

Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women

Hearing Notice, The Honorable Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, The Honorable Michael M. Honda, Ms. Yong Soo Lee, Ms. Jan Ruff O, Ms. Koon Ja Kim, Ok Cha Soh, Ph.D.

http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/sub_asia.asp

Following is the URL for the transcript of testimonies of survivors:

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/testimony.asp?committee=3>

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/faleo021507.htm>

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515**

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA
CHAIRMAN**

**before the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA, THE PACIFIC, AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT
on Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women**

February 15, 2007

Clearly, it is a matter of historical record that the Japanese military forced some 50,000 to 200,000 women from Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Holland and Indonesia to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during WWII and, H. Res. 121, introduced by Congressman Mike Honda, calls upon the US House of Representatives to urge Japan to accept full responsibility for the actions of its military.

Japan contends that it has accepted responsibility. But it wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that major publications in Japan began to describe the details of what is now known as the "comfort women" system and that countries occupied by Japan also began to speak out about it.

In response to these developments, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei issued a statement of admission and apology in 1992. Prime Minister Koizumi also issued an apology in 2001. However, in 2006, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shimomura Hakubun, as well as Japan's largest circulating newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, specifically challenged the validity of the Kono statement and this has led to the belief that Japan is attempting to revise history.

For the record, I am including an article from *The Daily Yomiuri* dated December 24, 2006 entitled "LDP split over 'comfort women'/Lawmakers plan to seek revision of 1993 statement on culpability." I am also including other newspaper articles from here and abroad which raise similar concerns and address other matters pertinent to this issue.

I also note that according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), "there has been a noticeable trend for new editions of history textbooks to omit references to comfort women."

The Japanese Government says this is not the case and has submitted a statement suggesting otherwise which I have included for the record.

As an aside, I will say that in no way is this hearing meant to embarrass Japan. Like my colleagues, I appreciate that Japan is a close US ally and I have a special love and affinity for the people of Japan and their leaders. But more sacred to me is our obligation to protect the human rights of those who were forced to be comfort women.

This is the very reason why I believe this hearing is important. Some may say the past is the past and that the US is also an offender and violator of human rights. Maybe this is so. But nowhere in recorded history has the US military as a matter of policy issued a directive allowing for the coercion of young women into sexual slavery or forced prostitution. On the other hand, this is exactly what the Japanese military did and it is an affront to truth for any government to downplay its history.

Civilized society cannot allow history to be revised or denied under any circumstances. Regardless of what bearing this, or any other issue, may have on bilateral relations, or US foreign policy, civilized society has a moral obligation to remember, to give voice to those who have suffered, to pay living tribute to victims past and present, to defend human rights. Otherwise we run the risk of another Holocaust or, in this case, young women being forced into sexual slavery.

While I am aware that Japan set up the Asian Women's Fund in 1995 and agreed to pay for medical and support programs, and fund operational expenses for comfort women victims, the Japanese government refused to finance atonement payments. Atonement payments were financed through private Japanese contributions and, to date, only 285 women have received payments from the Asian Women's Fund. In March of this year, the Asian Women's Fund will expire.

For the record, I will emphatically state that I do not believe any amount of money can atone for what these women suffered and, while I support any woman's right to lay claim to these funds, I do not believe the Japanese government or its citizens should suggest that a monetary payment can make right a moral wrong. So, for me, any and all discussions about the Asian Women's Fund sufficing as an act of apology falls short of what is relevant.

What is relevant is that Japan acknowledge, acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery during its occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands during WWII. According to the Government of Japan, it has done so, and since 1996 every Prime Minister of Japan has extended his sincere apologies. According to the Government of Japan, current Prime Minister Abe also announced to the Diet in October 2006 that the government continues to stand by its statement of apology.

H. Res. 121 suggests that this is not enough and, for this reason, we will consider the testimony presented to us in order to make a good-faith effort about where we go from here.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/hon021507.htm>

**Statement of
The Honorable Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress**

**Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on
Protecting the Human Rights of “Comfort Women”
Thursday, February 15, 2007**

Thank you, Chairman Faleomavaega, for holding this historic hearing. And thank you for inviting me to testify before the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on the comfort women tragedy, which my good friend and our former colleague, Lane Evans long advocated to be addressed by the U.S. Congress.

As the members of the Subcommittee know, I recently introduced H.Res.121, a resolution calling on 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 and girls into sexual slavery starting in the 1930s during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands. Euphemistically known as “Comfort Women,” these violated women have too long been denied their dignity and honor.

