

61st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Side Event

Rights of Indigenous People in Asia
Beyond the "Indigenous" Myth

Date: 18 March 2026 Time: 17:00-18:00 Place: Room XI

Organizer: Japan Society for the History Textbook

Moderator: Mr. Satoru Nakamura 仲村覚

Speakers:

Mr. Hajime Zaha 座波一

Mr. Ryuichi Sunagawa 砂川竜一

Mr. Rei Hashiguchi 橋口玲

Mr. Tai Yamada 山田泰

Mr. Ryonosuke Nakahara 中原涼之介

Mr. Keiichiro Hayashi 林慶一郎



***** Statements *****

<Mr. Satoru Nakamura 仲村 覚>



Welcome to Room XI. I am Satoru Nakamura, your moderator. First, please look at the map.

Okinawa is located at the southwestern tip of Japan, adjacent to Taiwan and the Philippines—it is the "Keystone of the Pacific."

Today, a specific country in Asia is launching a sophisticated "International Legal Warfare" by exploiting UN human rights mechanisms to seize this critical hub.

The country is weaponizing UN General Assembly Resolution 80/106, which established the International Day against Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations.

They are exploiting the "expansion of definitions" to redefine Okinawa as a "modern colony."

This is an attack designed to invalidate international accords following World War II—the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Okinawa Reversion Agreement—through UN administrative processes.

The country's goal is clear: to have Okinawa internationally registered as a "colony."

This would allow them to redefine Japan's Self-Defense Forces and U.S. bases as "illegal occupying forces suppressing indigenous people."

Currently, at the C-24 in New York, they are pushing for rule changes to bypass the Japanese government and negotiate directly with activists.

This is a "legal encirclement" designed to strip Japan of its defense sovereignty and bring Okinawa under the country's influence.

To block this Legal Warfare and protect Okinawa, we have brought the truth of Okinawa with us today.

Mr. Zaha, a former Assembly member, speaks for local democracy. Pastor Sunagawa offers a warning from the religious community. Attorney Hashiguchi, representing the Royal family, rejects the "Indigenous" label. And students from the University of Tokyo will academically deconstruct this "Colonial Myth."

They are the legitimate representatives of Okinawa, unlike the 0.1% of activists being used by the country. If UN rules are misused and international treaties that underpin post-war peace are unilaterally rewritten, every sovereign nation will become a target.

Through the upcoming speeches, I urge you to see the reality of this "sovereignty-seizure maneuver" by the specific country.

Now, I pass the floor to our first speaker, Mr. Hajime Zaha.

<Mr. Hajime Zaha 座波 一>



Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. My name is Hajime Zaha. I served as a member of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly for over 20 years.

I was recently shocked to learn that the UN has issued "Indigenous Recommendations" regarding Okinawa six times already.

Without the knowledge of myself or the Prefectural Assembly, the UN has unilaterally labeled the people of Okinawa as "Indigenous."

Furthermore, I am deeply alarmed that Okinawa is being considered for the UN's "decolonization list" without our consent.

Okinawa hosts U.S. military bases, and our politics are sharply divided between pro-base and anti-base groups.

The presence of these bases splits public opinion and remains the most contentious issue in Okinawan politics.

Most likely, anti-base politicians are weaponizing the "Indigenous right to self-determination" as a tool to remove the bases.

However, I fear that if the people of Okinawa and the Japanese government ignore this, it will lead to an irreversible disaster.

I have received information that there are moves to designate Okinawa as the world's 18th "colony" at the C-24 meeting this coming June.¹

Moreover, we hear that the "Indigenization" and "decolonization" of Okinawa could be officially recognized at the General Assembly in September.

Why are these designations proceeding at the UN without Okinawans present, and entirely without our knowledge?

We, the people of Okinawa, do not consider ourselves to be "Indigenous people."

We are Japanese. 99.9% of Okinawan citizens are certain of this identity.³

I ask this Council to thoroughly investigate who is behind this move to label Okinawans as "Indigenous" and for what purpose.

If necessary, we are prepared to provide information regarding the forces attempting to force the withdrawal of U.S. bases.

We ask for your understanding and cooperation to protect the truth of Okinawa. Thank you.

