

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

February
2016

Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

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South Korea



A Declaration for Life, Peace and Culture Village

Image by Lee Wooki

1. On Feb. 26, the Jeju navy base construction completion ceremony was held in Gangjeong village, land of life. It is clear that the Jeju navy base cannot create an era of peace. The Jeju navy base cannot but be an outpost which threatens the peace of northeast Asia, amid conflict for military domination between the United States and China.

2. The completed Jeju navy base was built by merciless state violence which trampled villagers' human rights and the sacred natural environment. The struggle for the last nine years has been a step towards true peace. During this time, villagers have made efforts to counter the war base built of cement over the remains of Gureombi Rock where Gangjeong villagers had shared the breath of peace. It has been a history of peace versus state violence pushed through under the guise of a 'national

policy project,' ignoring even the basic procedures of democracy.

3. The responsibility to restore the community lies on the central and island governments which have unilaterally pushed ahead with the Jeju naval base construction. However, neither the central nor island governments have ever made efforts to restore the peaceful community of Gangjeong. The government should make an apology now for the Jeju naval base construction which was continued while the will of Gangjeong villagers was ignored. [The navy] can only fancy itself to have played the role of 'conflict inducer,' ignoring the villagers' opinions, enforcing crackdowns like carrying out military operations, threatening and splitting villagers.

4. The declaration of this 'village for life, peace, and culture' was held before the navy ceremony on

Feb. 26. It is the villagers' noble step for true peace as well as the start of the restoration of the Gangjeong community. And all of us who pray for the peace of Gangjeong will strengthen our solidarity to bear the blossoms of the flower of peace. In resistance we will remember and continue our actions and cries for peace in order to stop the Jeju naval base for even one minute, one second. The Jeju naval base was built with the backing of state violence. We will cover it over with the wave of peace.

Gangjeong Village Association, Jeju Pan-Island Committee for Stopping the Military Base and for Realization of the Peace Island, and National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing the Naval Base in Jeju Island. (For the full statement published on Feb. 25, please visit savejejunow.org)

Looking at the Stars

By Kim Sung-Kyu
Gangjeong villager and poet

The stars which used to shine in my distant memory are still in my heart despite the passing of 50 years. The river of stars flowing in the Milky Way is a scene which one hardly sees in the modern times running toward development. One day in April 2007, I was anxious, not knowing what I could do after hearing an unbelievable story about naval base construction in my village.

Now the base has become a reality and the Gureombi rock covered by cement for the base construction has become a memory. The hill where I flew kites, the ditch where I caught frogs and minnows, and Gureombi Rock- the rest area where we used to share food in my childhood disappeared. And now they have become unbearable to look at with concrete and buildings replacing them. Totally strange men who kicked out my memories openly stride there.

The true masters of the land have been kicked out. And now false masters pretend to take their place. The naval base was nominally built for the development of the village. But the development has torn the hearts of the villagers to pieces. The site with the dramatically and luxuriously changed look has now become land where we cannot reach or stand. Is this progress?

The splendid lights have been taken out from the river of stars in the Milky Way. The numerous memories of our fathers, their fathers, and their fathers, have now been cut. The distance between us has also grown. Alas, I look at the stars and sky with all my last desperate energy. Today only memory is alive. I struggle to save that memory, hoping the stars and sky will remain in my heart...



Image by Curry. The navy took down the fence and is building a new road which threatens to displace the peace village of container houses at Samgeori. In negotiations with Seogwipo city, Gangjeong village got the guarantee to use the land for one more year if two houses are moved slightly to make way for the road.

Interview with Gangjeong villagers

On February 26 Gangjeong village declared itself as a Life Peace Culture Village. In the wake of the declaration, Choi Hye-Young from Gangjeong Friends visited the village and interviewed Mayor Cho Kyung-Chul and Samgeori communal cafeteria chef Kim Jong-Hwan and asked them how they remembered Gureombi and the ocean before the naval base.

