

November 27, 2013

Dear Madam Ambassador Caroline Bouvier Kennedy

In the season of autumn colors, it is our sincere pleasure to welcome Your Excellency as the Ambassador of the United States to Japan.

Our organization known as The Japan Christian Women's Organization was founded by 56 Japanese women who were inspired by the lectures of the American woman, Mary Leavitt, after her arrival in Japan in 1886. For the past 127 years we have continued our activities in pursuit of human rights and peace.

We have heard that it was your heart's desire to serve as US Ambassador in Japan. With your interest in improving the status of women, we have great expectations of your service and heartily welcome you to Japan.

And now, upon your arrival in Japan, we would like to share with you some of our deep concerns.

In Regards to OKINAWA:

The Pacific War that was fought between Japan and America ended in the defeat of Japan. And now, even after 68 years since the end of the war, Okinawa continues to suffer great hardships under the burden of the presence of US military bases on their land.

We are hopeful you share our apprehension, especially over the Futenma Base, which is located in the middle of Ginowan City surrounded by a crowded residential area of homes and schools where children are active while military planes fly at low altitudes above them every day.

In spite of the fact that training flights of Osprey aircraft were cancelled in the U.S. due to the opposition of local citizens, such flights are now taking place from Futenma Base in the midst of a heavily populated residential area in Okinawa. We deeply regret this irrational imposition on the part of America. Even the former US Secretary of Defense, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, was well aware of these facts and acknowledged this danger.

As you know, the planned relocation site for Futenma is Henoko, which is on a rare coral reef in the ocean. Henoko is internationally known as the northernmost habitat and one of the last feeding grounds for the Dugong (sea cow), which is classified as critically endangered on Japan's Ministry of Environment Red List. The citizens of Japan are not in favor of destroying this precious ocean site for the purpose of turning it into a military base.

Up to this time, we have been protesting these actions by using every democratic means possible as we joined with those people in Okinawa who are directly affected by these destructive plans. But in spite of the decision announced by the American government some 17 years ago to return the Futenma military base to Japan, the base is even now still being used as a US base.

We are concerned that the people of Okinawa are being treated in such a discriminatory way by forcing them to live under a situation that ignores the standards of environmental protection and safety that are guaranteed within the United States. They are living each day with ever present dangers to their lives under circumstances that are not allowed within your country.

Please work to have a life of safety free from anxiety returned to the people living in Okinawa. We sincerely request for you to give all your efforts for the removal of US military bases from Okinawa.

In Regards to Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

In keeping with Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, we affirm the desire of the Japanese people for peace without relying on military armaments. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which both suffered the first atomic bombings in the history of humankind, there are still many memories of the enormous sufferings they endured. Both cities have expressed their determination to end all war and never have such tragic wrongs repeated.

Honorable Ambassador Kennedy, as one who has previously visited Hiroshima, we believe you are fully aware of this issue. During your time of service in Japan, please do all you can to accompany President Obama to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is our earnest desire to have President Obama make this visit, as one who is dedicated to the abolishment of nuclear weapons and has been bestowed with the Nobel Peace Prize. This is something we hope you can arrange once you have settled into your new position as US Ambassador to Japan.

Along with your many official duties, we hope you will be able to enjoy Japan's late autumn season. We pray for your continued good health as you take up your important responsibilities.

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