<Mr. Ryuichi Sunagawa 砂川 竜一>



1. Introduction: As a Christian Leader in Okinawa

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ryuichi Sunagawa, Pastor of Tsukishiro Christian Church in Okinawa.

From 2020 to 2022, I served as the Chairman of the Okinawa Pastors' Association.

Today, I am here as a religious leader representing Okinawa to share a vital truth with you.

2. Okinawan Identity and the History of Reversion

First, let me state clearly: We, the people of Okinawa, are Japanese.

Following the defeat in 1945, Okinawa was placed under U.S. military rule for 27 years.

However, in 1972, we achieved our reversion to our motherland, Japan, by our own will.

This did not happen automatically. It was the result of the people of Okinawa uniting and crying out: "We are Japanese! Please let us return to our motherland!"

3. Rebuttal to the False "Indigenous" Narrative

Currently, claims are being made at the United Nations and other platforms that "the people of Okinawa are indigenous."

However, this is NOT the consensus of the Okinawan people.

Whether Christians, Buddhists, Shintoists, or those who practice ancestor worship—

Regardless of religion, the overwhelming majority of us identify ourselves as Japanese.

It is a historical fact that at the time of reversion in 1972, voices calling for independence were virtually non-existent.

4. Security Concerns and Threats to Human Rights

If the international community accepts the voices of a tiny minority (less than 0.01%) who seek to separate Okinawa from Japan as "the will of the people," it will lead to tragedy.

If Okinawa is separated from Japan, U.S. forces and Japan's Self-Defense Forces would be forced to withdraw.

It is obvious which power would move into the "power vacuum" created by their absence.

We are deeply concerned that the human rights suppression and genocide currently seen in regions like Uyghur and Tibet would be repeated in Okinawa.

5. Conclusion: An Appeal to the International Community

Please do not be misled by the false narrative that Okinawa is "under colonial rule."

Please do not separate us from our beloved motherland, Japan.

To prevent Okinawa from ever becoming a place of tragedy again, I sincerely ask you to listen to our true voice.

Thank you very much.

<Mr. Rei Hashiguchi 橋口 玲>



I am a Japanese attorney and serve as the legal counsel for Mr. Mamoru Sho, the 23rd Head of the Sho Royal Family of the Ryukyus. On behalf of the Head, I must clearly state our position: the people of Okinawa are Japanese citizens and are NOT an "indigenous people" separate from the Japanese nation.

We oppose the UN recommendation based on historical truths and scientific evidence.

[Science & Culture] Science proves our identity. Recent whole-genome analysis shows that the people of Okinawa share the same ancestors as mainland Japanese—the "Jomon" people.

We are an essential part of the Japanese archipelago group.

Culturally, our languages share a single root.

In particular, the language of the Heian period branched into Ryukyu, and its beautiful ancient phonology is still preserved today. We are not a separate ethnic group; we are sisters within the same Japanese cultural family.

[History] The integration of Okinawa was a legitimate process based on a peaceful and voluntary agreement. The "Ryukyu Disposition" of 1879 was by no means an illegal suppression or coercion from the outside.

Looking toward the future of the Okinawan people, my client's ancestor, King Sho Tai, the last king, chose

to belong to Japan.

The current Head, Mr. Mamoru Sho, defines this decision not as the "fall of a kingdom," but as a "historic decision to choose integration into the nation of Japan."

The 220,000 signatures in the movement against trusteeship before the post-war peace treaty are the ultimate proof that we chose to be Japanese by our own will.

"Okinawa is one with Japan." I conclude with the powerful words of the Head of the Family, Mr. Mamoru Sho:

"Identifying Okinawans as an 'indigenous people' is not only factually incorrect but also dangerous, as it could be exploited to support the groundless claim that 'Okinawa used to be a vassal state of China and therefore belongs to China.' We are not an indigenous people; we are Japanese."

The Sho Royal Family constantly and fervently prays for the peace, stability, and happiness of Okinawa.

We urge the international community to look beyond political agendas and hear this voice of truth. Thank you.

<Mr. Tai Yamada 山田 泰>



My name is Thai Yamada. I am a university student from Japan and a founder of Ugo no Shu, a student organization at the University of Tokyo focused on history, diplomacy, and national security.

