

# Comfort Women Organize for Their Rights

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## Brief Background ;

LILA-PILIPINA stands for "Lign ng mga Lolang Pilipina". It is an organization of Filipino comfort women and rape survivors as well as individual advocates of redress for human rights and justice to the Filipino comfort women survivors. It coordinates the efforts of various Philippine-based organizations and networks which support the struggle of the comfort women for justice.

On July 13, 1992, the Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women was founded to provide a national support mechanism to the comfort women's campaign for justice. The TFFCW functioned with a General Assembly composed of the members which met regularly for planning the programmes and activities and conducting evaluation. The membership increased from 7 to 15 organizations. A national served the day to day coordination needs of the campaign. For two years, AWHRC provided the venue for reception needs at the Filipino comfort women as well as a volunteer secretariat force.

On May 16, 1994, a national assembly and consultation of TFFCW members and FCW survivors resulted in the decision to form LILA- PILIPINA. The organization will stimulate the development of a broad and multifaceted national movement of advocates for women's human rights in times of war and armed conflict situations.

The Filipino comfort women filed their lawsuit against the Japanese Government, which serves as the first case to be filed by the victims themselves. It was made on the basis of the following legal basis: the Hague Convention of 1907 on War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity.

## REPORT OF LILA-PILIPINA and TFFCW'S ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS ;

On October 29, 1992, TFFCW and AWHRC paid tribute to the first Filipino comfort women survivors during a movint Solidarity Gathering for the lolas.

In 1992 and 1993, Fact-Finding Missions were held by Japanese Lawyers in the Philippines, consisting of interviews with survivors.

In April, 1993, LILA-PILIPINA held a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo.

On July 31, 1994, LILA-PILIPINA hold a protest meeting and General Assembly hosted by the 7th Fact Finding Mission of Japanese lawyers. There was a Solidarity Dance and distribution of Department of Hoalth Memo and Medical Cards.

On June 15, 1994, a Peace Keeping Operation Bill anniversary rally was held in front of the Japanese embassy in coordination with progressive organizations like

BAYAN, KMU(Trade Union movement), League of Filipino Students, Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition, SCMP and Gabriela.

On May 13-16, 1994, LILA-PILIPINA held its national planning and consultation meeting.

On June 3, 1994, LILA members attended the fourth court trial for the lawsuit of the Filipino comfort women, conducted at the Tokyo District Court. A march which mobilized 700 people was held on June 6 together with representatives of the Korean comfort women and Japanese solidarity groups and individuals.

On June 25, 1994, LILA-PILIPINA held its Quarterly General Assembly and Lola's birthday celebration. There was a presentation of quilts during the multiple celebrations.

On July 8, 1994, LILA-PILIPINA held a Relief Rummage Sale, which was to be followed later by subsequent rummage sales.

LILA-PILIPINA was also an active participant in the drafting of declarations and statements addressing international bodies such as the United Nations. LILA participated in an Appeal to the UN last September 13, 1994 protesting Japan's bid for a permanent member of the Security Council. On July 18, 1994, LILA wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of Japan, the Honorable Mr. Tomiichi Murayama, entreating his government to 1) withdraw its plan for an "Asian Center", and 2) express a sincere apology to all individual victims of war and provide due compensation to each and every war victim as soon as possible.

LILA-PILIPINA is currently working on its participation in the Quilt Making Project for the Boijing World Conference on Women. Workshops were conducted among the different group formations of the lolas in Navotas, Antipole and from the different parts of Metro Manila to conceptualize the design and size of the quilt they would make. The quilts told the lolas' stories of sexual violence during the war.

LILA-PILIPINA was an active participant in the Asia Tribunal on Women's Human Rights held in Tokyo held last March 12, 1994. During the tribunal, a Declaration was produced which condemned the horrendous crimes of organized and systematic rape, torture, detention, forced displacement and abduction. The Declaration named Japan's "Operation Comfort Women" as a war crime, and condemned this and all acts of military sexual slavery. It expressed deep concern over the unprecedented proportions of trafficking in women, including the Devadasi system in India, the sex workers in Japan, and profiteering in the sex industry which perpetuates the massive export of female labor for entertainment and prostitution.

The Tokyo Tribunal also produced a plan of Action which included ; data collection, education / information, Lobbying, and victim support and assistance. Specific to the Issue of Comfort Women, the recommendations included; full investigation and data gathering, trial and punishment of criminals, guaranteed compensation for survivors, public education, and strengthening of international solidarity.

In the month of February, 1995, LILA-PILIPINA is coming out with a paid ad in Filipino national newspapers dramatizing the lolas' demand for justice and compensation. Entitled "We are Not Beggars; No to Charity Money, Yes to Compensation", the ad expresses the lolas' protest over Japan's intent to give

charity money, for they would settle for no less than compensation and apology from the Japanese government for every individual comfort women survivor. The ad aims to popularize the issue and garner strong support for the lolas' demands.

#### RESONS TO HOPE;

Since the start of our movement, we at LILA-PILIPINA have received the support of many Asian women's groups and international human rights organizations, including the International Commission of Jurists and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The comfort women system has brought shame, disrepute, and unspeakable trauma to the women who were victimized by this heinous crime. We know by now that comfort women were raped on a torture and human degradation. For almost 50 Years, the Japanese government sought to hide this reality. For almost 50 Years, we the survivors bravely lived in silence, bearing the stigma of their ordeal despite the absence of any support system. We continue to live with the violence of its memory to this day, our grievance still without redress. It is a violence made invisible by governments and the societies to which we belong.

Our hope lies in our resolve to pursue our campaigns on the national and international levels, using the Japanese court as one avenue, and the United Nations system as another channel, to seek redress for grievances of the comfort women. We must increase the pressure on Japan to recognize and admit its involvement in drafting the women victims and maintaining the atrocious system, and to issue a public apology for its crime.

The aim of our lawsuit against Japan is not only to secure financial compensation but also to seek a recognition from the world community of sex slavery as a war crime. By so doing, it seeks the restoration of the honor and dignity of the victims of this crime.

In 1995, there will be and intensification of our activities as they lead to the historic Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing, China in September. We invite women's organizations to join the workshops and projects we have lined up.

Throughout Asia, we will continue to raise our voices high, across distances of our vast continent. Ours are voice of hope and struggle. Ours are the eyes of those who believe that there are other ways of knowing the world, different from the existing condition of domination based on objectification and subjugation. By so doing, ared transforming a world that has known suffering for so long, wherein we hope there will be war no more.