“There should be apology and truth examination”

On May 29th, the Korea National Police Agency Truth Examination Committee on Human Rights Infringement (hereafter, ‘Committee’) made public a report on the results of investigation into the so-called ‘Jeju Gangjeong naval base construction incident’ which it had carried out for the last 7 months. The Committee ‘urge[d] the government, Jeju Island and other state organs to apologize and to examine the truth of their unjust deeds against the people opposing the Jeju navy base,’ and "advise[d] the KNPA to improve its system & policy to prevent recurrence of similar cases and enhance human rights.” The next day, the nationwide-broadcasted committee report was followed by a press conference by Gangjeong villagers who stated that “state power has thoroughly destroyed the ground rules of democracy, not to mention the human rights of Gangjeong.’

In the statement, the villagers pointed out that, “it was exposed for the first time that the chief of the Jeju navy base project committee intervened directly in the Gangjeong residents’ vote to reject or approve the navy base on June 19, 2007.” They also emphasized that there was systematic intervention of police, navy, National Intelligence Service, and the Jeju Island government during the process of inviting the Jeju navy base.

The Committee also dealt with human rights infringement issues during the International Fleet Review, Oct. 10 to 14, 2018. It acknowledged that police neglected their duty when the navy interrupted people’s legal rally in front of the Jeju navy base on Oct. 3 & 4, 2018 and that police interfered with the legal rally and protest during President Moon Jae-in’s visit on Oct. 11. Looking at the state power’s continuing violence, we demand President Moon’s apology as well as strict reprimand against the National Intelligence Service, Defense Security Command, navy, police, coast guard, as well as related Jeju Island offices.

There should be immediate measures for comprehensive truth examination. The Jeju navy base should not have been able to exist from the beginning. It should be closed immediately. And how about the U.S. role?

Second Cruise Not Welcomed

On May 15, the Majestic Princess was the second cruise ship to enter the “Jeju Civilian Military Complex Port” (navy base). She carried about 4,100 passengers, more than the Queen Mary, the first cruise to Gangjeong which arrived with 2,762 passengers on March 2. Members of Gangjeong international team gave fliers to the passengers, who were mainly from Taiwan, telling them about the problems of militarism and over-tourism in Jeju.
On May 19th, citizens monitoring the Bijarim-ro worked all day in heavy rain to move young trees from the forest to save them from the construction / A photo by Licky Rooney

Fairy pitta, Dung beetles, and ADPi

By Choi Sung-hee

Citizens who have been persistently monitoring the expansion construction of Bijarim-ro road for more than 70 days since March 19th recently confirmed that IUCN -designated ‘vulnerable’ species such as fairy pittas and South Korean government-defined ‘endangered’ species such as dung beetles are living in the forest adjacent to the Bijarim-ro. The road would connect the current Jeju airport, in north Jeju, and the planned 2nd Jeju airport (air force base) in Seongsan, in east Jeju. With the citizens’ discoveries of endangered species, the Jeju island government had no choice but to pause the construction for a while and to organize a team to research the legally protected species’ habitats in the forest. The citizens’ discovery shows how the government has enforced construction based on a weak and/or deceptive environmental impact assessment (EIA) in which they failed to find endangered species on the site or possibly hid the findings in order to push forward the construction there. Damages have already been done. Citizens reported that around 3,000 trees have been cut, exceeding the EIA’s original estimate of 2,420 trees. They are concerned that an additional 2,000 trees including a 100 year old hackberry could be cut unless construction completely stops.

Otherwise, a report by ADPi (Aéroports de Paris Ingénierie) made in 2015, but hidden by the government until now, was finally made public in mid-April thanks to citizens’ pressure. According to the report, the current Jeju airport can satisfy the predicted aviation demand up to its highest numbers in 2035 with the improvement of an existing intersecting runway, which means the government does not need the 2nd Jeju airport. Further, it was also recently exposed that, in the process of location selection for the 2nd Jeju airport, the South Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation (MOLIT) had not considered at all the safety problem to airplanes which can be caused by bird strikes. The planned area for the 2nd Jeju airport in Seongsan is nearby three big habitats for migratory birds.

