

For The Solution of Japanese Military's "Comfort Women" Issue

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I. As citizens of Japan, a past aggressor of Asia

We are at this meeting feeling tense as Japanese women. We are painfully conscious of the fact that our country was an aggressor in Asia.

Through our activities trying to solve Japanese military's "comfort women" issue, we have learned more about the wrong history education Japanese people are getting and the wrong direction Japan has been taking. In our activity to correct these we should always be aware that Japan's wrong stance will distort the personality of individuals and at the same time the sound development of the society as a whole. To bring the change it is essential to make the Japanese government take official responsibility.

And, as women as well as human beings, we have listened the cries of victims with pain in heart. We have shuddered at the atrocities, felt anger at the human right abuses toward women by state power. We think Japanese government's public apology, the individual compensation to the victims and prosecution of the persons responsible are essential to restore the human rights and dignity of the victims. We regret that we could not come to realize this until the victims themselves started to give the cries of accusation forty years after the war.

We would like to take this opportunity to offer our solidarity with you all. Now we would like to make a report about the measures we are going to take.

Calling for the withdrawal of "the alternative measure"
aimed to evade responsibility

Yesterday a Japanese speaker reported about the plan of "private donation" which the present Murayama Cabinet is trying to push forward. So far the Japanese government has never tried to take legal responsibility even after former prime minister Miyazawa reluctantly made a gesture of apology. The government has been trying to put an end to the issue by offering alternative measures that will never lead to the real solution. Making a gesture of "apology and repentance", the government has been offering plans such as "Youth Exchange Programs", "Asian Exchange Center", and "Center for Asian Women's Independence". We are determined to scrap these plans and make the government take official responsibility. We will make steady efforts to show the public what is really behind the government proposal and keep pressuring the government and other related organs.

When a plan for "Asian Exchange Center" was proposed as "an alternative measure for compensation", in July last year, "Japanese Military's 'Comfort Women' Issue Network" immediately started to lead the activities and collected about 20,000 signatures to demand the government to withdraw the plan. Regrettably the objection to "private donation" is still not so strong in Japan, so we found the signature encouraging, though the 20,000 may not sound such a large number. They gave us an incentive to take actions such as appealing to the Diet members and the related organs.

In many districts various people organizations are working on this issue through their own networks. Their cooperations in making appeals and protests are acquiring understanding and support of the general public.

The government is still pushing hard to carry out the plan of "private donation" and the power supporting and sticking to the plan is very strong. We are now preparing for the activity to arouse the public opinion in Japan with the help of the advice of ICJ and the international cries opposing Japan's attempt to win a permanent seat in the United Nations. The surge of the public opinion will surely give the strength to the activity to scrap the government's plan of "private foundation".

For the success of the International Court of Arbitration

Korean victims made a decision to have the issue settled by the international law at the Hague based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) because the Japanese government was persistently trying to evade public responsibility. In response to their move we newly organized "The Liaison Conference for gaining success of international arbitration and for bringing realization of individual compensation" in September 1994. At the rally held in Tokyo attended by 200 people, the victims made their decision clear and the representatives of "The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan" entrusted the Japanese lawyers to make the Japanese government agree to the arbitration. Since then we have been engaged in such activities as collecting and analyzing information, researching, issuing news letters and invitational leaflets, holding meetings on one hand, we also have been appealing to the government administration on the other hand.

"The Liaison Conference" now has 47 private organizations and 349 individual members. The Japanese lawyer body organized for the international arbitration is composed of 70 lawyers. Keeping in close contact with the Korean lawyer body (38 members) as well as with "The Liaison Conference", the body offered "the statement of mutual agreement

by arbitration" to the Japanese government in November 1994. However, on January 24, 1995 the Japanese government officially expressed its intention of not accepting the agreement. Against this reply, immediately we issued a statement asking for withdrawal of the reply and advising reconsideration. We feel quite confident that the success of the international court of arbitration in the near future will not only affect favorably the cases still pending in the domestic courts, but also pave the way for state's compensation to all peoples in Asia victimatized by war crimes. No doubt, the Japanese military sexual slavery system is nothing but one of punishable war crimes committed by the state. In order not to commit the same crimes over again, we cannot shrink back before the difficulties of the problem.

Correcting the biased history education

The Japanese government should extend fact-finding reserches farther, and make public the truth of this issue. We are convinced that this is one of the ways which would put history education in Japan to rights. We must be responsible for changing the educational situation in which among Asian countries only Japanese people have not known accurately the history of their own aggression in Asia. However, in the process of reforming the situation, we will lay particular stress on the question as to who will shoulder the responsibility for reforming. We ought to reject positively any forms of authoritative control. The genuine subject who opens up the history is the people. While urging the government to reveal the truth of the issue, we would like to communicate, share and confirm each other the facts obtained through pople-oriented sources. Such activities, we believe, will certainly contribute to correct biased history education in Japan. We can raise great waves of changing history

education, continuing our movement step by step.

