

We call on Japanese and U.S. governments to take decisive action against repeated assaults by U.S. military personnel

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The Okinawa Prefectural Police on January 8 referred to prosecutors a U.S. marine in his 30s on suspicion of sexually assaulting and injuring an adult woman last November.

In protest against crimes committed by U.S. military personnel, a rally took place on December 22 in Okinawa City with 2,500 people participating. Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki stated, “We cannot help but have strong doubts about the effectiveness of measures taken by the U.S. military to prevent a recurrence. We are furious at a serious situation that calls into question the state of discipline within the U.S. military.” As Okinawa’s governor, his comment stands to reason.

In October 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Geneva, Switzerland, recommended that the Japanese government “take appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators and to provide adequate reparations to the survivors of sexual and other forms of conflict-related gender-based violence against women and girls on Okinawa.” This is a significant recommendation from the international community.

Although the U.S. military has explained that it is taking measures to prevent recurrence and to enforce discipline, crimes have repeatedly occurred. Downsizing and removing U.S. military bases is the best way to eradicate crimes committed by U.S. military personnel. The Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement must be revised as it gives extraterritorial privileges to the U.S. military, such as not having to turn over to Japan the custody of U.S. military personnel who have caused accidents or committed crimes off duty until they are prosecuted.

We demand that the Japanese and U.S. governments respond to the concerns of the people of Okinawa, where 70 percent of U.S. military bases in Japan are concentrated, take seriously the situation in which women’s dignity is being threatened, and take urgent measures.

In order to establish a base-free, peaceful, and prosperous Okinawa, we are determined to continue fighting in solidarity with Okinawans as well as a wide range of citizens throughout Japan.