Mayor Cho Kyung Chul:

"Gangjeong village is bigger than you think. It is divided into east and west. West villagers usually went to An-Gangjeong and east villagers went to Gureombi. Back in my school years, there weren't boats for fishing like nowadays. We used to collect a lot of barley bran and filled used fertilizer bags with them, which floated in the water. Using those fertilizer bags as swimming tubes we went in the ocean for fishing. The fish we caught the most was rockfish. It was so easy to catch them, since the water was so clear and we could see them moving near our feet everywhere.

Unfortunately the opening ceremony of the naval base is on February 26. The navy has been using the media to spread their lies such as that they are communicating with the villagers for co-existence. But in fact they are still trying to separate the villagers by playing sides. We would like to denunciate this cunning lie of the navy during our press conference for the declaration of Life Peace Culture village on the same day. From 23-25th of February we will hold candlelight vigils every night in the Peace Center and I hope we could share our memories of the last 8 years of the anti-naval base movement together with other villagers. We will continue to fight against the naval base. It's been quite difficult physically but even if there are only a few of us left, we will continue. We won't give up."

Chef Kim Jong Hwan:

"As a child I used to play on Gureombi rock a lot. We used to collect shells, all kinds of seafood and herbs, seaweeds, anchovies that came after the big waves. We never had to go to a supermarket to buy food, because the sea and the rock gave us ample amount of food. My happiest memories are when we used to all gather on Gureombi and eat together. Gureombi was the nature's table for us. When I was imprisoned, that was the dearest memory that I held onto. Even now I miss that time the most, and I grieve for it. Gureombi used to embrace me like my mother. The rock felt like it was connecting everything in a way that all the lives that existed on Gureombi were in harmony.

It is our 10th year since the anti-naval base movement began. I've been cooking for us for 8 years now but it's nothing. I will go all the way, to the end. I can continue because of many people who anonymously send the rice and Kimchi to the cafeteria, for whom I feel grateful everyday. Also, my activist friends help me to take care of myself especially my body. I could go on because of all these people. Without them I would have stopped a long time ago"

The Jeju navy did it again

By Joyakgol

The Jeju navy invited public to show off their warships, again. On the new year's day of 2016, they invited about 300 people including 50 Gangjeong residents and 40 local right-wing group members to the high-tech Yulgok Yiyei Aegis destroyer armed with guided missiles. The navy did so to celebrate the year's first sun rise with the people, but it was said they couldn't see the sun because of the bad weather.

So the Jeju base did it again on Feb 9. But this time, it was with more people. Supposedly, more than 500 people responded to the navy's free invitation to the South Korea's biggest warship Dokdo. It was very troubling to see the aircraft-carrier filled with chanting crowd on the dock.

Call for No Naval Base in Jeju

By Merci L. Angeles

200 participants in the International Conference on Women, Peace and Security: Women Leaders in Peacebuilding and Rebuilding Lives held in Pangasinan, Philippines, last Feb. 3-5, adopted the call of Gangjeong Villagers for No Naval Base in Jeju. They learned about the construction of the naval base through the presentation of Sunny(nickname) of the Gangjeong International team and Ms. Merci L. Angeles, President of the Peace Women Partners. Merci joined the Grand March for Life and Peace last July, 2015.

Conference participants said they will spread the information to their own hometowns. The participants in the International Conference came from Japan, Singapore, Fiji/New Zealand, Australia, Cook Islands, and various regions in the Philippines, including Mindanao. The conveners of the Conference are the Peace Women Partners and Pangasinan State University.

Remembering Father Bix

By Melissa

Fr. William J. Bichsel, S.J., commonly known as Fr. Bix, or just simply Bix was born May 26th, 1928 and passed Feb 28th, 2015 at the age of 86. He was ordained into the Society of Jesus in June 1959.

Throughout his life as a priest Bix became well known for his radical ideology and contribution to social justice, specifically anti war/ anti nuclear movements. Bix was arrested over 40 times and imprisoned over 2 1/2 years for his civil disobedience actions.

Bix came to Gangjeong for the first time in 2013, with Br. Gilbert, who is a Buddhist monk. The second trip Bix made was in November 2014 with a team of 10 other peace activists. Fr. Bix loved Gangjeong. He said the collective action of faith and resistance was one of the best examples of community work to oppose military forces. "The daily Eucharist is the foundation of the ongoing acts of resistance" Bix had said in a news report after his first visit. He had a new found spirit after his first trip, that he just had to come back.

