

**COMFORT WOMEN REDRESS AND  
HOW THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN CONTINUES TO REFUSE TO  
ACCEPT UNEQUIVOCAL RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR  
ONE OF THE LARGEST, MOST EXTENSIVE AND BRUTAL CASES  
OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**February 2007**

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The Support 121 Coalition**

Comfort Women Redress and  
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I. The Undisputed Facts

Who

- As many as 200,000 Asian and Western young women, but an exact number is not known.
- Mostly of Korean, Chinese, and Filipino, these women were euphemistically known as Comfort Women.
- Western women captured from invasion and even some boys were used.
- Japanese women as well as many from Southeast Asia were also procured.
- Some as young as 12, but also including mothers who were forced to separate from their children.

When

- First Comfort Women station established in Shanghai in 1932.
- Widespread use of these comfort stations began in 1938 after the Nanjing Massacre.
- After 1938, first documentary evidence of Army requisition of condoms and assignments of gynecologists to military units.
- Comfort Women used for the purpose of recreational sex by the Japanese Naval brigade posted in Shanghai and their friends.
- Most documents detailing the number of Comfort Women by the Japanese Government used were destroyed during the Tokyo bombings or by design.

Why

- Comfort Women stations were a military strategy to increase the efficiency and morale of Japanese soldiers.
- To prevent soldiers from raping and pillaging the local populations and becoming prone to various venereal diseases.

### How

- Many women were deceived by local private traffickers and were lured under false pretenses -- education and employment -- to leave their homes.
- Poor families sold their daughters to these “procurers.”
- Others were the “spoils” of war.

## II. The Atrocities and Their Legacy

### Atrocities

- Comfort Women were mentally, psychologically and physically dehumanized and diminished to the status of a “resource.”
- Subject to beatings, gang rape, forced abortions, torture, mutilations and extreme sexual violence often resulting in death.
- Comfort Women were routinely required to service up to 36 men a day.
- Comfort Women were drugged (sometimes with Opium) so that in the event they tried to escape, their addiction would draw them back to the rape camp.
- Comfort Women had to service numerous men with only one condom.
- Many women were killed after they became diseased or “overworked.”

### Survivors

- Surviving Comfort Women suffer many physical and psychological problems.
- Many survivors committed suicide from the shame and physical pain.
- Many concealed their past to avoid societal condemnation.
- Only recently have a few survivors dared to come forward and speak out against the atrocities they experienced.
- Most of the Dutch survivors refuse to have their names released.
- First Comfort Woman came forward in 1991 and her case was spotlighted by the Japanese press.
- The legacy of their pain is magnified by the unwillingness of the Government of Japan to formally acknowledge, unambiguously apologize and accept unequivocal responsibility for this atrocity.

## III. Government of Japan’s Response

### Japanese Government Response

- Denial until the first official government document found in Japanese Army archives referring to comfort women in 1992.
- Did not acknowledge that comfort women system existed until 1993.
- Comfort Women continually described as willing prostitutes who were compensated.
- Asian Women’s fund (AWF) established in 1994 and organized in 1995, but was only a quasi-governmental effort.

- Japanese Government has refused to provide direct governmental redress and states that today's Japan is different than wartime Japan.

#### Japanese Government Redress

- The AWF, and not the Japanese Government, has taken the initiative in addressing the Comfort Women situation -- the AWF is not a government agency.
- In Japanese, the fund is commonly referred to as the Kokumin Kikin (People's or National Fund) -- only in English, it is known as the Asian Women's Fund (AWF).
- Apology letters signed by the Prime Minister in personal capacity as opposed to an official State apology (with confusion on the translation of the words "apology" and "remorse").
- The Japanese Government regularly reiterates that it supports AWF projects out of moral responsibility and that legal compensation issues have been settled.
- The Japanese Government sidesteps the issue of whether the Comfort Women system was a war crime.
- The compensation is known as "atonement money" and many Comfort Women refuse to accept it claiming that the Japan avoids its legal responsibility by acting through a third party.
- Reparations were never intended to provide for all the former Comfort Women.
- Initial plan only involved compensating 300 women or only 00.15%.
- The majority of former Comfort Women and their families remain uncompensated.
- Although the Fund's mandate is to educate the public about the Comfort Women issue, little has been done.
- Former Comfort Women have made it clear that they want both an official State apology and reparations from the Japanese Government itself.

#### IV. The Apology "Myth"

It is unfortunate that the Embassy of Japan in Washington, DC has chosen to defend its government record on the Comfort Women with overstatements and misrepresentations:

- The Government of Japan has never extended an official government apology.
- For an apology to be official it would have to be a statement by a minister in a session of the Diet, a line in an official communiqué while on overseas visit, or to be definitive, a statement ratified by the Cabinet -- none of these conditions have been met.
- The few apologies given by prime ministers on this issue can be viewed as the equivalent of the President signing a treaty, but the Senate never ratifying it.
- The letters of apology to the Comfort Women by Japanese Prime Ministers (Hashimoto, Obuchi, Mori and Koizumi) do not constitute a government apology.
- For example, the first sentence of the so-called apology letter reads "in cooperation with the Government of Japan" -- an official apology should, however, read "on behalf of the Government of Japan" which it clearly does not.