I speak today not as a government representative, but as a young person who seeks peace, truth, and an international order that does not reward political manipulation.

The Human Rights Council was created to protect those who truly suffer from oppression, persecution, war, and the denial of basic human dignity. It was not created to advance political narratives designed to divide nations. It was not created to lend moral legitimacy to strategic propaganda. That is its mission, and that is its responsibility. And yet, the narrative surrounding Okinawa shows how the language of human rights can be misused to distort history and undermine national sovereignty.

Let us be clear. Okinawa has regional traditions, historical experiences, and cultural expressions of its own. But that does not make Okinawa separate from Japan. Linguistically, the Ryukyuan languages belong to the same Japonic language family as Japanese. Culturally and historically, Okinawa has developed through deep ties with Japan over many centuries. Genetically as well, Okinawan people belong to the broader population history of the Japanese archipelago, even if there is regional variation from mainland populations. Recent research describes Hondo and Ryukyu as major Japanese subpopulations, not as unrelated peoples.

Beyond these linguistic, cultural, and genetic realities, there is also a historical fact that must not be erased. Postwar Okinawan history was not simply a story of separation from Japan. It was also a story of determined efforts by many Okinawans to return to Japan. Under U.S. administration, Okinawans organized, appealed, and campaigned for reversion. That history matters. It shows that the truth of postwar Okinawa is not a

fabricated narrative of detachment from Japan, but the lived will of many Okinawans who sought return to their own country.

And yet, despite this history, we continue to see language in international human rights forums that frames Okinawa in ways that align with separatist narratives. They are not addressing a real injustice; they are inventing a problem where none exists and using it to make division. Japan has repeatedly rejected that position, stating clearly that people born in or living in Okinawa are fully equal Japanese nationals and that it does not recognize them as an indigenous people under its legal position.

So let me be absolutely clear:

Okinawa is not a tool in anyone's narrative war. The people of Okinawa are not pieces on a geopolitical chessboard. Human rights language must not be used as camouflage for political fragmentation.

Such political misuse hollows out the authority of the Human Rights Council itself and, in the end, amounts to abandoning those who truly need protection and relief.

That is why this issue matters not only for Japan, but for the credibility of the entire human rights system.

My generation does not want human rights turned into a weapon of division. We want truth. We want peace.

We want sovereignty to be respected. And we want international institutions to confront real abuses with seriousness, honesty, and integrity.

If this Council wishes to retain its credibility, it must return to its original purpose.

Human rights exist to protect human beings — not to fracture nations through narrative manipulation.

Thank you.

<Mr. Ryonosuke Nakahara 中原 涼之介>



Good evening.

I am Ryonosuke Nakahara, currently a university student too.

I believe that we are the ones who will be shaping the world tomorrow.

As students, we do have a responsibility to consider the future we will live in.

Recently, we see propaganda from outsiders that damage the harmony, trust and stability on which we all depend. It is my responsibility to ensure that the future of Japan does not fall into the hands of separatists.

My concern comes from a very simple conviction: the future of Japan should not be shaped by the forces that divide people from the outside.

Okinawa has played a significant role in Japanese history. It has cultural memory, traditions, pain, and pride.

It is important to recognize the value of these perspectives.

However, respect is not the same as reduction.

Respect is not the same as speaking over people.

Identity is not a weapon.
It is not a tool.
It is not a flag to be waved for someone else's diplomatic destination.
First of all, identity belongs to the people themselves.
No outside actor has the right to decide what that community really is.
People are more than symbols.
More than narratives.
And more than pieces in a political argument.
That is where my concern begins.
That is why I cannot stay silent.
For me, this is not an abstract debate.
It is not a theory.
It is about the future of Japanese society.
I understand that words have consequences.
Repeated words shape perception.
Perception shapes attitudes.
Attitudes shape politics.
And politics, in the end, shapes the future people must live in.

So when I hear narratives from the outside who divide the nation and people living there, I do not hear mere opinion.

I hear the risk of mistrust.

I hear the risk of oversimplification.

And I hear the risk of a future built not on understanding, but on division.

Not on democracy, but on the rule by power.

I do not want that future for Japan.

I do not want our generation to inherit a country in which social trust is weakened by labels imposed from the outside.