My interest in seeking justice for the Comfort Women began during my career as a schoolteacher in San Jose. A couple decades ago, I learned that Japan’s Ministry of Education sought to omit or downplay the comfort women tragedy in its approved textbooks. As a teacher interested in historical reconciliation, I knew the importance of teaching and talking about tragedy and injustice without flinching from the details. Without honesty and candor, there is no foundation for reconciliation.

My subsequent research on Japan’s long unresolved history issues with its former adversaries led me to pursue efforts toward reconciliation in the California State Assembly. In 1999, I authored Assembly Joint Resolution 27 (AJR27), which called on Congress to urge the Japanese government to issue an apology for the victims of the Rape of Nanking, Comfort Women, and POWs who were used as slave laborers. The resolution was ultimately passed.

Now, nearly nine years after the passage of AJR27, I stand united with several of my colleagues in the House, from both parties, in support of H.Res.121 and the surviving Comfort Women who are here with us today. The urgency is upon this Committee and the Congress to take quick action on this resolution. These women are aging and their numbers dwindling with each passing day. If we do not act now, we will lose a historic opportunity to encourage the Government of Japan to properly acknowledge responsibility for the plight of the Comfort Women.

Elected officials of Japan have taken steps to address this issue, and for that they are to be commended. In 1993, Japan’s then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued an encouraging statement regarding Comfort Women, which expressed the Government’s sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal. Additionally, Japan attempted to provide monetary compensation to surviving comfort women through the Asia Women’s Fund, a government initiated and largely government-funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the Comfort Women. The Asia Women’s Fund is to be disbanded on March 31, 2007.

Recent attempts, however, by some senior members of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party to review and even possibly retract Secretary Kono's statement are disheartening and mark Japan's equivocation on this issue. Additionally, while I appreciate Japan's creation of the Asia Women's Fund and the past prime minister's apologies to some comfort women, which accompanied this Fund's disbursement of monetary compensation from this fund, the reality is that without a sincere and unequivocal apology from the government of Japan, the majority of surviving Comfort Women refused to accept these funds. In fact, as you will hear today, many Comfort Women returned the Prime Minister's letter of apology accompanying the monetary compensation saying they felt the apology was artificial and disingenuous.

Mr. Chairman, let me make my intentions abundantly clear: this resolution provides for historical reconciliation and then moving forward. It is not in any way meant to and should not damage our strong relationship with Japan. I understand that many feel strongly that this resolution is unnecessary, that it focuses too much on the past, and fear it will negatively affect regional stability along with our alliance with Japan.

These worries are unfounded. I feel strongly that accepting responsibility for the Comfort Women tragedy is worthy of a nation as great as Japan is to do. I also feel strongly that reconciliation on this issue will have a positive effect upon relationships in the region as historical anxieties are put to rest.

I ask that Members of Congress understand that apologies on matters of historical significance are important and that they are the first, necessary steps in any attempt to reconcile differences or atone for past actions. Our government has made its own mistakes. But in its wisdom, it has made the difficult choice to admit wrongdoing.

For example, in 1988, Congress passed, and President Ronald Reagan signed into law, H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was a formal apology to U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly put into internment camps during World War II. As someone who was put into an internment camp as an infant, I know firsthand that we must not be ignorant of the past, and that reconciliation through government actions to admit error are the only ones likely to be long lasting.

For many Japanese Americans whose civil and constitutional rights were violated by internment, that dark chapter of history was closed by the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which emerged over 40 years after internment. Seeking reparations was a long and arduous journey, but the apology, once it came, was clear and unequivocal. Reconciliation is something our generation should rightfully be calling for in order to promote the growth of a peaceful global society, and to address issues of the past so we can finally put them to rest.

Americans have high expectations of close allies such as Japan, which shares so many of our values and ideals. Japan's current approach of denial to the Comfort Woman tragedy -- some call it a historic fabrication -- detracts from the relationship and questions the overall alliance in the eyes of Japan's neighbors. It compels one also to question Japan's appreciation of the Dutch, British, and Australian soldiers who recently guarded Japan's Self Defense Forces in Iraq, whose country's nationals are said to have been included in the Comfort Women system. Most

important, the failure of Japan to successfully resolve their culpability and responsibility toward the Comfort Women casts doubt upon Japan's commitment to human rights, violence against women in war and UN leadership.

Mr. Chairman, for reconciliation and justice for these women, I have worked very hard to bring these three survivors, Ms. Lee Yong Soo, Ms. Kim Koon-Ja, and Ms. Jan Ruff O'Herne, to Washington. They are the human face of the wartime violence against women. Their words reflect not just history but the continued pattern of organized abuse of women in conflict. Members of Congress who feel that this resolution is unnecessary need to look no further than these three women who know that they speak not just for themselves but also for the young women in Burma, Bosnia, and Darfur.

