

被害者 冰山の一角

Only the tip of the iceberg

Women's human rights under threat spate of sexual assaults by U.S. military service personnel

The review of our newspaper pages published during the period shortly after World War II shows that assaults on local women by American soldiers were common during that time, and the trend continues to this day, 44 years after Okinawa Prefecture's reversion to Japan. A copy of the *Uruma Shimpō* (the predecessor of *Ryukyu Shimpō*) from Feb. 6, 1948 includes a commentary by the police chief calling on victims to file complaints without remaining silent. Such a commentary seems to indicate that sexual assaults by U.S. troops were already a widespread social problem. The threat posed to human rights by U.S. military bases continues to this day. Let us show major assault cases from the past pages of the *Uruma Shimpō* and *Ryukyu Shimpō*. These, however, are just the tip of the iceberg.

A backdrop of colonialism

Just after U.S. troops landed on Okinawa in 1945, sexual violence against women started.

Even after the battle ended, heinous sexual crimes committed by U.S. service members and civilian personnel showed no signs of declining under the U.S. administration. Many women were wounded and sometimes robbed of their lives.

Now, though 44 years have passed since Okinawa was returned to Japan, the reality of the situation in which women are threatened by soldiers remains unchanged.

Seventy-one years after the end of the war, sexual violence by U.S. troops still occurs repeatedly.

Suzuyo Takazato, co-representative of the women's group Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence, emphasizes

that "after the war ended, a new war against women began."

According to research by the group, the number of crimes per year, including rape, murder and arson, reached 439 in 1946 and 242 in 1947. Most of the victims of these crimes were women.

Women were targeted in acts of violence and sometimes killed.

The group speculates that incidents that become publicly known represent only a fraction of all crimes committed.

During the period before Okinawa's reversion to Japan, as U.S. troops traveled between foreign battlefields and Okinawa, murderous rampages took place with even greater frequency.

During the Vietnam War in particular, one to four residents were victims of murder

by U.S. military personnel each year.

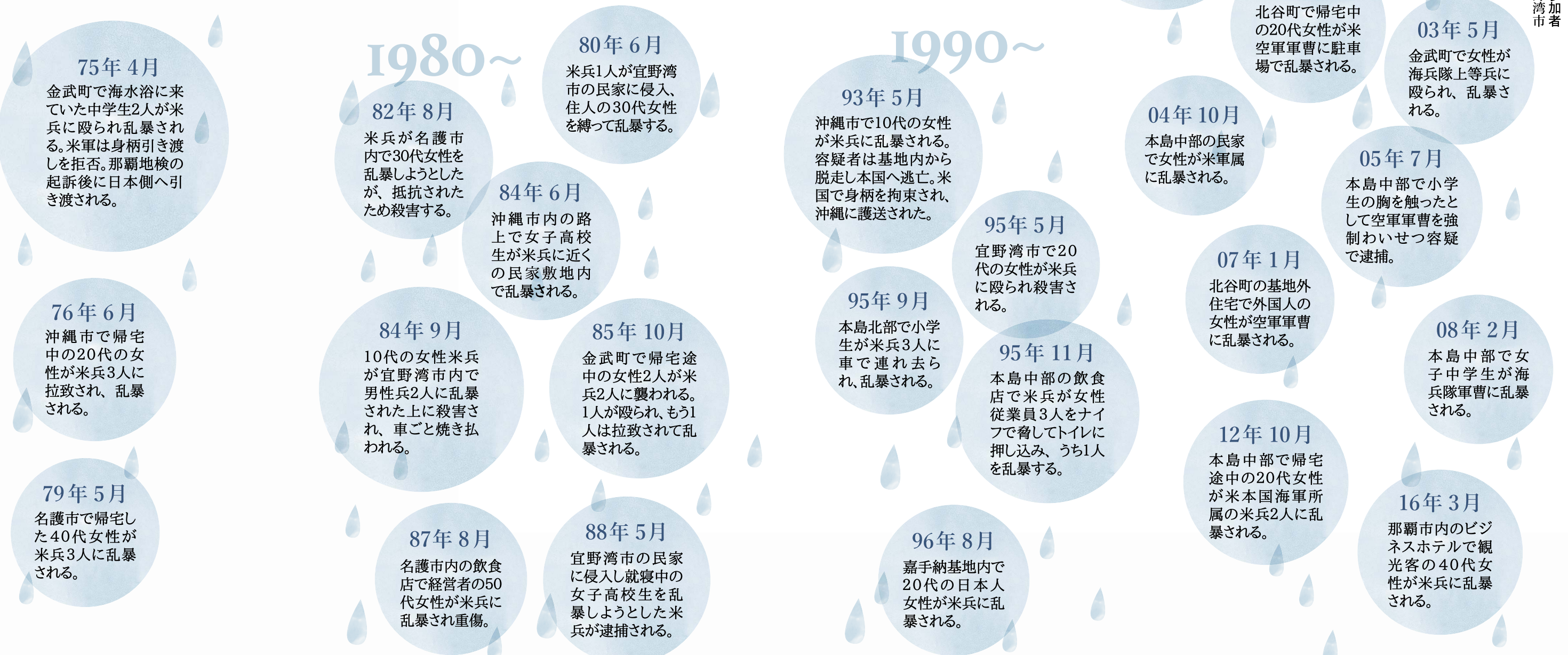
Sexual violence against Okinawan women continued after Okinawa reverted to Japanese sovereignty.

