

'Okinawa Without US Bases': Mass Protest Against U.S Military Presence in Japan

By [RT](#)

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Thousands have been marching in Okinawa and across Japan in protest against the planned relocation of a US military base in Okinawa. The protesters criticized the Japanese government, who appear to be turning a deaf ear to the locals.

The protests began on Friday with about 1,200 people in Okinawa, as the island marked the 43rd anniversary of its reversion to Japanese sovereignty, and continued into Sunday gathering thousands of people.

"Even after our reversion, the problems of the bases remain unchanged," Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga said at the protest, adding reversion of sovereignty had failed to bring Okinawans what they wanted.

The activists said the island had seen decades of injustice from US and Japan.

Hyogo Okinawa association of people origination from the same prefecture!
pic.twitter.com/8PB9d8wzqu

— mamimoe1 (@mamimoe1) [May 17, 2015](#)

"We've long suffered from the bases, and I'm angered by the outrageousness of both the US and Japanese governments in insisting a new base be built in Henoko," Fujiko Matsuda, who heads a local citizens' group, told the Japan Times.

"It is wrong to proceed with the Henoko relocation without listening to the voices of the Okinawans," said another Okinawa resident, Atsuko Ikeda. "If we don't prevent it, there is no future for Japan as a democratic nation."

On Saturday, protestors marched around the US Futenma airbase in Ginowan city in Okinawa. About 2,600 people across Japan from Hokkaido to Nagasaki also took to the streets to voice their disapproval.

The activists shouted slogans, such as: *"Oppose enhanced Japan-US defense ties", "Bring back an Okinawa without US bases", "The United States has to respect Okinawa people's will".*

replacement base to be scrapped.

pic.twitter.com/3xc2X8eQH9 — (@okinawa_yasai) [May 17, 2015](#)

In March, Onaga demanded the underwater survey needed to build an offshore airstrip for the new base be stopped, citing environmental damage.

He met Defense Minister General Nakatani in May for the first time to discuss the relocation plan. They failed, however, to resolve their differences.

all okinawa!! no more base, n i just hope the world peace
[pic.twitter.com/33Y9EvDIR5](#)

— chikichiki (@kochikichiki) [May 17, 2015](#)

There is a long history of incidents and alleged crimes committed by US soldiers in Okinawa. The current wave of anti-base sentiment on the island was sparked by a 1995 case, when three US marines were reported to have kidnapped and brutally raped a 12-year-old schoolgirl.

There were also less-publicized sex crime cases involving underage victims reported in 2001 and 2005, the fatal running over of a female high school student by a drunken US marine in 1998, and other crimes.

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