I commend groups such as the Washington Coalition for Comfort Women, Amnesty International, V-Day, the Korean American Voter's Council, the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, Justice for Comfort Women, the Global Alliance for Preserving History of World War II in Asia, and the Center for Women Policy Studies for their continued and tireless work on behalf of these women -- without which much of the efforts to keep this issue alive would have failed long ago.

I urge the Committee to act swiftly on H.Res.121 so that it soon may come to the floor for a vote. The strength and humanity of these women and the truths to which they testify today must supersede any political pressures to stop this resolution.

Thank you.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/ohe021507.htm>

**Statement of
Jan Ruff O'Herne AO
Friends of "Comfort Women" in Australia**

**Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on
Protecting the Human Rights of "Comfort Women"
Thursday, February 15, 2007**

Chairman Faleomavaega and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this holding this congressional hearing on the plight of "Comfort Women". I am pleased to join with survivors Ms. Yong-Soo Lee of Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Japanese Military Sexual Slavery and Ms. Koon-Ja Kim of the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium to share our stories before you today.

I would also like to thank Representative Michael Honda for introducing House Resolution 121, which demands that the Japanese government “officially and unambiguously” apologize and to “take historical responsibility”. And I thank Chairman Eni F.H Faleomavaega for inviting the witnesses to speak, to tell our stories to the world in the hope that it will bring us justice.

My experience as a woman in war is one of utter degradation, humiliation and unbearable suffering. During World War II, I was forced to be a so-called “Comfort Woman” for the Japanese military, a euphemism for sex slave.

The Forgotten Ones

I was born in Java, in the former Dutch East Indies (now known as Indonesia) in 1923 of a fourth generation Dutch colonial family. I grew up on a sugar plantation and had the most wonderful childhood. I was educated in Catholic schools and graduated from Franciscan Teacher’s College in Semarang, Java.

When I was 19 years old in 1942, Japanese troops invaded Java. Together with thousands of women and children, I was interned in a Japanese prison camp for three and a half years. Many stories have been told about the horrors, brutalities, suffering and starvation of Dutch women in Japanese prison camps. But one story was never told, the most shameful story of the worst human rights abuse committed by the Japanese during World War II: The story of the “Comfort Women”, the *jugun ianfu*, and how these women were forcibly seized against their will, to provide sexual services for the Japanese Imperial Army.

I had been in the camp for two years, when in 1944 high ranking Japanese officers arrived at the camp. The order was given: all single girls from seventeen years up, had to line up in the compound. The officers walked towards us, and a selection process began. They paced up and down the line, eyeing us up and down, looking at our figures, at our legs, lifting our chins. They selected ten pretty girls. I was one of ten. We were told to come forward, and pack a small bag, as we were to be taken away. The whole camp protested, and our mothers tried to pull us back. I embraced my mother not knowing if I was ever going to see her again. We were hurled into an army truck. We were terrified and clung to our bags and to each other.

The truck stopped in the city of Semarang, in front of a large Dutch Colonial house. We were told to get out. Entering the house we soon realized what sort of a house it was. A Japanese military told us that we were here for the sexual pleasure of the Japanese. The house was a brothel.

We protested loudly. We said we were forced to come here, against our will. That they had no right to do this to us, and that it was against the Geneva Convention. But they just laughed at us and said that they could do with us as they liked. We were given Japanese names and these were put on our bedroom doors.

We were a very innocent generation. I knew nothing about sex. The horrific memories of “opening night” of the brothel have tortured my mind all my life. We were told to go to the dining room, and we huddled together in fear, as we saw the house filling up with military. I got

out my prayer book, and led the girls in prayer, in the hope that this would help us. Then they started to drag us away, one by one. I could hear the screaming coming from the bedrooms. I hid under the table, but was soon found. I fought him. I kicked him with all my might. The Japanese officer became very angry because I would not give myself to him. He took his sword out of its scabbard and pointed it at me, threatening me with it, that he would kill me if I did not give into him. I curled myself into a corner, like a hunted animal that could not escape. I made him understand that I was not afraid to die. I pleaded with him to allow me to say some prayers. While I was praying he started to undress himself. He had no intention of killing me. I would have been no good to him dead.

He then threw me on the bed and ripped off all my clothes. He ran his sword all over my naked body, and played with me as a cat would with a mouse. I still tried to fight him, but he thrust himself on top of me, pinning me down under his heavy body. The tears were streaming down my face as he raped me in a most brutal way. I thought he would never stop.

