

# WOMEN and CHILDREN, MILITARISM and HUMAN RIGHTS

We are a group of women activists, policy-makers, and scholars from Okinawa, mainland Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and the United States who share a deep concern for the impact of the U.S. military presence on women and children in all our countries.

We have exchanged information and strategized together about the situation of victims of violence committed by U.S. military personnel against civilians, especially women and children. We shared information about the plight of Amerasian children who are abandoned by their G.I. fathers, and the effects of U.S. military bases on the social environment, in particular on women who are absorbed into the dehumanizing and exploitative system of prostitution around U.S. bases. We considered the current status of the various official agreements governing U.S. bases and military personnel; also the effects of high rates of military spending on women and children in the U.S. We see militarism as a system of structural violence which turns its members into war machines and creates victims among women and children in our local communities. Underlying our discussions is the clear conviction that the U.S. military presence is a threat to our security, not a protection. We recognize that the governments of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines are also complicit in this.

This is the first time that women sat down together to discuss these issues which are usually marginalized in discussions concerning U.S. military operations. As a result of our work, we see the many striking similarities in our various situations more clearly than ever before. As women activists, policy-makers, advocates, and scholars, we strengthened our commitment to work together towards a world with true security based on justice, respect for each other across national boundaries, and economic planning based on local people's needs, especially the needs of women and children. We will continue to support women and children affected by U.S.

militarism in all our countries, and to create alternative economic systems based on local people's needs. We will establish new guidelines to prevent military violence against women that are quite separate from existing official agreements.

In addition we demand:

- ◆ that the Status of Forces Agreements between the United States and the governments of Japan and South Korea be significantly revised to protect the human rights of women and children, and to include firm environmental guidelines for the clean-up of toxic contamination to restore our land and water and to protect the health of our communities;
- ◆ that the U.S. government cease circumventing constitutional provisions and national laws in imposing their continued military access or presence;
- ◆ that our governments pursue sincere efforts to support the democratization and reunification of Korea;
- ◆ that our governments take full responsibility for violence against women perpetrated by U.S. military personnel;
- ◆ that all military "R and R," which has meant widespread sexual abuse and exploitation of local women and children, be banned;
- ◆ that all military personnel receive training aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse of women and children who live and work around bases;
- ◆ that our governments provide substantial funding for the health care, education, training and self-reliance of women who service G.I.s, and their children, including Amerasian children;
- ◆ that the U.S. government and the governments of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines take full financial responsibility for Amerasian children, and that the U.S. government introduce immigration law that provides for all Amerasians in these three countries;

- ◆ that all U.S. bases, weapons and military personnel be removed from Japan and South Korea;
- ◆ that our governments fund detailed, independent research on health conditions due to military activities and operations (e.g. the incidence of low birth-weight babies in the vicinity of Kadena Air Base in Okinawa), as is being done in the U.S.;
- ◆ that our governments take full financial responsibility for environmental clean-up of U.S. military bases in a way that meets local people's needs;
- ◆ that our governments and public agencies recognize the central importance of women's issues in all base conversion projects, and include women in all levels of base-conversion decision-making;
- ◆ that money currently spent on the U.S. military use be developed to benefit local people rather than investors and transnational corporations as has happened at the former Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines;
- ◆ that local, national and international media investigate and report the issues and concerns referred to here, and educate people on the effects of the U.S. military presence in our countries.

We have committed ourselves to establishing an international network to hold our governments accountable on these issues, and to build a broad base of support to create a secure and sustainable world for future generations.

*This is the final statement issued by the International Women's Working Conference that met from 1-4 May 1997 at Naha City, Okinawa.*

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