Real solidarity begins with listening.

Real humility begins with restraint.

And real justice begins when we resist the temptation to turn people into symbols for causes they did not choose. We cannot accept narratives that divide people from the outside and call that justice.

So this evening, I ask for something simple.

If we truly believe in human dignity,

Let us be more careful with propagandas.
Let us be more humble in our judgments.
Let us listen before we label.
Listen to the genuine voices from Okinawa.

Thank you very much.

<Mr. Keiichiro Hayashi 林慶一郎>



Today, we have come to the United Nations to sound a critical alarm: false narratives are actively accelerating military instability in East Asia. I speak to correct a grave factual error spreading within this very institution—the absolute fallacy that the Ryukyuan people of Okinawa are an "indigenous group" seeking independence.

Okinawans take great pride in their history. However, the narrative that they are an oppressed indigenous people seeking separation from Japan is a manufactured fiction—a complete shock to the residents. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) establishes "self-identification" as a fundamental principle. It is utterly absurd for the UN to unilaterally dictate that Okinawans are indigenous when they do not consider themselves as such. Furthermore, the Japanese government firmly maintains that the Ainu are Japan's only indigenous people, repeatedly demanding the withdrawal of these baseless recommendations.

Yet, since 2008, UN committees have issued seven recommendations forcing this label upon us. Why? Because the UN system suffers from a fatal structural weakness: unverified reports from fringe groups are blindly adopted as "facts." This flaw is being exploited for foreign cognitive warfare. The UN is being manipulated so easily by certain countries that it might as well rename itself the "Allied Powers of World War II."

The international community remains dangerously unaware of the geopolitical reality. A certain country has declared its intent to unify with Taiwan. The greatest obstacles to any armed unification are the Japanese and US forces stationed in neighboring Okinawa. Therefore, that country launched an operation to label Okinawans as "indigenous" because Article 30 of UNDRIP strictly prohibits military activities on indigenous lands.

This entire movement is a political operation—backed by a certain country under the guise of human rights—designed to force the withdrawal of military bases. Tragically, these UN recommendations comprehensively back a certain country's military expansion. Capitalizing on this, the representative of a certain country explicitly referred to Okinawans as "indigenous" at the UN Third Committee in October 2025. NGOs are now being used as tools to incite demilitarization, deliberately destabilizing the region.

We can no longer watch Okinawa be used as a pawn on an international chessboard. Today, our team announces a concrete countermeasure. To tell you the truth, I'm an AI engineer. We are developing a "Narrative Detection AI" to identify unnatural information flows on social media and expose intentional cognitive warfare. By sharing this globally, we provide a powerful "shield" empowering everyone to verify facts and reject malicious propaganda.

This is not merely a technological announcement. It is a resolute declaration of resistance from civil society against forces waging cognitive warfare to dismantle our democracy from within. It is a "declaration of war" against non-kinetic aggression. Armed with technology and truth, we urge the UN to stop listening to manufactured illusions and stand with Okinawa against information warfare.

Thank you.



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Side event information

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Moderator : Satoru Nakamura - Japan Society for the History Textbook

Rights of indigenous people in Asia **Beyond the "indigenous" Myth**



Organizer
Mr.Satoru Nakamura
Japan Society for the
History Textbook



Speaker
Mr.Hajime Zaha
Japan Society for the
History Textbook



Speaker
Mr.Keiichiro Hayashi
International Career
Support Association



Speaker
**Mr.Ryonosuke
Nakahara**
Japan Society for the
History Textbook



Speaker
Mr.Ryuichi Sunagawa
Japan Society for the
History Textbook



Speaker
Mr.Rei Hashiguchi
Japan Society for the
History Textbook



Interpreter
Mr.Shunichi Fujiki
International Career
Support Association



Speaker
Mr.Thai Yamada
Japan Society for the
History Textbook

Time schedule

17:00-17:05
Set up and
preparaiton

17:05-17:13
Satoru Nakamura

17:13-17:21
Hajime Zaha

17:21-17:29
Ryuichi Sunagawa

17:29-17:37
Rei Hashiguchi

17:37-17:42
Thai Yamada

17:42-17:47
Ryonosuke Nakahara

17:47-17:52
Keiichiro Hayashi

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