When he eventually left the room, my whole body was shaking. I gathered up what was left of my clothing, and fled into the bathroom. There I found some of the other girls. We were all crying, and in total shock. In the bathroom I tried to wash away all the dirt and the shame off my body. Just wash it away. But the night was not over yet, there were more Japanese waiting, and this went on all night, it was only the beginning, week after week, month after month. The house was completely guarded, there was no way to escape. At times I tried to hide, but was always found, and dragged back to my room. I tried everything, I even cut off all my hair, so I was totally bald. I thought if I made myself look ugly, nobody would want me. But it turned me into a curiosity object; they all wanted the girl that had cut off her hair. It had the opposite effect.

Never did any Japanese rape me without a fight.. I fought each one of them. Therefore, I was repeatedly beaten. In the so-called “Comfort Station” I was systematically beaten and raped day and night. Even the Japanese doctor raped me each time he visited the brothel to examine us for venereal disease. And to humiliate us even more the doors and windows were left open, so the Japanese could watch us being examined.

During the time in the “Comfort Station”, the Japanese had abused me and humiliated me. I was left with a body that was torn and fragmented everywhere. The Japanese soldiers had ruined my young life. They had stripped me of everything. They had taken away my youth, my self-esteem, my dignity, my freedom, my possessions, and my family. But there was one thing that they could never take away from me. It was my religious faith and love for God. This was mine and nobody could take that away from me. It was my deep Faith that helped me survive all that the Japanese did to me.

I have forgiven the Japanese for what they did to me, but I can never forget. For fifty years, the “Comfort Women” maintained silence; they lived with a terrible shame, of feeling soiled and dirty. It has taken 50 years for these women’s ruined lives to become a human rights issue.

The war never ended for the “Comfort Women”. We still have the nightmares. After the war I needed major surgery to restore my body.

In 1992 the Korean “Comfort Women” broke their silence. Ms. Kim Hak Sun was the first to speak out. I watched them on TV as they pleaded for justice, for an apology and compensation from the Japanese government. I decided to back them up. I broke my silence at the International Public Hearing on Japanese War Crimes in Tokyo in December 1992 and revealed one of the worst human rights abuses of World War II, the forgotten holocaust.

For the past 15 years, I have worked tirelessly for the plight of “Comfort Women” in Australia and overseas, and for the protection of women in war. Now the time is running out. After sixty years the “Comfort Women” deserve justice. They are worthy of a formal apology from the Japanese government, from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe himself. The Japanese government must take full responsibility for their war crimes.

In 1995 they established the Asian Women’s Fund, to compensate the victims. This Fund was an insult to the “Comfort Women” and they, including myself, refused to accept it. This fund was a private fund, the money came from private enterprise, and not from the government. Japan must come to terms with its history, and acknowledge their war time atrocities. They must teach the correct history of the mistakes made in the past.

It is important that the surviving “Comfort Women” tell their stories. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I thank you for this opportunity to share my story. I hope that by speaking out, I have been able to make a contribution to world peace and reconciliation, and that human rights violation against women will never happen again.

Thank you.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/kim021507.htm>

Kim, Koon Ja

Former Comfort Woman, House of Sharing and NAKASEC

February 15, 2007

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and
the Global Environment**

My name is Koon Ja Kim. I was born in Pyongchang, Gangwon province in 1926.

I became an orphan when I was 14 and I was placed in the home of Choi Chul Ji, a colonial police officer. As his “foster child,” I cooked and cleaned for Mr. Choi. I had a boyfriend and we wanted to be married. However, his family objected because I was an orphan.

I remember the day that changed my life forever. I was wearing a black skirt, a green shirt, and black shoes. It was March of 1942, and I was 16 years old. I had been sent out of the house by police officer Choi and told that I needed to go and make some money. I found a Korean man wearing a military uniform and he told me that he would send me on an errand and I would be paid for this errand. I followed him and he told me to board a train a freight car. I did not know where I was going but I saw seven other young girls and another man in a military uniform on this freight train. There were other soldiers in different cars on the train, but I didn’t see them until we came to a stop and I got off the train. A Japanese soldier with a ranking badge was

waiting for us by a truck. The soldiers got on the truck and the other girls and I were put on the back of the truck.

Eventually the truck stopped in front of a house that looked like an old inn. I was later told that the name of the town was Hunchun, China. The next evening, a Japanese officer came to the house. He spoke Japanese, which I did not understand. I did not know what he was saying or what he wanted until he raped me. When I refused and fought back, he punched me in the face and the blow split my eardrum. That was the first of many days and nights that I was raped. On a daily basis, I was raped by Japanese soldiers, and it was common to be raped by 20 different soldiers a day, and on some days, it was as high as 40. If we fought or resisted the rapes, we would be punished, beaten or stabbed by the soldiers. There were soldier overseers to make sure that we complied and, if we resisted, they would punish us. My body is forever marked and scarred with those beatings and in some cases stabbings with a knife. Many soldiers refused to wear condoms. We would be beaten for insisting that they wear condoms. It was common for girls to become pregnant and to contract sexually transmitted diseases. But if a girl became pregnant, she was forced to have an abortion. I was one of those girls. Eventually, we were moved to the front lines of the war to a town called Kokashi (Japanese name for a town in China). I did not believe it could get worse, but it was. The soldiers on the front lines believed they were going to die and so they acted out their fears and stress on us by being more violent than one can imagine.

