

[Statement] Jeju must be an island of peace.

We support the non-violent resistance of the residents of Gangjeong village and call for the immediate cancellation of the Jeju naval base construction.

Jeju is an "Island of Global Peace." However, Jeju is currently far from peace because of the enforcement of the naval base construction. This is destroying the local community and the natural environment. People in Gangjeong village have been fighting for years against government violence and attempts to construct the naval base. Not only the residents of Gangjeong village, but also the visitors and people who have seen the beautiful and peaceful scenery, are asking for reasons why the navy base should be constructed.

There are many questions from civilians about why this base is necessary. We ask the Ministry of National Defense and the provincial government of Jeju to answer questions about their justification for this base; what kind of threats this base will address; and if those threats are real, whether constructing this base in Jeju is the most appropriate solution. The Navy's argument of using the Jeju naval base as a stepping stone for the "blue water navy" to progress and to facilitate the navy forces' overseas deployment is no longer convincing. This argument from the Navy is no longer valid, since the withdrawal of the expansion plan in revisions of the National Defense Reform Law, which was announced on April 29. The Ministry of National Defense and the Jeju provincial government should reconsider the necessity of the naval base before enforcing the construction against the opposition of the residents.

We are also concerned about the lack of procedural legitimacy followed by the Ministry of National Defense and the Jeju provincial government, which used various expedients and illegal methods to speed up their construction plan. Gangjeong village was never the first candidate for the construction site. After confronting the great opposition from another proposed site, the Ministry of National Defense and Jeju provincial government hastily selected Gangjeong village as the site for construction without sufficient consideration of the residents' intentions. Gangjeong village is one of the most beautiful sites of the Jeju Olle Road and is designated as an "absolute preservation area." It's also a World Heritage site. However, this designation of absolute preservation area was hastily lifted by the local government through a change of the law, and the environmental impact assessment was only nominally implemented. It is an ironic contradiction, because at the same time the government lifted the designation of "absolute preservation area" through a quick decision, they were also making a great effort to rank Gangjeong as one of the world's 7th best sites for natural scenery. We call upon the Ministry of National Defense and the Jeju provincial government to make a decision to preserve the ecological environment in and surrounding Gangjeong village which is a gift of nature.

We also draw attention to the fact that construction workers' violence toward the Gangjeong villagers and activists has been ignored, even as those who are struggling to stop the construction are subjected to diverse accusations and imprisonment. Gangjeong residents are trying to show through non-violent protest that they have never agreed with the naval base construction, because they believe the construction is taking away their livelihood and destroying the environment inherited from their descendents. The Navy must stop using threats to create division in the Gangjeong community, which is dismantling the village. In

addition, government suppression of citizens who are nonviolently protesting to protect their right to live also needs to be stopped.

Currently, the five national opposition parties are investigating the procedures and the legality of the problems caused while constructing the naval base. In addition, lawsuits suspending and nullifying the lift of the designation of "absolute preservation area," as well as the approval of the military and defense facilities business implementation plan are in progress. We call upon the Ministry of National Defense and the Jeju provincial government to stop the construction until the problems of expedients and illegal methods used to justify the construction are dealt with in the judicial system and just decisions are made. We believe that legitimate and democratic procedures, which more seriously consider citizens' intentions and the environmental impact assessment, should be done once again.

We are now witnessing that the resistance of Gangjeong residents in order to protect the local community and beautiful Joongduk Sea is becoming a nationwide movement of objection against the navy base construction. Thus, we will bring together wisdom and solutions from every field of society, so that we can establish Jeju as an "Island of Peace" without military bases, an "Island of Peace" where citizens are not sacrificed under the name of the national security, and an "Island of Peace" acknowledged by the international society as a place truly representing peace, also by overcoming the long lasting conflicts surrounding the Jeju naval base construction.

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Korean Civil Society Network for Opposing to a Construction of Naval Base in Jeju Island