Despite all this, MOLIT attempted to enforce an information hearing session with biased promotion of the 2nd Jeju airport on April 23rd, and Jeju Island government made so-called open forums with a similar purpose in Jeju City and Seongsan on May 23rd and June 4th. All those attempts faced citizens’ resistance, resulting in the meetings’ interruption or dissipation. According to the latest poll of Jeju islanders regarding the 2nd Jeju airport on May 31st, more than 62% are concerned about its procedural problems and 83% responded in favor of having a deliberative poll to reconsider the project.

Many species live in the Bijarim-ro forest. Among them, fairy pitta is classified as vulnerable according to the IUCN red-list. Dung beetles (Copris tripartitus) are one of the endangered species defined by the South Korean government. Drawing by Lee Nan-young.
International Solidarity

Opposing the third Zumwalt destroyer

By Curry

75 people gathered to protest, and 25 were arrested and charged with obstruction of a public road at the “christening” of the US Navy’s third and final Zumwalt-class stealth destroyer, the USS Lyndon B. Johnson at Bath Iron Works (BIW), Maine, on Saturday, Apr. 27.

A Korean official reported in Feb. 2017 that commander of the US Pacific Command (now US Ambassador to South Korea) Harry Harris had proposed deploying a Zumwalt destroyer to the Jeju Navy Base. Natasha Mayers was inspired to protest the Zumwalt after visiting Gangjeong several years ago. “I felt a real shame that we were sending these giant warships out to this space that was absolutely destroying the sweetest little village on the coast of this island.”

The Zumwalt warships, however, have been undergoing endless remodeling and repurposing, delaying their deployment. Costing a total of 23 billion USD so far, these high-tech “stealth” warships are designed to look like small fishing boats on radar and to use new weapons such as laser guns, rail guns, or even “low-yield” nuclear missiles.

As the world faces existential threats from the climate crisis and the risk of nuclear war, the production of Zumwalt destroyers exemplifies the misdirection of American tax money. Robert Shetterly, one of the 25 arrested, explained, “[our] signs… that said ‘Convert!’ were demanding that BIW start making green infrastructure—wind turbines, solar panels, high speed rail cars, electric cars, fossil free cargo ships, all those things that create sustainable jobs—in fact, better paying jobs—than weapons… Our goal was to use the arrest to get in the media to talk about the link between militarism and climate change.” Indeed, the authorities were aware of this goal; on May 9 the district attorney stated that she will not prosecute the 25, because of the cost and “undue publicity.”

Mooming reported on the 2019 Okinawa Peace March: A base on mayonnaise-like sandy seafloor? These days the US base construction at Henoko is endlessly heaping landfill on the soft foundation. The wasted budget is a golden goose egg for the construction companies. The promise to close Futenma was not kept, and improper construction continues at the supposed replacement base site at Henoko. Participants from Gangjeong, Pyeongtaek, Seongju, Andong, Seoul joined a solidarity visit from May 15-20. For many it was our first time in Okinawa. It briefly felt like a vacation, but I became speechless in face of the tragedy of the war in 1945. We visited Chibichiri Gama (cave) where poison bottles and the teeth and bones of those who names are carved in the war memorial remain as they were, the museum where the walls are covered with the tragic scenes of the war, and the cliffs and blue ocean where people had jumped. I experienced the current situation of base construction and noise. I felt dizzy from the all the connections with issues like Gangjeong, the 4.3 Massacre, the Gwangju Uprising, the division of Korea, the Sewol Ferry tragedy, women’s issues… These mixed dizzyly with new questions: How will the upcoming vote go? How can the Okinawan residents who don’t protest the bases coexist with the bases? All day long as we rode the bus and walked, we sang, “Suwarikome koko e (Sit down here).” Whether there is rain or hot sun, people gather in front of the US bases and shout “Gijiwa deteike! (Bases out!!)” Photo by Mooming.
Kings Bay Plowshares 7 Update

By Curry

On April 4, 2018, 7 Catholic Plowshares activists entered the US Navy's Kings Bay base, home to 8 submarines equipped to use Trident nuclear missiles, to "preach the gospel of nonviolence directly to Navy and Marine personnel." They were arrested and charged with three felonies and a misdemeanor and could face over 20 years in prison. Three remain in jail and four are out on bond with ankle bracelets. In their November 2018 hearings they argued that the government violated their rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. On April 26, though the magistrate found their cause religious and their faith sincere, he denied their motion to dismiss charges based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. They appealed this decision and are still awaiting a trial date.