After three years of this nightmare, the war ended and, I thought, so would my nightmare. After years of imprisonment and threats against our lives, we were simply told to leave. We had no money and no idea where we were or how we would get home again. Six other girls and I walked to the border of China and Korea. It took us several weeks by foot to arrive at Baekdu mountain, which is in the border of China and North Korea. We survived by eating roots and vegetation from the ground. We had to cross the Duman River near the border to survive. We clasped hands and held on to each other as we crossed the river. One of the girls drowned and we could not save her.

I eventually made it back to my hometown but I did not have anyplace to go. I had no family or friends and I would never go back to Mr. Choi's house. To survive, I worked in a hostess bar. There, I met my old boyfriend again. We wanted to be together again, but his family again objected because I was an orphan. After mounting pressure and difficulty with his family, he committed suicide. After his death, I found out I was pregnant with his child. His family and other people in the town blamed me for my boyfriend's suicide, so I left to go to Seoul. I first worked at a hostess bar and then found a job as a housekeeper. My baby girl was born but only lived for five months. All the money that I made as a housekeeper, I spent seeking religious healing. I really wanted to know why fate had been so cruel to me. I sought healing and answers from Buddhist temples, world churches, and other religions. I am a Catholic now. Government social services eventually introduced me to the House of Sharing (a home for former comfort women), where I now reside.

My body has so many physical scars and reminders of those three violent years of my life as a young girl. There are memories that I will never be able to erase. In addition to these physical and emotional scars, the Japanese government continues to torture and punish me every day that

it continues to deny the truth of those camps and what it did to me and other young girls. The war has ended but for 62 years, I have had to live a life with a scar in my heart. Not only does the Japanese government deny these barbaric actions, it claims that we voluntarily submitted to its repeated rapes and torture. The Japanese government continues to treat us as if we are not human. I believe that the officers in the Japanese government are fathers and mothers - would they act the same way if their daughters were in my situation? We were dragged there when we were young and our youth was robbed. As young girls, our innocence and youth were beaten and taken from us and our voices and cries for help were muffled and smothered with the stench of Japanese soldiers. Now, as elderly women, although we may be physically frail, we have the strength of spirit to give voice to those young girls.

The Japanese government must acknowledge and admit to its crimes and claim responsibility for these atrocities. The Japanese government is mistaken if it is simply waiting for all of us to die. Eighteen former comfort women died last year. Many have died but our memories and history live on in the voices of the younger generation and written resolutions, such as this one introduced by Congressman Honda. The Japanese government should officially apologize and provide reparations. Reparations symbolize the Japanese government's acknowledgment and responsibility for these atrocities. I am 81 years old. Money will not change my life, heal my scars, or make my memories change. I have received money in the past from the Korean government, but I donated my one hundred million won (approximately \$100,000 US) to different charities and foundations, particularly ones that work with orphans and orphanages. I was not able to study or receive an education as a young girl because I was an orphan. If I had been able to receive an education, perhaps I wouldn't have been in the situation I was in as a young girl. I don't want the money that will come from reparations. I want the responsibility of the Japanese government that the reparations symbolize. Governments must know that there is a price to pay for human rights violations and war crimes. Governments must know that our bodies and our innocence have real value and worth. Governments must know that we will not forget. There are nine of us living in a "House of Sharing" with me. We are all in our eighties. Time continues to slip away for us, but not for our cause. We sincerely recognize the U.S. Congress for caring about the cause we have waged and the unbearable pain we have all carried. My wish is that the resolution passes as soon as possible. And that it will send a strong message to the Japanese government to acknowledge its crimes and provide official redress, including an apology and reparations.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/lee021507.htm>

**Statement of
Lee Yong-soo**

**Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on
Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women
Thursday, February 15, 2007**

Chairman Faleomavaega and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to come before you today. I am pleased to join with Ms. Jan Ruff O'Herne of the Friends of Comfort Women in Australia and Ms. Koon Ja Kim of the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium to share our stories.

I would also like to thank Representative Michael Honda for introducing House Resolution 121, which expresses 'the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan 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.' You have just heard Congressman Honda explain the circumstances that compelled him to sponsor this legislation. Now we would like to add our personal histories to the conversation.

This is a story that I told nobody until just a few years ago, because the shame of my shattered childhood haunted me through the rest of my life. Some of the details of my life story you will find shocking. You will think these are the details of a movie script or novel about cruelty. I can assure you that these are the true things that happened to me.

My Early Life

I was born in 1928 in the Korean city of Taegu. My family was poor and nine of us lived in a single, small house: my parents, my grandmother, my five brothers, and myself. I only had one year of formal education and spent most of my childhood caring for my younger brothers and doing household chores so my father and mother could work outside our home to support the family.

At the age of 13, I also began working in a factory and tried to return to school, but the heavy burden of work prevented me from focusing on my studies. To tell the truth, I was not a highly motivated student, although I did enjoy music lessons and was told I had a pretty singing voice.

During World War II, when I was 15, I was drafted to the training group for the Voluntary Corps in Ch'ilsong Elementary School. Boys and girls lined up separately for training, and we did exercises and marched in neat lines. We also had to march home at the end of each day. Our lives were highly regimented.

In the autumn of 1944, when I was 16 years old, my friend, Kim Punsun, and I were collecting shellfish at the riverside when we noticed an elderly man and a Japanese man looking down at us from the hillside. The older man pointed at us with his finger, and the Japanese man started to walk towards us. The older man disappeared, and the Japanese beckoned to us to follow him. I was scared and ran away, not caring about what happened to my friend. A few days later, Punsun knocked on my window early in the morning, and whispered to me to follow her quietly. I tip-toed out of the house after her. I left without telling my mother. I was wearing a dark skirt, a long cotton blouse buttoned up at the front and slippers on my feet. I followed my

friend until we met the same man who had tried to approach us on the riverbank. He looked as if he was in his late thirties and he wore a sort of People's Army uniform with a combat cap. Altogether, there were five girls with him, including myself.

We went to the station and took a train to Kyongju. It was the first time I had been on a train. In Kyongju we were put up in a guest-house. We stayed in the guest-house for two days, during which time two more girls joined us. Now there were seven of us. We boarded a train and passed through Taegu where I could just see my home through the broken window. I suddenly missed my mother. I began to weep, saying I wanted to go home. I pushed the bundle of clothes away and continued to cry, asking the man to let me get off. He refused. Exhausted, I finally fell asleep as the train just kept on going. We must have traveled for several days.

Beating and Torture

We got off the train at Anju, in P'yongan province, and were led to what looked like an ordinary residential house. An elderly woman was keeping the house on her own. Food was short, and we were given boiled potatoes and corn. We felt very hungry and sometimes during our stay there we would pinch apples from the tree. The Japanese man who had led us from Taegu punished all of us if any single girl did something wrong. We had to stand on small round clubs, holding large bottles filled with water in our hands. Or he would beat our palms and the soles of our feet with sticks. He would ask one of us to bring him water to drink, and if the girl was slightly slow in doing what was asked, he would beat all of us. Any excuse prompted a beating. We became so scared that we tried not to upset him in any way.

In the winter, we froze, feeling ice form all over our bodies. If we complained of the cold, he would beat us. We shivered and tried to keep our frozen hands warm, doing everything behind his back. The two girls who had joined us in Kyongju were taken away, leaving the five of us who had set off together at the beginning of our journey. We remained in Anju for about a month and then boarded a train once more to travel to Dalian. We stayed overnight in a guest-house in Dalian. The following morning we were given soup and steamed bread. We boarded a ship and were told that a convoy of eleven boats would be sailing together. They were big ships. We were taken into the last one. It was already crowded with Japanese sailors. We were the only women.

New Year's Day 1945 was spent on board. The ships stopped in Shanghai, and some of the sailors landed for a short break on shore. We were not allowed to disembark. I was summoned on deck and sang for the men. Afterwards, an officer gave me two rice cakes. I shared them with the other girls. The ships started to sail again but often halted because of bombing. One day our ship received a direct hit. The other ships were destroyed, but only the front of our ship was damaged. Men shouted and screamed outside our cabin. The ship was tossed about, and I suffered with severe seasickness. My head was splitting with pain, and my stomach seemed to turn upside down. I remember crawling towards the bathroom, throwing up as I went along, when I was grabbed by a man and dragged into a cabin. I tried to shake him off, biting his arm. I did my best to get away. But he slapped me and threw me into the cabin with such force that I couldn't fight him off. In this way I was raped. It was my first sexual experience. I was so frightened that what actually happened didn't sink in at the time. I vaguely thought that this man had forced me into the room just to do this.

People kept shouting that we would all die since the ship had been torn to pieces. We were told to put life-jackets on and to stay calm. We thought we were going to drown. Dying seemed better than going on like this. But the ship somehow managed to keep going. Later I found out that I was not the only one who had been raped. Punsun and the others had also suffered that same fate. From then on, we were often raped on the ship. I wept constantly, until my eyes became swollen. I was frightened about everything. I think that I was too young to hold a grudge against my aggressors, though looking back I feel angry and full of the desire for revenge. At that time I was so scared I didn't even dare look any man squarely in the face. One day I opened the window of our cabin and tried to jump into the water. It would have been better to end my life then and there, I thought. But the water, blue-green and white with waves, scared me so much that I lost the courage to throw myself out.

Eventually we arrived in Taiwan. When we disembarked I couldn't walk properly as my abdomen hurt so much. My glands had swollen up in my groin, and blood had coagulated around my vagina. I could walk only with great difficulty, since I was so swollen that I couldn't keep my two legs straight.

The man who had accompanied us from Taegu turned out to be the proprietor of the comfort station we were taken to. We called him Oyaji. I was the youngest amongst us. Punsun was a year older than me and the others were 18, 19 and 20. The proprietor told me to go into a certain room, but I refused. He dragged me by my hair to another room. There I was tortured with electric shocks. He was very cruel. He pulled out the telephone cord and tied my wrists and ankles with it. Then, shouting '*konoyaro!*' he twirled the telephone receiver. Lights flashed before my eyes, and my body shook all over. I couldn't stand it and begged him to stop. I said I would do anything he asked. But he turned the receiver once more. I blacked out. When I came round my body was wet; I think that he had probably poured water on me.

Life in the Comfort Station

The comfort station was a two-storey Japanese-style building with 20 rooms. There were already many women there when we arrived. About ten, all of whom looked much older than us, wore kimonos. There was a Japanese woman, the proprietor's wife. We changed into dresses given to us by the other women. The proprietor told us to call them '*nesang*', 'big sister' and to do whatever they told us to. We began to take turns to wash their clothes and cook for them.. The food was again not enough. We ate gruel made with millet or rice. I was terrified of being beaten; I was always scared. I was never beaten by soldiers, but I was frequently beaten by the proprietor. I was so frightened that I couldn't harbor any thoughts of running away. After having crossed an ocean and not knowing where I was, how could I think of escape?

The rooms were very small. Each was big enough for two people to lie down in. At the entrance of each hung a blanket in place of a door. The walls and floor were laid with wooden boards, and there was nothing else. We were each given a military blanket and had to sleep on the bare planks. One day, a man came in and asked my name. I was still frightened and just sat in a corner shaking my head without answering. So he said he would give me a name, and began to call me Tosiko. After that day I was always called Tosiko in the station.

We mainly had to serve a commando unit. They were not in the slightest way sympathetic towards us. They wore uniforms, but I had no idea whether they were from the army, navy or air force. I served four or five men a day. They finished their business quickly and left. Hardly any stayed overnight. I had to use old clothes, washed thoroughly, during my period. Even then I had to serve men. I was never paid for these services.

There were frequent air raids, and on some days we had to be evacuated several times. Whenever there was a raid, we were forced to hide ourselves in mountain undergrowth or in a cave. If the bombing ceased, the men would set up make-shift tents anywhere, on dry fields or in paddies, and they would make us serve them. Even if the tents were blown down by the wind, the men didn't pay any attention but finished what they were doing to us. Those men were worse than dogs or pigs. They never wore condoms. I don't remember ever having a medical examination.

One day, while we were in an underground shelter, the comfort station collapsed in a bombing attack. Our shelter was buried under the rubble. We dug through the soil, trying to get out. After a while we saw light through a small hole. I was incredibly relieved to be able to look out and shouted 'At last I can see outside!' Then I smelt smoke, and blood gushed out of my nose and mouth. I lost consciousness. The proprietor's wife and mistress both died. As the house had collapsed, we were moved into a bomb shelter at the foot of a hill, and there we again had to serve the men. After a while, the proprietor got hold of some material and built a rough and ready house. It didn't take him long. We continued to serve the men. In the end I was infected with venereal disease and the proprietor gave me the injection of the serum known as No. 606, which was used before penicillin became widely available. The fluid had a reddish tint. The disease stayed with me for a long time because I had to continue to serve men before I was clear. So I had to have constant injections. There was no hospital or clinic in the vicinity. Medical care such as it was was haphazard.

Apart from going to the bomb shelters we weren't allowed out at all. We were warned that if we tried to venture beyond the confines of the station we would be killed, and I was sufficiently scared not to try anything. The men we served in the unit were all young; they seemed to be 19 or 20 years old, not much older than we girls were.