Grounded in revolutionizing the consciousness of citizens

The backing of public opinion is one of powers to push pressure on the government. At the same time, we should not lose the sight of the fact that building-up of public opinion is deeply concerned with full development of our character as an individual.

The victims have appealed that they were not "deprived of their innocence" but "had their womanhood and human rights violated". Their appeal urged us to reconsider our preconceived sex-consciousness. Through facing this issue, we have come to see the structure which has hindered the resolution of the issue through many entangled problems. Within Japanese society where the idea which tolerates prostitution is still commonly accepted and the Emperor system has been ingeniously kept, man-centric structure solidly still remains. We have a question whether Japanese women have gained independence as an individual. Within our society where racial discrimination and discrimination by sex are not severely charged, we have a question whether we have developed our character enabling ourselves to respect human rights. By way of addressing these questions to ourselves, grounded in daily life of citizens who are struggling for self-reformation, we will aim to transform Japanese society.

These movements, we believe, will help to furnish a soil on which we can change Japanese society — a society which is still doing harm to Asia and practicing sexual abuse on women as prostitution including trading in Asian women. We must change this situation.

II Our Future Activities

We are determined never to compromise with Japan's political situations and we must now stress that we must never allow the government to carry out its plan because recently some politicians have started to say threateningly that there is no any other solution better than this and that they will withdraw everything if the "private donation" is not accepted. The idea of the "private donation" is becoming more tangible. The fund is to be established under the Japanese Red Cross Society. And the government appropriated five hundred million yen for public relations and personnel costs in the budget for 1995 fiscal year.

In Japan one hundred and forty-three conservative legislators of the Liberal Democratic Party have formed a council to oppose the proposed Diet resolution to apologize to Asian countries for Japan's action during the World War II. And resolutions to mourn and thank the war dead were adopted in many prefectural meetings. No words to express the repentance for Japan's aggression and colonization of Asia were offered in these. And it is feared that the war museum planned by the Health and Welfare Ministry will simply become a receptacle for war relics rather than a practical research facility for gathering information on the war. We need to block this move and appeal to the public that Japan's military "comfort women" issue is yet to be solved. And we must show how this issue is being taken overseas and appeal to the diet members and related organs to make the government listen to the international cries. We want recognition of war responsibility and resolution of war apology in the Japanese Diet, the highest organ of state power.

As for fact-finding activities, there must be things we can do ourselves apart from what government should do. While continuing to demand the government to present the documents that are not disclosed yet, we will surely be able to strengthen our movement by positively conducting research, study and interviews in collaboration and by sharing the achievements of these activities.

As actions against Japan's "alternative measure," sit-ins have been held in front

of the Diet House in Japan by the victims who are the members of "the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families." And the protest demonstrations were held by the halmonis of the "association of the victims." These movements are getting the support of grass roots. "Opinion advertisement campaigns" were organized to run opinion advertisements in newspapers in many countries. Already the the opinion advertisements were run in Japan, South Korea and the United States introducing the cries of the victims. And plans to run the advertisemments in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Holland are in progress.

At present "the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families," the Philippine women, and Dutch women who were detained in Indonesia by the Japanese Army, are filing suits at the Tokyo District Court. And in Simonoseki the Kanpu Law Suit filed by two former "comfort women" and two women who were "drafted for Laborers" is in progress. And also in Shimonoseki a lawsuit to demand the payment of MS. Mun Ok Ju's military postal deposit is in progress. And as was already reported at this meeting, the court struggle of Ms. Soh Jin-Doo, a Korean woman living in Japan is also in progress. All these court struggles in Japan are playing a very important role in raising the issue in Japan.

As you all know, in July last year the possibility of settling the issue through the arbitration court was shown at the United Nations Human Right Sub-commission, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. And the UN Sub-Commission decided to recommend that the Special Rapporteurs on the question of the impunity of perpetrators of violations of human rights take into consideration the information on the sexual exploitation of women. And in October at the East Asian Women's Forum held in Japan, the action plan to demand the government the truth-finding research, the public apology, the individual compensation and the prosecution of the perpetrators was adopted. And it has been decided that Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Special Rapporteur, will examine this matter from the angles of both individual compensation and prosecution of perpetrators. We have received the information that the UN is going to send a research

team after the approval of her report. We do hope this will come true and that we will be able to intensify our campaign making the the best use of this opportunity.

Japan's Foreign Ministry outrageously concealed the report sent by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) sent last November from the eyes of the Diet members who are now working on the "comfort women" issue. Those Diet members had no choice but to make the plans for "private donation" without having the detailed information. Seminars and symposiums are to be held in Tokyo on this report of IJC. We must always appeal to the public awareness and keep pressuring the government.

We will finish the report from Japan hoping that this Asian Solidarity Forum will become another long step toward the solution of Japan's "comfort women" issue. We are sure today's conference will strengthen the movement internationally and bring success to the U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing in August, 1995.