

URGENT ACTION

OKINAWA ACTIVIST RELEASED ON BAIL AFTER FIVE MONTHS

Hiroji Yamashiro, 64 years of age, has been released on bail after five months in detention without being able to see his family. Arrested for his role in protests against new U.S. military construction projects in Okinawa, his next court hearing is scheduled for 27 March 2017.

Hiroji Yamashiro was released on bail on the evening of 18 March 2017, a day after his first court hearing. Arrested on 17 October 2017 for his role in protests against the construction of new U.S. Marine Corps facilities near Takae, Okinawa, Hiroji Yamashiro had been held in detention for five months under restrictive conditions and without access to his family. The first and only time he was able to see his wife was on 13 March 2017 for 20 minutes, less than one week before his release.

Upon his release, Hiroji Yamashiro was finally able to read the over 400 letters of encouragement sent to him, as the detention centre had banned all external communications. At a press conference on 18 March 2017, Hiroji Yamashiro thanked everyone for the support he received from Okinawa and beyond and went on to say:

“The detention was over five months, but I had been holding my sprit while being encouraged by my lawyers. Today around 6:30pm, staff of detention informed me that ‘though it is not office hours, you may be released.’ Since I thought I had to continue fighting in dentition till August or September until the court procedure further progresses, I’m so happy and feel that it’s like a dream.

The charges against me as are in the wider sense, oppression to the people of Okinawa and tramples upon the feelings of people. Though it will be a long fight, I will continue to fight for my innocence and demand for the justice of Okinawa.”

Hiroji Yamashiro is the chairman of ‘Okinawa Peace Action Center’, a non-violent peace movement in Okinawa, and is part of the ‘All Okinawa Council’ which fundamentally opposes the building of the military base. His next court hearing is scheduled for 27 March 2017.

We will continue to monitor the situation, however no further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 23/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa22/5789/2017/en/>

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