See petition at kingsbayplowshares7.org

The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 posed for a photo on April 4, 2018 (50 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.) before entering the US nuclear submarine base with banners, crime scene tape and bottles of their own blood. Martha Hennessy shared that visiting Korea gave her motivation to join the action, and she entered the base with a yellow Gangjeong Grand March t-shirt. Photo by Kings Bay Plowshares.

Dissolve the United Nations Command in Korea!

"On July 7, 1950, the United Nations Security Council recommended the creation of a US - led the unified command, but the United States referred to it as the United Nations Command using the name of the United Nations.[..] [The] United Nations Command has the authority to start a war on the Korean peninsula without a UN Security Council resolution, to take over North Korean region, and to use Japanese bases and services without consulting with the Japanese government.[..]

1. The US government should dissolve the United Nations Command in South Korea.
2. The US government, through the United Nations Command in Korea, should not interfere with inter - Korean cooperation projects.
3. The UN should stop the United Nations Command the use of the name "the United Nations".
4. The United Nations should force the United States to implement its 1975 resolution to dissolve the UNC."

(Excerpt from the statement, “In the era of peace, dissolve the UNC, the relic of the Cold War,” April 25, 2019, signed firstly by 140 individuals and 37 groups from the domestic and international. The 1st petition was delivered to the member states of UN Security Council the next day. Source: Lee Si-woo)

Gureombi Rock remembered on Children’ Day

By Curry

May 5 was Children’s Day in Korea and the Jeju Navy Base hosted an open house. Families came with their children to see the base, tour warships, take photos on tanks, and even practice holding guns. Next to the open house parking lot was a small remaining part of Gureombi Rock. Most of the 1.2 km coastal rock, which was the habitat of several endangered species and a playground and sanctuary for Gangjeong villagers, is now covered by landfill and concrete. Appreciation for this natural landscape, rather than the myth that war is fun, is the message that must be passed to the next generation. However, soldiers said the rock is dangerous, off limits, no photos allowed. The yellow flag in the photo below reads "We miss you Gureombi!"

On May 5, the ‘Unseen Village Project’ made a temporary exhibition in front of the navy base. A map showed the location of Gureombi Rock overlaid with the outline of the navy base, along with quotes from the Gangjeong peace struggle and paintings of soft corals (Though part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, many soft corals, including endangered species, are being killed by the navy base.) Photo by Emily.

Photo by Forest Hill.
Linking Korean Historical Traumas in Gwangju

By Curry

In 1945, the Japanese empire was defeated and Korea was divided and occupied by Americans in the South and Soviets in the North. Jeju citizens who called for a unified Korea were oppressed by police and when they rose up against police violence, Jeju was labelled a ‘Red Island.’ South Korean soldiers who refused to join in the slaughter of Jeju civilians were also met with disproportionate force in Yeosu and Suncheon. In order to escape suspicion of sympathy for communism, many young men joined the Korean army. In the Vietnam War, once again, Korean soldiers massacred civilians in villages they suspected of sympathy for communism. Many soldiers who had participated in the Vietnam War were then sent to suppress the citizens of Gwangju who rejected the authority of the Chun Doo-hwan coup and called for democracy. To this day, this vicious cycle of violence and the complicity of the United States in these events is a very sensitive topic in South Korea.