I traveled with Bix to Jeju in 2014, while he was in a wheelchair the entire time. He called the action of Mass "Eucharistic Resistance" this brought on a new meaning of resistance and the power of the Eucharist. Bix strongly believed in the Resurrection, and I remember him talking about how the power of the resurrection is alive in Gangjeong and that power is what generates the full time peace keepers and resisters here.

For myself, and many others Bix was instrumental in my teaching of anti war movements, and my love for Gangjeong as well. I know he would be deeply proud of the fight the village is keeping up, and I know he is also holding the same pain and sadness that is being held in the hearts of many, now that the base has officially opened.

Fr. Bix's ashes will be kept in the Chapel of the St. Francis peace center in Gangjeong.



Image by Gangjeong Village Story/ The Gangjeong Catholics and visiting U.S. activists (here in this photo, many of those are Catholic Workers) remember Father William Jerome Bishel, S.J. (1928-2015) together in front of the construction site of the Jeju naval base.

International Solidarity



Image by an event participant/ International Conference on Women, Peace and Security, Pangasinan, Philippines, Feb. 3-5, adopted a call for no naval base in Jeju Island.

Hotbed of irregularities at the Jeju naval base construction

By Joyakgol

It was revealed that malpractice cases associated with Jeju naval base construction subcontracting were common. Over the years, we would hear from the news that the temporary workers complain about how they were not paid for several months or they were on a walkout. These days, local media reported that local eateries in Gangjeong village didn't receive payment from the contractors. One restaurant owner said he didn't receive twenty million won (about USD 18,000) and another owner said Jeju naval base workers owed him about USD 15,000. We wondered why this kind of thing happened because Jeju naval

base project spends 1 billion dollars of budget, a huge cash flow to local business according to the government propaganda. The truth was shocking; several subcontractors disappeared without paying to the workers or to the local restaurants. Primary construction companies would normally hire subcontractors to perform specific tasks, and then the subcontractors hire more second-tier contractors for the job. Since the civil engineering is so lucrative and yet consists of very complex structure of multi-layer subcontractors, all sorts of irregularities and illegalities lie there. Basically it is built on exploitation

Recently, a subcontractor called 'Green FA' vanished with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth money, 21 local business companies such as motels and restaurants are suffering from the unpaid debts. A Jeju provincial parliament member asked at a hearing if the provincial government officials were aware of the situation, they said they didn't know. Bottom level workers and small local business owners don't get paid properly while some greedy capitalists get all the money at the expense of environmental destruction. This is what Jeju naval base is really about.

The Police's Reasonable Judgment?

By Joan

On Feb. 26, when it was a village declaration day for life, peace, and culture, as well as a day for the navy to hold a ceremony for the completion of base construction, opposition party members' filibuster to stop the Anti-Terror bill hit their 4th day in the National Assembly. On the day, the policemen violently detained all the passers-by on the street, for the so called security purpose but without any explanation. Some were detained by 6-7 policemen just for the reason that they were holding banners while others were abruptly dragged and detained by the police even on their way back from the road closed by the police.

All the people on the street were respectively detained by around 6-7 policemen. During the process, one was broken with a finger, while another fell away at the end of her resistance to the police's abrupt and stifling suppression. However, the policeman/woman turning away their backs from those victims did not take any proper medical care for them. Victims were taken to hospital or carried to an emergency hospital room in ambulance only by the help of their fellow citizens.

On the day's situation, Choi Chang-Bok, the Security Director of the Seogwipo Police station stated that 'it was a legal execution of public duty based on the police's reasonable judgment.' Even in the current when the anti-terror bill has not passed, the government powers' infringement on a personal body is easily carried out for the reason of 'police judgment.' If the Anti-Terror bill is passed, not only body but all belongs to a person will be easily monitored. (Editor's note: On March 2, the anti-terror bill was passed in the National Assembly with 157 ruling conservative party members all voted yes.)