According to the prefectural police, 129 rape incidents took place from 1972 to the end of 2015, and 145 U.S. military-affiliated suspects were arrested.

Civic groups and researchers point to structural violence and colonialism as factors behind sexual violence.

"Okinawa hosts vast military bases," says Takazato. "U.S. service members and civilian personnel are granted special privileges by the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement. These privileges lead to violence. There is no way to prevent more people becoming victims other than removing the U.S. bases from Okinawa."

米兵による少女乱暴事件に抗議する県民総決起大会の参加者
1995年10月 宜野湾市



抗議の声 県外、海外へ

玉城福子さん（沖縄大非常勤講師）



The mainland Japanese should realize they are imposing the bases on Okinawa

Fukuko Tamashiro Okinawa University part-time lecturer

After the latest case, I saw opinions on Facebook and other places saying, "There are good American soldiers, too." But it is not contradictory to have friends or romantic partners among U.S. military personnel and to think that it is not right that Okinawa should host bases like these. While maintaining relations with American soldiers, they still need to think about how to approach base-related problems and what to do about them.

Women who are involved in the anti-base movements have not just

criticized assault cases only when U.S. troops were involved, but they have always worked to create a mechanism to care for the victims of sexual violence. Those who say, "You always make noises whenever American soldiers are involved," should themselves take the initiative over providing care for the victims and thinking about how to punish perpetrators, regardless of their nationality.

Again, earlier today I was told by someone that, "There are sexual assault cases by those who are not American

soldiers," but I believe the latest case would not have happened if there were no military bases in Okinawa. If we do not act now, we will certainly see yet another case like this in the future. It is important to raise the voice of protest in Okinawa and pass it on to the mainland and overseas. I want the mainlanders to have a proactive mindset and realize that they are imposing the bases on Okinawa, and not just think, "Let's oppose the bases because Okinawans are against them."

今回の事件後、フェイスブックなどで「いい米兵もいる」という意見を見た。でも、米兵の友達や恋人がいることと「沖縄にこんなに基地があるのはおかしい」と思うことは矛盾しない。米兵と付き合いながらも、基地問題にどのようなスタンスをとり、どう行動するか、考える必要がある。

基地反対運動をしている女性たちは、米兵が加害者の時だけ批判してきたわけではなく、誰が加害者であっても性暴力被害者のケアの仕組みをつくらうとしてきた。「米兵のときだけ騒ぐ」と言う人

は、誰が加害者であろうか被害者のケアや加害者の処罰について率先して声を上げてほしい。

先日「米兵以外の性暴力もある」と言われたが、今回の事件は基地がなければ起きなかった。今何もしなければ、今後も確実に起きる。沖縄で抗議の声を上げ、本土や海外に伝えるのも大事な。本土の人は「沖縄の人が基地はいらないと言っているから（反対しよう）」ではなく「私たちが押し付けている」という主体的な立場で考えてほしい。