in relation to [letter of 12 May 2025](#) by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) regarding the information received under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the construction of a new U.S. military base in the northern part of the island of Okinawa, including Henoko-Oura Bay, and its impacts on the Indigenous People of Ryukyu/Okinawa.

The Committee thanks the State Party for its response to the letter and for the information provided. The Committee notes the information that the sole solution to mitigate the impacts of the military bases in the island of Okinawa is to relocate the Futenma Air Station and the construction of a new facility in the Henoko-Oura Bay area on the east coast of Nago City in the northern part of Okinawa Island, where the U.S. Marine Corps Camp Schwab is located. It also notes the information that this conclusion was reached after examining all options and while taking into account all factors, including security concerns, geographic location, the crucial role of the U.S. Marine Corps and the need to eliminate the danger of the Futenma Air Station. It further notes the information that two of the functions of Futenma Air Station will be relocated outside of Okinawa Prefecture and only one of the functions will be relocated to the U.S. Marine Corps Camp Schwab. It notes the information that the construction of the new U.S. Military base will be smaller in size compared to the Futenma Air Station.

The Committee takes notes of the information that under the environmental impact assessment, which was conducted between 2007 and 2012, the Governor of Okinawa Prefecture submitted more than 1500 opinions and that they were reflected in the final report. Furthermore, it notes the information that the authorities conducted a study on the stability of seawalls and other structures in the waters of the northern side of Camp Schwab, which confirmed the possibility of constructing the seawalls and landfill work. The Committee further notes the information that the Technical Review Committee, established in September 2019, confirmed the conclusion of the latter study.

The Committee notes the information that the Environmental Monitoring Committee, which held meetings in early 2020, confirmed before the submission of the modification in the project's design that the degree of impact on the environment caused by the change in the plan would be the same or less than that before the change. It further notes the information that the State Party has been

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undertaking a range of environmental conservation initiatives, including efforts to reduce air pollutant emissions, in alignment with the recommendations of the Environmental Monitoring Committee and that the construction activities are being carried out with careful attention to environmental protection, encompassing both the natural surroundings and the living conditions of local residents.

The Committee notes the information on the establishment of consultation framework with senior local government officials, including the Governor of the Okinawa Prefecture, regarding the relocation of the Futenma Air Station. It further notes the information on the establishment of recent consultation frameworks in 2024 with local governments surrounding the relocation site and the Futenma Air Station.

Notwithstanding the information provided, the Committee remains concerned that the State Party has not adopted measures to recognize the people of Ryukyu/Okinawa as Indigenous Peoples, despite the recommendations by the Committee and other human rights mechanisms. The lack of recognition prevents the Indigenous People of Ryukyu/Okinawa from enjoying their right to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources. It also notes with concerns the lack of information on measures adopted to mitigate the concerns by the various scientific societies and environmental non-governmental organizations regarding the validity of the environmental assessment study and its conclusions regarding the construction of a new U.S. military base in the northern part of the island of Okinawa. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of information on measures to take into consideration the outcome of the prefectural referendum, conducted in February 2019, on the construction of the new facility in the Henoko-Oura Bay area, under which 72 per cent of the participants voted against the plan. It also notes with concern the lack of meaningful consultation with the Ryukyu/Okinawa Indigenous People to obtain their free, prior and informed consent concerning the project.

In this regard and in accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and article 66 of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee will consider this matter in the context of the consideration of the State Party's next periodic reports and requests that the State Party provide updated and detailed information during the constructive dialogue on the situation of the Ryukyu/Okinawa Indigenous People and the impacts of constructing a new U.S. military base in the northern part of the island of Okinawa, including Henoko-Oura Bay. In particular, (i) measures to recognize people of Ryukyu/Okinawa as Indigenous Peoples and to guarantee their rights, including their right to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources; (ii) additional information on the environmental assessment study regarding the construction and modification processes and measures to mitigate environmental harm; and (iii) measures to ensure the meaningful consultation with the Ryukyu/Okinawa Indigenous People regarding this project.



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Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of Japan with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Balcerzak", followed by a horizontal line.

Michal Balcerzak
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination