

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

December
2014

Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

Published by Gangjeong Village in Jeju,
South Korea



Mayor's message for New Year's Day event

Image: Lee Wooki
Article by Grace

On New Year's Eve the fifth Sun Rise Festival took place in Gangjeong community center. Until last year the cultural festival with various concerts and performances was a focus, however, the village committee decided to compensate the festivity this year in order to concentrate on the ancestral rites of Confucian tradition at 12 o'clock. The ritual prayer ceremony for peace in Gangjeong village took place in the shrine at the entrance of Meotburi. The previous traditional annual event was stopped by the Gangjeong village people in 2008. By reviving the tradition that was ceased due to conflicts among the villagers around the naval base issue, Mr. Go Gwon-II, vice chief of the village hoped 2015 would be the year of harmony in Gangjeong. He said, "We will be praying sincerely and wholeheartedly for serenity. The life and peace that our ancestors bless us with will help us to rebuild the peaceful and harmonious village that Gangjeong once was."

Those who participated in the rites were asked to clean themselves prior and to not drink alcohol. The dinner that began at 5pm and all shared food together before encountering the spirits of the ancestors. It was quite noticeable that over thirty members of the Gangjeong Women's Association prepared food together, which had been a rare sight of collaboration since the conflicts began. Mr. Choi Yong Bum, a co-vice chief, expects the New Year to be a time of collaboration among the five organizations in Gangjeong, the Village Committee, the Elder's Association, the Young Men's Association, the Women's Association and the Folklore Conservation Association. He couldn't hide his expectation when he said, "I think when these organizations work in firm solidarity once again the bond among our villagers will be stronger. That gives me a lot of hope and excitement." In fact, the village committee's

decision to hold the event, albeit minimized by the villagers themselves without the support from outside, was meant to encourage the active participation of the villagers, and it was fruitful.

Cho Kyung Chul, the village chief, shared a new year's greetings with the village on January 1st: "The year of sheep has just begun. We have successfully finished the Prayer ceremony for peace in Gangjeong village thanks to the support from our villagers as well as the participants from inside and outside of Jeju. I sincerely wish each family all kinds of good luck in the New Year. It's already the 9th year since our struggle against the naval base began, however, I see the biggest hope in the fact that we are still living together in our village. I'll do my best in order to facilitate better communication among the villagers and to make Gangjeong a more livable place. Happy New Year!"

Encountering of Nanjing and Jeju's suffering: "People for Demilitarized Jeju Island of Peace"

By Emily Wang

The event was held on December 13th, 2014, the memorial day of the Nanjing Massacre as a way to remember the victims of Nanjing massacre from Alddreu Airfield, which was followed by a seminar in Daejeong city.

Alddreu airfield was a navy air base developed in 1926-30 during the Japanese Imperial period and was used to support the Japanese forces' invasion of China. In 1937, Alddreu airfield was used to reach and bomb both Shanghai and Nanjing causing up to 300,000 deaths. The history connection between Jeju and Nanjing was not well-known by both countries respectively and even fewer people were aware that Jeju was a part of this vicious historical conflict.

This history is particularly meaningful due to the current militarization in Jeju Island where the new naval base is under construction. The special event held to remember the Nanjing massacre reminds us that both the victims and offenders of war are not divided by nationality but by those who take action for peace, action for war or choose

to ignore.

The movement to "Demilitarize Jeju Island for Peace" has drawn memories from the suffering from the Jeju 4-3 incident, Jeju's militarization history during the Japanese colonization time and from the current Gangjeong Naval Base issue to show the resistance to state violence and the restoration of Jeju's identity as the proclaimed island of peace. From the 1st to 5th annual gathering of the "People for Demilitarized Jeju Island of Peace", we could see the effort that has been put into the reflection of Jeju's victimized history compared to the present time.

Through the 6th and most recent gathering, seeing Nanjing in China from Alddreu in Jeju, it was inspiring to see the movement intends to overcome its own suffering and actively get involved in the suffering of others. We regard it as a necessary and meaningful step for both the "Demilitarized Jeju Island of Peace Movement" and the "Inter-Island Solidarity for Just Peace Movement".



Image : Gonyang

Citizens from Jeju, Korea, Taiwan, China, Australia... participated voluntarily in the commemoration ceremony of the encountering of Nanjing and Jeju's suffering.

Navy plans crackdown on 24 hour sit-in tent

By Park Yong-Sung,
Gangjeong peace activist

Despite people's strong demand to cut the whole 2015 Jeju naval base construction budget, the South Korean National Assembly passed all the budget of about 290 million USD on Dec. 2nd. The decision came with an unreliable condition of so-called 'occasionally allocated' which means that the Navy shall only be given a budget for military residence construction inside the village, only if the villagers and the Island government are consulted and agree to. However, in regards to people's sit-in tent (in front of the military residence construction area and outside of the base construction site), the shameless Navy has sent warning notices to the Village Association,

three times in December alone. They warned people of forcefully dismantling the tent unless people volunteer to dismantle it themselves. Eventually, the Navy postponed the crackdown plan for early next year.

However, villagers and activists are unyieldingly holding sit-ins, totally stopping the entrance of construction vehicles into the construction areas for military residence, military detour road, and cruise terminal, a part of the base project. Not to mention activists throughout Jeju and peace-loving people nationwide and in the world are visiting here in support of and expressing solidarity.

Fire rises in furnace in front of the sit-in tent early in the dawn. A day of sit-in tent life is so busy; to clean inside and around the tent, take 100 bows in front of the Peace Center, gather fire woods, install protest banners sent from all over the country, share information and discussions about the current situation in the village, and carry out public relation to Olle tourists passing by. Despite the business of the tangerine-harvest season, villagers deliver food and snacks to the people in the tent every meal and gather together around tent every night. To save the sit-in tent from the navy's plan to dismantle it is to save the village.

A priest's getting pushed down by a construction vehicle and the negligence of police

A daily mass is celebrated at 11am at the main gate of construction site for the naval base. As always, Catholic priests, nuns and brothers bring a plastic chair, put it in the middle of the gate and sit on it during the whole mass. Like always, the police force also approach and remove them by lifting them up to on the side roads repeatedly. There was a very exceptional incident at the gate on December 4th. One truck pushed down Fr. Kim Seonghwan sitting in the middle while the truck was driving out of the gate. This is a dangerous situation that the police force is supposed to prevent. Upon the people's protest to it, the field chief of the police responded to them in high handed manner rather blaming Fr. Kim.

Republic Of Korea Navy Chief involved in corrupt arms purchase

The villagers remember Admiral Hwang Ki Chul, the incumbent chief of Naval Operations of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy since September, 2013 because of his lie. Admiral Hwang stated that the navy would never build a military residence inside Gangjeong village unless it was agreed with by the villagers, however construction for military housing was commenced.

Recently the Admiral was denounced by Korean media for his scandalous involvement in the purchase of an outdated sonar system. The system was purchased for the 1st domestic-made salvage rescue ship, Tongyoung in 2009, which was during the period that the Admiral served as the head of the vessel project division at the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA). It was later discovered that the sonar system was very outdated and made during the 1970's by a US arms company and purchased by a ROK delivery company at a reported cost of 4.1 billion won, however it was later known to cost merely 200 million won. The state auditing agency has asked the ROK Ministry of National Defense to take disciplinary action against Hwang. At least nine individuals, most of who are linked by personal connections as naval academy graduates, are involved in the acquisition of the outdated sonar system. These nine individuals have been indicted along with a captain and a commander who were imprisoned for accepting bribes. The Tongyoung was built due to the Cheonan ship incident in 2010 but could not be used in the Sewol ferry incident in 2014 due to its improper sonar system.

Love is the only answer

By Park Yong-Sung

The relationship between the security guards and the Navy & the police are like crocodiles and crocodile birds in Gangjeong Village. The security guards have become puppets of the Navy and shields of the police in the name of protecting the naval base construction.

There was one young security guard who irritated peace activists and fought numerously with the villagers. He left Gangjeong two years ago, and everyone here completely forgot about him. But just recently, and unexpectedly, he appeared again in Gangjeong in a rainy and dark night. He visited us with his wife in the sit-in tent in front of the new construction site of the military housing.

"You are still doing great! Lately, I got married to the girl I met in Gangjeong. We were both curious about you guys and wanted to meet the priests, so we made a stop today on our honeymoon trip. After I left Gangjeong, I sometimes remember you guys and those hard times when we were in fights. When I saw peace activists and priests today, you all seemed same as always even though you are now in a more difficult situation than before. We, the safe guards and the police, did really mean things to you all. In return, sometimes, we were also rebuked by you guys.

I still often think about one woman peace activist who rebuked me a lot. She told me about what would happen to this village once the naval base is built. She said a lot of bars would open and also prostitution would go on, and the area would end up becoming like the US Army base in Yongsan, Seoul. Now I can understand what she means. When I returned to the mainland, I worked with another security service company for a while, and then I quit it after my wife got pregnant. Having a child changed my mind and I didn't want to hurt others and do harm on them anymore. Now I am a car salesman. It is great to see you all again, really!" Perhaps, love is the only answer?



Image : Park Yong-Sung- 'Stop the cruise terminal construction without a project information briefing session to villagers!' The struggle by villagers and Island people to stop the resumption of the construction for military residence and cruise terminal after the navy's expected crackdown early next year continues.



Image :Haku- It is the tangerine harvest season in Gangjeong. Many Gangjeong villagers grow tangerines and that are known to be of best quality produce in Jeju. Gangjeong peace activists also get busy harvesting in tangerine groves and working at packing houses.

Trial Updates



On December 5, the Jeju local 1st court handed down the decision for the Special Obstruction of Justice charge a sentence of 1 year imprisonment, suspended for two years to ex-mayor Kang Dong-Kyun and Mr. Lee Jong-Hwa, a peace activist. For the charge of obstruction of business the court found both Kang and Kim not guilty. They had both been resisting the Seogwipo City's forceful crackdown of the villagers' sit-in tent that was located in front of the Jeju naval base construction site on May 10, 2013. At that time, Kang and Kim respectively chained their necks together with the tent and vehemently resisted the state power's to dismantle the tent. Hundreds of policemen were mobilized for this crackdown and they arrested the two along with one other villager and an activist on the day.

Palestine, Come and See...

By Father Pat

The Kairos document (2009) is a statement by Palestinian Christians calling on people to 'Come and See' and be witnesses to the realities of people living under Israeli military occupation and to walk in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their search for justice is what prompted me to join members of Palestine Peace and Solidarity (PPS) on a trip to Palestine in November. While the prospect of visiting the Holy Land as a pilgrim for the first time was exciting I was deeply conscious of the call by the churches to 'take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land' and allow my eyes to be opened. The truth is indeed there for everyone to see but sadly many countries led by the United States turn a blind eye to the Israeli colonial occupation and are therefore complicit in war crimes.

One particular village we visited was Kufr Qaddoum (Nablus) where the people are engaged in a 4 year long struggle against the Israeli forces who arbitrarily closed a road in 2004 in order to protect the 'security needs' of the Kedumin settlement. The road closure has caused huge disruption to the lives of the villagers! The weekly Friday protests have resulted in over 175 arrests, 500,000 shekels (130,000 US dollars) in fines and 12 people

currently serving prison sentences for protesting the road closure and resisting the occupation-early morning house raids by soldiers are a constant feature of daily life seeking out young people whose sin is 'participation in the protests'.

Incalculable damage has been inflicted on the family of Mr Wallid whose house happens to be situated closest to the Kedumin settlement. The family has suffered huge losses by way of dead livestock-15 sheep and one pregnant cow and the destruction of bee hives due to tear gas inhalation! They also suffered the loss of 100 olive trees which were burned to the ground by the military.

They told us that the windows in the house were smashed in with such great regularity that in the end they decided just to bar up the windows and not replace them. "In entering the house the military vandalize everything in sight while using the rooftop as a sniper position from where they shoot tear gas and rubber bullets on protestors down below." Sadly the story of Mr. Wallid's family is not an isolated one but all too familiar and it is my duty to retell the story of his family and the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice.