- The letters also only accompany the disbursement of funds to those women who are willing to accept Japan's atonement money.
- So-called Japanese Prime Minister letters of apology were not given to Comfort Women generally, only to those who accepted AWF funds and promised to remain silent.

#### V. The Asian Women's Fund (AWF) "Myth"

- The Asian Woman's Fund (AWF), designed to compensate the Comfort Women is not a government fund.
- Although a laudable and notable effort, AWF is not a government organization.
- The Japanese Foreign Ministry worked very hard to distance itself from any institutional association and scholars now find it strange that the Embassy of Japan claims ownership of the Fund.
- In order to side step rightwing criticism of acceptance of the Comfort Women history, some senior Japanese Foreign Ministry officials worked with prominent Japanese citizens to establish AWF in 1995.
- Government funds were allocated to provide the operating expenses and medical care disbursements.
- Funds raised from Japanese citizens were used for the "atonement" payments to the survivors.
- This is not the definition of "reparation," which implies it is a government payment. The majority of comfort women wanted the national government of Japan to take responsibility for their history-- not just some well-meaning citizens.
- The Asian Women's Fund was never designed to compensate all the Comfort Women.
- Only women from South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines are considered part of the Fund. Korean women left behind by retreating Japanese troops in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, China, and North Korea were not included.
- Survivors who came from U.S. territories such as Guam where Japanese troops were stationed or those who emigrated to the U.S. were not included.

#### VI. Relevance of the Comfort Women Issue Today

##### Japan Refuses to Set the Record Straight

Although institutionalized means for catering to male sexual needs in the military have long existed, the Japanese Imperial Army's coordinated system of sexual slavery remains the most organized and systematic. Their legalized military rape of women was on an unprecedented scale. The Japanese government has avoided legal responsibility for their Comfort Women regime for several reasons: much of the documentary evidence was consciously destroyed after the war; the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal did not include it in the prosecution; the Japanese government felt that the San Francisco Peace Treaty voided any

further reparations; and social prejudice against Comfort Women prevented them from speaking out in societies where chastity is prized.

### Northeast Asia Regional Cooperation

With North Korean nuclear disarmaments talks central to East Asian regional peace, American relationships with Japan, China, and South Korea have never been more important. Historical disagreements that include the apology to Comfort Women issue, the content of Japanese textbooks, and the Japanese Prime Minister's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, however, threaten to undermine the unity needed for success. Any and all efforts are thus necessary to encourage reconciliation in the region to consolidate lasting security. It is in American interest to expect Japanese to responsibly address issues that continue to destabilize regional peace. Most important, the failure of Japan to successfully resolve their culpability and accountability toward the Comfort Women casts doubt upon Japan's commitment to human rights and UN leadership. H.Res.121 is a step toward reconciliation among our allies in Asia.

### Japanese Deniers

Japanese leaders and textbooks have long downplayed Japanese war crimes and emphasized Japan wartime victimization. This trend has intensified over the past decade. Today, leading Japanese politicians, including the Prime Minister, question aloud the veracity of the Rape of Nanking, the harshness of the Bataan Death March, and the existence of comfort women. The ruling LDP Policy Chief and leading Diet members have intensified their efforts to revise and/or rescind Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono's 1993 statement expressing remorse and atonement for the Comfort Women system. Indeed, the LDP is planning on sending some members to Washington to block H.Res.121. The U.S. simply cannot afford to have an ally that appears as deniers of history.

### Upholding Human Rights & Restoring Justice

There were as many as 200,000 girls and women who were part of the Japanese program of comfort women. Taking the lowest figures, there were about 20,000 comfort women at any given time. Each of them was raped at least 5 times per day. That means that there were at least 100,000 rapes per day arranged by the Japanese authorities and carried out by its soldiers. This equals at least 24 million rapes per year, and even assuming only 5 years of the program, there were at least 125 million rapes against the women of Korea, Philippines, Burma, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Netherlands. Japan, however, has paid nothing to these victims. Time is running out for the few former Comfort Women who are still alive today.

## VII. In Support of H.Res.121

As an ally of the U.S. that helps advance American foreign policy objectives in the Northeast Asia region, the Japanese Government must show with greater clarity that it share American values and is not just nominally regretful of its past wrongs.

### H.Res.121

- House Resolution 121 (H.Res.121) was introduced by Rep. Michael Honda (CA-15) along with six bi-partisan original co-sponsors: Representatives Edward R. Royce (CA-40), Christopher Smith (NJ-4), Diane Watson (CA-33), David Wu (OR-1), Phil Hare (IL-17), and Delegate Madaleine Bordallo (GU).
- H.Res.121 calls for the Government of Japan to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as "comfort women", during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.
- H.Res.121 recognizes some of the positive steps that the Japanese Government has attempted on the Comfort Women Issue.
- The legislation encourages Japan to be honest about its past mistakes and to educate its future generations on crimes against humanity.
- House Resolution 121 demands that Japan fulfill four conditions:
  - (1) Should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as "comfort women", during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;
  - (2) Should have this official apology given as a public statement presented by the Prime Minister of Japan in his official capacity;
  - (3) Should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the "Comfort Women" for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and
  - (4) Should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the "Comfort Women."

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