Trial Updates



▶ Remarkably, the Jeju Higher Court made a decision of not guilty to Mr. Lee H R, a Gangjeong peace activist, on Feb. 18. The decision overturns the original court decision of guilty of charges of obstruction of business against Lee, who had been indicted for stopping a construction vehicle. The 1st court had imposed 1.5 million in Korean won fines on him for that charge. In February, 2014 when a passenger of a construction vehicle moved a chair on which a Catholic father was sitting during the mass in front of the base construction gate, Lee stopped a vehicle in protest for 8 minutes. He then sat in the road for 9 minutes in front of the gate in protest and was eventually indicted for the charge of obstructing a vehicle's movements. The Higher Court emphasized in its decision that the mass in front of the gate during which his action occurred is a form of political expression and the application of the charge of obstruction of business on such expression should be interpreted restrictively. Groups including the Gangjeong Village Association, noticing that that the court's decision came just before the navy base construction completion ceremony, stated that the decision confirmed that the anti-Jeju base struggle which has been staged near the construction gate is quite just.

▶ On Feb. 23, the Supreme Court confirmed the Higher Court decision of 2.4 million won fines to the three Jeju activists Hong Y. C., Bae K. C., and Kim K. N. respectively who had been charged of obstruction of business and light crime. In a separate case, the Supreme Court confirmed the original court decision of six months imprisonment, suspended with two years of probation, along with 2.4 million won in fines, against a peace activist, Mr. Kim K. N., on charges of obstruction of business.

▶ The three had been indicted on charges relating to crossing over a wire fence to sit-in inside the construction site for 35 minutes in February, 2012. Mr. Kim was also indicted for his sit-in in front of the gate in July of the same year. The 1st court had made a decision of not guilty in part. But the Higher Court dismissed it and imposed fines and probation against the three.

War Tax Resistance (WTR)

By Brando

It seems logical to talk about War Tax Resistance (WTR) on Okinawa and on Jeju Island. Both of these beautiful places have endured and continue to endure heinous treatment by the Japanese and American Empires. The Okinawan topography was permanently altered during the US "Typhoon of Steel" bombardment during WWII. Now the Tokyo/Washington plan is to continue to expand US war making capability in the Asia-Pacific region by adding 21 million cubic meters to fill the pristine Oura Bay in Henoko in order to construct landing strips, helipads, docks, ammunition loading area, fueling docks, and other war making features. Out of a total area of 205 hectares, they are planning to reclaim 160 hectares, about 80% of the project's total footprint. All this despite the fact that the majority of Okinawans - polls put this figure between 70-80 per cent - oppose the existence and expansion of the US occupation of their island. As of 2014, the US boasted 32 US bases and at least 26,000 trained killers on the island. On Jeju and on Okinawa, much tax money is misinvested in war. How much is being spent on police alone in order for Tokyo/Seoul/Washington to force these war bases into existence against large-scale active opposition from hundreds of thousands of people? Police training, pay, uniforms, airfare from the mainland, special blue buses, housing in local resorts (Kanucha Resort is where mainland riot police reportedly stay in the Henoko area of Okinawa. I visited the resort with a friend, but didn't see any police vehicles. Still, multiple people confirmed that the riot police are housed there. Apparently it costs regular people around \$200 per night. I'm not sure where the mainland police stay on Jeju, but I've heard they, too, are housed in a resort.), etc. It's interesting that both central governments regularly import and rotate their young enforcers from mainland cities. Similarly, no local people would accept employment relating to the war base construction in Gangjeong, and workers from outside the area were brought in to cut down tangerine trees, take down greenhouses, and pave paradise to put up a warship dock, despite pay rates that were sometimes double the going local rate. The US itself will misinvest \$1,300,000,000,000 on war in 2016 alone. Japan and ROK are among the top ten military spenders on the planet, though their combined spending on war was only around 15% of the 2014 US war budget. Citizens in all three countries have needs that go unmet due not to lack of funds, but to skewed priorities that do not reflect the values and visions of the vast majority of people. How can we change this and use our common wealth for the common good?



Image by Lee Wooki. Yellow was the theme color for the resistance against the naval base opening ceremony on Feb. 26. Activists wore yellow shirts and passing cars and human chain footprints spread yellow paint up and down the road.

The Precarious Spring of Korea

By Park Seok-Jin,
Civilian Military Watch

Korean peace is in peril. The Republic of Korea (ROK)-US military authorities are responding aggressively to North Korea's fourth nuclear test and subsequent satellite launch. The main strategic arms of the US are being installed into Korea one by one and the ROK-US military authorities announced that in March they will hold the biggest ever Key Resolve joint military drill. Additionally, the issue of THAAD deployment in Korea, which would intensify the conflict with China, will likely be negotiated.

Further, the Park Geun-Hye government has halted the Kaesong Industrial Complex, the symbol of cooperation between North and South Korea. In response, North Korea declared the Kaesong complex a military restriction zone, froze equipment, and is deporting the remaining South Koreans. Certainly, North Korea's aggressive military action, including the recent nuclear test, is the primary reason for present heightened tensions, but the ROK-US lasting blockade and oppressive policy against North Korea has been a constant contributor. In fact, right after the ROK-US announced a drastic joint statement in relation to North Korea's nuclear program last October, North Korea made a surprising proposal to replace the ceasefire agreement with a peace agreement. However, the US turned down North Korea's pacifying suggestion, instead demanding abandonment of nuclear capabilities.

The US and China have recently agreed on sanctions against North Korea. The US pressured China, utilizing the issue of THAAD deployment in Korea as leverage. While making clear its opposition to THAAD deployment in Korea, China has proposed simultaneous non-nuclearization of North Korea and a peace agreement for Korea. Significantly, ROK has not played any role in the negotiations between the US and China.

It is the result of the policy against North Korea by the Park Geun-Hye government, which has only shown hostility towards North Korea. Meanwhile, the Park Geun-Hye government is focusing on promoting the "anti-terror" bill on the pretext of alleged North Korean threats. The precarious Spring of Korea has begun. (Editor's note: On March 4, the ROK and US began working group level negotiation on the deployment of THAAD in Korea)



Image by the Civilian Military Watch

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to stop the Jeju base project and to the US government to stop the support for it.
2. Write letters to Gangjeong's prisoners of conscience.
3. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
4. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...)
5. Then share about it on social media.
6. Visit Gangjeong!
7. For other ways to help and more visit us on the web.

For More Information

<http://www.SaveJejuNow.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/NoNavalBase>
<http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju>
<http://www.twitter.com/SaveJejuNow>

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org or check these Vimeo/YouTube users :

Vimeo : cho sung bong / DH Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

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Image by Choi Hye-Young. Gangjeong Friends hosted a candlelight vigil in Jeju City on February 23. Supporters of Gangjeong from around Jeju gave speeches, shared videos, and sang along to the music. Four activists from the USA shared solidarity messages and songs.



Image by IPFFIG. The first International Peace Film Festival In Gangjeong (IPFFIG) is going to be held in April 23-26, announced at a press conference.

Fr. Mun Jeong-Hyeon's speech trip to NY

In early March, Fr. Mun Jeong-Hyeon, one of the leaders of Gangjeong peace movement, is traveling to give talks throughout New York, United States. He was invited by Martha Hennessy, granddaughter of Dorothy Day and a Catholic Worker, NY, who has visited Gangjeong last December. Fr. Mun is accompanied by a young Gangjeong peace activist nicknamed Ddalgi. Beside his original speech plans in NY, he will also have a chance to meet Korean Americans in NY during the trip. Please spread the word and join his speech events. For more details, contact Martha Hennessy: marthahennessy@gmail.com

Fr. Mun's schedule will be as follows:

4th (Fri.) Saint Joseph College, NYC, 1 pm. Topic: Korea and Palestine with other speakers.

8th (Tue.) Manhattan College, NYC, 4 pm "The US Militarization Korea: A Catholic Response"

10th (Thurs.) Union, 9:00 AM/ Fordham University, 4:00 PM.

11th (Fri.) Night Meeting, Maryhouse Catholic Worker, 8:00 PM

12th (Sat.) Attending at Dorothy Day Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. 9:00 AM.

No talk.

13th (Sun) Mass at the war ship memorial, 10 or 11 AM.