On April 12-13, St. Francis Peace Center, The May 18 Memorial Foundation, Korea Vietnam Peace Foundation, and Gwangju Nabi (For a Just Resolution to the Problem of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery) co-hosted a workshop in Gwangju to connect these historical tragedies. Victims’ family members from the Jeju 4.3 massacre and the Yeosu-Suncheon incident, veterans from the Vietnam War and the suppression of the Gwangju uprising, and a survivor of a massacre during the Gwangju uprising shared their experiences with workshop participants. Though each of these tragic events is rooted in the same stigmatization of whole populations as communist sympathizers and the use of indiscriminate and overwhelming force against them, it was a unique chance for the survivors to meet together in one place and for those who were on the side of victim and of perpetrator to meet and work together to speak out the truth and seek justice.

Three women’s statements in objection to military service.

By Choi Sung-hee

For International Conscientious Objectors’ Day on May 15th, three women peace activists, Oum Mun-hee, Choi Sung-hee and Wang Yu-hsuan (Emily Wang), each made statements on their objection to military service. All three have joined the ‘No Jeju navy base’ movement in Gangjeong for years, and they have seen their male colleagues suffer from the draft system in Korea. One of them, e-sang, is the one who gave the three women motivation to make such statements.

In Korea, women are ‘exempt’ from the duty of military service. So what is the meaning for women to make such statements? “Many women in the world look at the complicity between militarism and patriarchy and share the way of resistance together,” declared the Korean group War Without War. Another Korean woman, Soopia, had already made a statement of objection to military service last year and even before that, there were similar statements by women in Turkey and Israel.

Choi Sung-hee said that “this global system has been successful as women do not take the issue of objection to military service as their own issue.” Oum Mun-hee wondered “all of my identity has been simply rejected by the mainstream power, except for my identity as a woman.” Finally Wang Yu-hsuan (Emily Wang), a Taiwanese who was once denied entry into South Korea for her participation in the anti-base campaign in Gangjeong, said “it is not soldiers but all of us all together who must close the military base.”

What happened on April 26th in the past years?

By Curry

On April 12 in Gwangju, workshop participants sat in an outer circle to witness the conversation of people who experienced several of the tragedies of modern Korean history. The inner circle of the ‘fish-bowl’ provided a safe space for the sharing of personal stories of Jeju 4.3, Yeosu-Suncheon, the Vietnam War and the Gwangju Uprising. Photo by Korea Peacebuilding Institute.

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What happened on April 26th in the past years?

On April 26, 2007, only 87 people, of whom many had been induced by the navy, joined a village meeting which was organized without appropriate procedures. On that day, the agendas were changed in the meeting without official procedures, and ultimately most of the villagers had no idea of what was going on. The decision in favor of base installation was done not by vote but by clapping.

Despite the majority of villagers’ protests against the base project and their democratic vote months later, the government choose Gangjeong anyway as the location for the Jeju navy base based on this manipulated village meeting on April 26, 2007.

10 years later on April 26, 2017, the US military enforced the entry of THAAD radar and 2 launchers into Soseong-ri, Seongju, mainland of Korea. Now it is attempting to officially build the THAAD base there.

April 27th hit one year since the Inter-Korea Summit meeting between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un. In the era for peace, denuclearization, and ending of hostile relationships, why do we need THAAD and the Jeju navy base?
South Korea to introduce SM 3 ‘class’?

On April 30th, the South Korea Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) decided to load SM-3 class anti-air defense systems with anti-ballistic missile interception ability on the three new aegis destroyers currently planned to be built from 2024 to 2028. The DAPA says it is to “prepare for maritime conflict and participate in overseas peace keeping activities.” During the international fleet review in Jeju last year, the South Korean navy announced its motto as a ‘blue ocean navy’ which goes beyond the roles of a ‘coastal navy.’ The Jeju navy base is a South Korean base but it is very likely to be used as an outpost for US missile defense to contain China. South Korea’s introduction of SM-3 ‘class’ missiles should be surely stopped.

Whose is the Jeju Island government?

By Choi Sung-hee

It was recently confirmed that the Jeju island government invited the navy chiefs of staff from Korea and all the participating countries to a banquet it hosted during the International Fleet Review in the Jeju navy base from Oct. 10 to 14 last year. The Island government paid for the banquet and called it business promotion. The Gangjeong Village anti-navy base committee criticized the Jeju Island government in its May 27 statement that it should have been the navy, not the island government who hosted the banquet. “Was island governor Won Hee-ryong really unaware that the Gangjeong residents suffer as 10 years’ conflict has become 100 years’ conflict because of the international fleet review?”

