

**28 October 2013**

**To: World Council of Churches**

Delegates of Member Churches

Public Issues Committee

**Re: Calling for the Issue of a Public Statement for Peace against Asia-Pacific Maritime Militarization - *“Guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79)***

We are writing to urge the delegates of Member Churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to seriously consider issuing a public statement on building peace in the Asia-Pacific against maritime militarization. Today, we are witnessing a rise of militarism under the name of peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. Tension between the economic and military expansion of China and the corresponding the U.S. “Asian Pivot” strategy has sparked an escalation in the war-profit industry and an arms race for global military dominance. This has left in its wake conflict and suffering, and the destruction of land, cultures, and traditions across the Asia-Pacific. These false idols of security and economic expansion runs counter to the justice, peace, and life that are the core values of the World Council of Churches and Christians everywhere.

A key example of the impact of this militarization can be seen in Gangjeong Village, Jeju Island, Republic of Korea. One of the oldest and most naturally beautiful villages of Jeju, the unique eco-systems of Gangjeong are a showcase of God’s creative spirit, home to numerous endangered species and the world’s largest temperate soft coral forest. Since 2007, without the villagers’ consent, it has become the site of massive naval base construction. If built, the Jeju naval base will be a critical outpost of the ROK-Japan-U.S. maritime military alliance targeting China. As a result, Jeju, ironically known as “the Island of Peace”, will become a primary target, leading to devastating loss of life and destruction.

Dedicated to the care of creation and the spread of life, the struggle against the base in Gangjeong is an open and truly ecumenical/inter-faith resistance for justice. Catholics, Protestants, Quakers, Anabaptists, Buddhists, and Shamanists have come together to create a vital community, marked by vibrant practice of faith and respect for different traditions without dilution or conflict. Despite police crackdowns on religious expression and assembly, Catholic priests hold daily mass in front of the construction site, Protestants have prayer services, and Shamans perform traditional rituals. The ingredients that hold it all together are a steadfast desire for God's justice, a dream of life together, and a commitment to nonviolent peacemaking. We hope that the struggle against the Jeju naval base construction, which is a microcosm of the maritime militarization of the Asia-Pacific, can be a call to Christians and all people of God to return to the path of peace.

It is now urgent for churches to respond to the escalating maritime militarization and violence in the Asia-Pacific region that runs counter to the call of the people of God to peacemaking. As mentioned in an “Ecumenical Call for Just Peace,” churches should become

builders of a culture of peace while recognizing the promise of peace is a core value of all religions. The farmers of Gangjeong Village on Jeju Island are at the forefront of such a faithful realization of the Kingdom of God. Let's not turn their plowshares into swords.

Therefore, we call upon the World Council of Churches to:

- Issue a public statement at the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of World Council of Churches, formally expressing its grave concern regarding maritime militarization in the Asia-Pacific which is a threat to regional and global just peace;
- Urge the government of the Republic of Korea to stop the Jeju naval base construction and focus on peaceful approaches to cooperation;
- Call upon the government of the Republic of Korea to protect and promote all human rights including the right to peace and environment of the people of Gangjeong Village;
- Appeal to the churches and national ecumenical councils in the region to take serious measures to stop the arms race and make the Pacific the Sea of Peace.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. Dong-Kyun Kang  
Village Mayor  
Gangjeong Village Association



Ms. Young-hee Jeong  
Chairwoman  
Village Women's Committee



Mr. Gi-Ryong Hong  
Co-convenor  
Jeju Pan-Island Committee for Stop of Military Base and for Realization of Peace Island



Ms. Ri-ri Hong  
Co-convenor



Mr. Taeho Lee  
Co-convenor  
National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island



Ms. Hye-ran Oh  
Co-convenor

**\* Contact Details:**

Ms. Gayoon Baek, National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island, [gayoon@pspd.org](mailto:gayoon@pspd.org), +82 (0)10-9436-0316

Mr. Paco Michelson, Gangjeong International Team, [gangjeongintl@gmail.com](mailto:gangjeongintl@gmail.com), +82 (0)10-9229-4054