Korea loses Father James Sinnott

By Regina Pyon

American priest Father James Sinnott, who exposed the truth on the manipulated 'In-hyok-dang' case and 'the judicial killing' of 8 innocent men by Park Chung-hee regime in 1975, died on December 23 in Seoul. Father Jim came to Korea in 1960 as a missionary but was deported in 1975 for activities opposing the execution of the alleged 8 "People's revolutionary Party" members. Father Sinnott worked hard to advocate for human rights in Korea during the military dictatorship stating that he found it difficult to answer what is good in the world but if you ask him what is evil he will answer confidently 'the Park regime'. He was recognised for his support of the suppressed and invited back to Korea in 2002 for his retirement. The Mass for his funeral was held in the Church of Repentance and Atonement in Paju, 50 kilometers northwest of Seoul, near the border of North and South Korea as recognition of how much Father Sinnott wanted reunification of Korea.



Image source: Park Yong-Sung

On Christmas Eve, Gangjeong people gathered to celebrate the Christmas and express gratitude for great food and warmth from one another standing in a circle around the fire by the sit-in tent in front of the new construction site of military housing.



Image source: Park In-Chun

Metburi- The damaged caisson block is being recovered by a salvage boat.

Metburi report

By Park In-Chun

On July 7th this year, a small-scaled Typhoon Neoguri landed in Gangjeong and dislodged three caissons at the end of South breakwater. Salvage boat has recently recovered two of those blocks leaving the last one behind, which is being prepared for a move as well. Having observed the relatively effortless process of recovering the damaged caissons past few months, I couldn't help myself from comparing it to the case of seven broken caissons after Typhoon Bolaven hit Gangjeong back in 2012. The Navy and Samsung then came up with the solution to dismantle the damaged caissons in water, neglecting the option to retrieve them for their demolition outside of the water, which, considering how much pollution it has caused on the underwater life of Gangjeong sea, they could have at least let the dust protection filter dust to a certain extent. They said heavy weight of the caissons was the main reason

for their decision not to recover: those seven caissons weighed only 8900 tons each, not permanently settled and without the fill-in. Unless there has been a significant technological breakthrough since 2012, which is hardly possible, the navy and Samsung have proven themselves completely contradictory to their own logic by allowing the recent recovery of two caissons, which were far heavier: those weigh 18,000 tons (40,000 tons with the fill-in) and filling was complete for two of them. I don't think it's too wild to guess that the navy and Samsung wanted to hide something from the public by dismantling them underwater, which could be related to a former caisson worker's exposure to the unreliable construction of caissons in October 2012. As five bottom boards of the damaged caissons from 2012 remain today, I find it significant and urgent to reexamine this matter.

United Progressive Party

By Dongseok

On December 19, the Unified Progressive Party was disbanded in a historic ruling by the Constitutional Court. The left-wing party was formed in December 2011 and its goal is to achieve 'progressive democracy'. The Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Korean government requested the disbandment ruling in Nov. 2013, claiming the UPP's goals and activities were 'pro-North Korea' and thus violated the Constitution. The government's petition to disband the UPP stems from a controversy that several party members were accused of plotting an insurrection.

But many people wonder how much of a threat the UPP was to maintaining law and order in South Korea. In fact, the court ordering a dissolution of a political party is the suppression of democracy. It kills the diversity and makes people feared about expressing their political opinions. The party stood with Gangjeong in solidarity. South Korea is going backwards to authoritarian era where military dictatorship ruled the society. The UPP disbandment clearly shows that. Shame on the repressive South Korean government and judicial branch.

International Solidarity



Image : John Wagner

Peace activists from many struggles gather in Carrboro, North Carolina to learn and be inspired by the Peace/Life resistance community in Gangjeong Village. Among the group are members of the 'Raging Grannies', older women activists who perform original peace and justice songs at area gatherings.