Another fact exposed in the beginning of June was that the Jeju island government had not made public its own truth examination report completed in 2016 on the matter of the appropriateness of the Jeju navy base location selection process. The report analyzed that the selection process was hugely wrong and procedural democracy was damaged. However, the Won Hee-ryong Island government told the anti-navy base committee chairman that it would not adapt the report unless the village anti-navy base committee was dismantled. Speechless.

The Jeju April 3rd Human Rights Issue goes to the UN

There was a South Korea-Japan–United States conference with the topic of ‘Jeju 4.3 Human Rights, Reparative justice and Reconciliation’ at the University of Pennsylvania, United States on April 29th. Bishop of Cheju (Jeju) Diocese Peter Kang U-il made a keynote speech in which he urged the United States’ honest apology which, he said, would make a moment for reconciliation and healing between Jeju and the United States.

Before that, Fabián Salvioli, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, visited Jeju to join an international symposium hosted by Jeju April 3rd related groups on March 19th. Next, a Jeju April 3rd Human Rights symposium is planned for the 1st time at the UN headquarters in New York in June. At least 30,000 Jeju islanders were killed during the Jeju April 3rd Uprising and Massacre period, March 1, 1947 to Sept. 21, 1954. Most of them were killed by South Korean military, police and right wing groups backed by the United States government.

Peace Prize for Vietnamese Survivors

On April 1, the third Jeju 4.3 Peace Prize was awarded to survivors of massacres by Korean soldiers in Vietnam, Nguyen Thi Thanh of Ha My and Nguyen Thi Thanh of Phong Nhi Phong Nhât. Both women (who happen to have the same name) have campaigned for recognition and apology by the Korean government. In April 2018 they testified at the People’s Tribunal on War Crimes by South Korean Troops during the Vietnam War in Seoul, visited the Vietnam Pieta Statue in Gangjeong, and met with survivors of the Jeju 4.3 Massacre. This year they returned to Korea for the 4.3 Peace Prize awards ceremony on April 1, then visited Gwangju and Seoul. On April 3, they joined the opening of Hankyoreh journalist Koh Kyoung Tae’s photo exhibition about the massacre in Phong Nhi Phong Nhât at the Gwangju May 18 Memorial Foundation. On April 4, the two survivors delivered a petition signed by 103 survivors and family of victims calling on the Moon Jae In government to enact truth finding investigations and restore the honor of the victims. So far, the Korean government has not issued an official apology and despite clear evidence (including photos and reports by the US military) Korean veterans groups continue to deny responsibility for the massacres.
Jeju has mountains of trash

By Joyakgol

Jeju is now an island full of trash. Tourists and visitors come and leave behind mountains of waste. People living on the island are suffering from the problems caused by over-tourism and over-development; environmental degradation, coastal pollution by untreated sewage water, trash everywhere, skyrocketing living expenses, traffic jams, bad air quality and so on.

Admittedly, Jeju does not have enough capacity to process all the trash within the island. So the provincial government made a contract with a company which smuggled three thousand tons of waste out to the Philippines. The Filipinos were outraged to find out that trash from Jeju arrived in Cebu and Mindanao. They refused to take it. The smelly contraband was shipped back to several ports of South Korea.

Jeju officials say more than nine thousand tons of trash is stored outside of the island, kept in port cities like Pyeongtaek, Kunsan and Gangjeong. This is a big disgrace and shame. There are 11 trash processing facilities (burial or burning) throughout Jeju but every facility already reached 99.9% of full capacity and there is no more space. Right now all the garbage is being compressed and just stored in a remote mountainous area. The Jeju City mayor said in a press conference that it will take at least two or three years to process 50,000 tons of stored compressed trash. But 500 tons of trash is being thrown out every day here in Jeju.

April 16 marked the 5 year anniversary of the Sewol ferry tragedy. Five years ago, the ferry sunk on its way to Jeju Island, killing 304 people of whom many were high school students. The government strangely neglected its duty to save the people. In Jeju this year, hundreds of people held a rally and marched to the harbor where the ferry was supposed to safely arrive five years ago. People chanted, “Punish the responsible! Carry out full reinvestigation immediately!” In Gangjeong, a small space for memory was organized to remember the dead and the incident. It is known that on the day of incident the ferry (managed by the National Intelligence Service) was overloaded with steel bars heading to the Jeju navy base construction site. A father whose son died in the incident has joined the memory event in Jeju every year since the incident. Photo by Kun Kang (Jeju City)

Ever since Women Cross DMZ started their DMZ peace march on May 24, 2015, International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament is remembered every year in Gangjeong on May 24. Photo by Pang Eunmi

On May 4, Peace Wind held an opening event for “Peace Wind Inn” in Gunsan. The cultural event and exhibition space was created by Father Mun Jeong Hyeon and other Peace Wind members to share with many people about peace issues, and to remember the painful loss of Haje village to the expansion of the US Kunsan Air Base there. Photo by Heo Ran.
Don’t destroy the historical site of Mt. Songaksan

By Joyakgol

Mt. Songaksan in Daejeong-eup is located at the strategic south-western tip of Jeju Island and boasts of peaceful ocean scenery and fabulous views of the islands Gapado and Marado. Imperial Japan forced laborers to build military installations in the area, such as Kamikaze boat hideouts, cave barracks, anti-air artillery bases and Alddreu airfield, turning the island into a huge military base for imperial aggression. Seotal Oreum, one of the major April 3rd Massacre sites, is located near Songaksan, too. Those historical areas still remain for the most part intact, thus attracting thousands of tourists every day, serving a crucial part of Jeju’s dark tourism.

A Chinese company is planning to build a huge hotel and resort complex in the neck of Mt. Songaksan. An environmental review was passed in late January and according to the New Ocean Town project presentation, a six-story building with 464 hotel rooms and several other buildings will be built if the Jeju Provincial Council agrees and the Governor approves.

Daejeong-eup residents heard this shocking news and formed a committee to begin collecting signatures of the residents who oppose the Chinese hotel project. Within a month, over one thousand residents participated in the campaign. Many members of the Council showed their inclination for the conservation of the area rather than development. However, Governor Won did not clearly show his position. That is why the residents expanded the campaign to gather more than 10,000 signatures, demanding to the governor to preserve the beauty and the historical lesson of Mt. Songaksan.

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to close the Jeju base and to the US government to stop the use of it.
2. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
3. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...)
4. Then share about it on social media.
5. Visit Gangjeong!
6. 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

Biennale features Jeju Artist

By Grace

Jane Jin Kaisen, a Jeju born media artist, is participating in the Venice biennale as one of three representing artists for the Korean Pavilion. Jane is known to Gangjeong community and its friends for her short film “Island of Stone (2012)” which featured an interview with Yang Yoon Mo on Gureombi rock. This year’s Korean Pavilion at the biennale, curated by Hyun Jin Kim, is showing the works by siren eun young jung, Jane Jin Kaisen and Hwayeon Nam under the title “History Has Failed Us, but No Matter”. Jane’s new film ‘Community of Parting’ uses the ancient Korean myth of Bari to create a complex mosaic of the stories of diaspora women.

Every year for Passion Week, the Catholic Church holds a special foot-washing mass beside Gangjeong river and a stations of the cross walking pilgrimage around Gangjeong Village. Participants remember not only Jesus suffering on the cross but also God’s presence during many episodes of suffering in the struggle against the navy base. Photo by Pang Eun Mi.

From May 7 to June 8, the Gangjeong Peace Center displayed Lee Seungmin’s exhibition “Hanako’s song / the life time of a warship.” It included drawings, a mask, an interactive sculpture with a lever that makes a toy policeman beat a prisoner, reminiscent of Jeju 4.3, and the model of a Russian warship that was converted into a Japanese ferry boat which carried a quarter of the population of Jeju to Osaka in the 1930s before it was sunk by American bombing in the Second World War. Pictured is Sunkyung’s performance at the opening of the exhibition. Photo by Yang Sang.

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