Image : Fr. Kim Seonghwan

Korean people prepare for the upcoming long and cold winter by making a lot of Kimchi which is the most favorite side dish for Korean people. Many Gangjeong supporters have sent all ingredients for Kimchi and even people to make it with the Gangjeong people. Thus, making Kimchi all together for the winter has become newly restored tradition in the village.



Image : Joyakgol

This is a photo of the Ghosts of Jeju screening in Busan on Nov 29. Since the official release of the Korean version of the film in August, there have been 20 screenings around the country and an estimated 1,000 audiences have watched the film so far.

Global Days of Listening

By Lina

On the 10th of December, International Human Rights Day, the Gangjeong International Team participated in the Global Days of Listening video conference call. Global Days of Listening is an active listening event to share the ordinary voices of those whose homeland is occupied by violence. During the conference call, we were connected to peace activists from different parts of the US, Oslo, Kabul and Gaza. We had the chance to brief the participants about the current situation in Gangjeong and the new struggle against the military housing. Many of the participants were interested in the situation on Jeju Island and asked many questions. We were also updated on the situation of the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul. The Afghan Peace Volunteers is a nonviolent multi-ethnic community working for peace. We learned about their main project of schooling children working who are forced to work on the streets.

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

- Created and designed by the Gangjeong International Team, special thanks to Everyday Practice.
- Published by the Gangjeong Village Association, 4417 Gangjeong-dong, the Life and Peace village, Seogwipo-si, Jeju, the Peace Island. Email: gjengnews@gmail.com
- Special thanks to Gangjeong Friends for financial support.

Introducing Gangjeong struggle through movies

Approximately half a dozen documentary films have been made about the peace movement in Gangjeong to date, some of which have been broadcasted and shown in theaters. The first notable movie 'JamDocu Gangjeong' was released in 2011 and made by five independent filmmakers. It was at this time when the battle to save Gangjeong was very heated and the film helped to catch the attention of the media and spread the word. This was followed by Award-winning director Cho Sung-bong's feature film 'Gureombi, The Wind Is Blowing' which was premiered at the Busan International Film Festival in 2012 and showed critical points of the struggle for peace.

Regis Tremblay's 'The Ghosts of Jeju', completed at the end of 2013, has reached several thousands of viewers across the US and Korea. 'The Ghost of Jeju' focuses on US militarism and the negative impact it has had on Jeju islanders since World War II. Recently, an Irish film crew produced a 25-minute film 'Jeju's Aching Heart' which was aired December 8, 2014 in Ireland and warns of the possible escalating tensions in East Asia due to the construction of the Jeju naval base.

These films deal with the hard facts and the suffering of residents, but a new type of documentary called 'Mira Story' tells a remarkable story of a young woman in her 20's from Seoul. She has no job and happens to board a ship bound to Jeju with hundreds of people who send tens of thousands of books to Gangjeong, for a cultural project with the aim to transform the village into a non-militarized peace town. This film will be open in theaters on January 15, 2015 and it has been stated by the farmer/poet Kim Sung-kyu that 'Mira Story' is the best film ever made about his beloved village.



Image : Emily Wang

Several volunteering English classes have been carried out with a popular participation. "I want to introduce this beautiful village and inspiring struggle to the international visitors by myself", "I think as a peace activist, there's no way but to be an international peace activist..." These are some of the beautiful words I have heard in this Village of Life and Peace. We are proud that the Gangjeong international team could lose our function to guide the internationals due to this kind of cool awareness by each individual here.

Laid-off workers from Ssangyong Motor Company

By Dongseok

Lee Chang-geun and Kim Jeong-uk, who were dismissed by the Ssangyong Motor Company climbed a 70-meter smokestack at the company's factory in Pyeongtaek on December 13 and have remained there in protest since. The Ssangyong Motor Workers' Union said the protest was planned to deliver the message that the laid-off workers want their jobs back after the company refused to have talks with the union members and the Supreme Court ruled that the dismissal of the workers was valid on November 13, 2014.

The aerial protest by the Ssangyong workers marked 2002 days since their strike began on May 21, 2009. The Ssangyong Motor Company has come forward to negotiate on December 24 with the condition that the protest is halted.