One evening, a soldier came to me and said he would be in combat later that same evening and that this battle would mark the end of his early life. I asked him what his commando unit was. He explained that one or two men would fly an airplane to attack an enemy ship or base. They would be suicide pilots. He gave me his photo and the toiletries he had been using. He had come to me twice before and said he had got venereal disease from me. He said he would take the disease to his grave as my present to him. Then he taught me a song:

*I take off with courage, leaving Sinzhu behind,
Over the golden and silver clouds.
There is no one to see me off:
Only Tosiko grieves for me.*

Until then I had known we were somewhere in Taiwan, but because we were kept in such close confinement and isolation, I had no idea of exactly where. From his song I learned we were in Sinzhu.

When we were evacuated to avoid the bombing we stole sugar cane. We were that hungry. But if we were caught we were beaten. We were not allowed to speak in Korean. Again, if we were caught doing so, we were beaten.

The War Ends

One day, one of the older girls who normally hardly spoke a word to us announced that she, too, was Korean. She told me, in Korean, that the war was over. We hugged each other and wept with joy. She held my hand tightly and told me I must return to Korea. We could hear people shouting and running about. This confirmed to us that the war was really over. By the time we had calmed down, the proprietor and the other women who had been at the station before us were nowhere to be found. We walked to a refugee camp by the pier. It looked like a warehouse. We were given balls of boiled rice which had dead insects mixed in. We waited for a ship. I was scared even then that someone might drag me away, so I sat, shaking with fear, in a corner wrapped in a blanket. I kept crying so much that my small eyes got even smaller.

We finally got a ship. When it arrived in Pusan, the barley was green. As we disembarked, someone sprayed us with DDT and gave us each 300 won. There were four of us: Punsun, two other girls, and myself. We said farewell and went our separate ways. I got a train to Taegu. I kept weeping and tried to hide myself from other passengers in fear that someone might take me away again. I found my house, just as run down and poor as before. My mother asked if I was a ghost or a real person and fainted.

After my return, I couldn't dare think about getting married. How could I dream of marriage? Until recently I had suffered from venereal disease. My parents and brothers did not know what I had been through; I could not tell them. My father was upset merely because his only daughter wouldn't get married. Both my parents resented the fact that they weren't able to see me hitched before they died. I worked in a drinking house which also sold fishballs, and I ran a small shop on the beach in Ulsan. For some time I ran a small market stall selling string. Then I worked as a saleswoman for an insurance company. I gave up when I began to get too old.

Return My Youth to Me!

In 1992, encouraged by the existence of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, I told my story. It poured out from me and I felt so relieved, but I was also faced with the question, How many more years can I live?

I am grateful that the Korean Council is trying to help us. These days I hum a song, Katusa, putting my own words to the tune: 'I am so miserable; return my youth to me; apologize You dragged us off against our own will. You trod on us. Apologize... This lament, can you hear it, my mother and father? My own people will avenge my sorrows.'

I visited my parents' graves the other day. I said to them: 'Mother, I know you won't come back to life however much I may wish for it. My own people will avenge me. Please close your eyes and go to paradise.'

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you and tell my story. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/kot021507.htm>

Prepared Testimony

Mindy L. Kotler
Director, Asia Policy Point
Before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and
the Global Environment
Of the
House International Relations Committee
February 15, 2007

Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Japan's contemporary responsibilities for the war crimes of Imperial Japan from 1932 to 1945. I am honored and humbled to be here with Mrs. Jan Ruff O'Herne, Grandma Kim Koon-ja, and Grandma Yong Soo Lee. Thank you Mr. Honda for your inspiring opening to this hearing. I am director of Asia Policy Point, a nonprofit research center studying the U.S. policy relationship with Japan and Northeast Asia. My personal research focus is how historical reconciliation or lack thereof affects U.S. foreign policy in Asia.

If I may, I would like to first submit, for the record, five supporting documents on Japan's involvement in establishing the Imperial Military's Comfort Woman system.

They are: an excerpt from the 1978 wartime memoirs of former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone where he states he established comfort stations (*iansho*) in Balikpapan, Netherlands East Indies (Borneo); the August 4, 1993 "Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the result of the study on the issue of 'comfort women'"; a translation of an October 16, 2006 editorial in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* dismissing the Comfort Woman history; a chart outlining the disappearance of any mention of comfort women in Japanese textbooks from 1997 to 2006; a map of "Where 'Comfort Stations' Were"; and a paper by Professor Alexis Dudden on the December 2000 Woman's International Tribunal on Military Sexual Slavery by Japan; and a paper on the Asian Woman's Fund by

Professor Andrew Horvat of Tokyo Keizai University's International Center for the Study of Historical Reconciliation.

I am tasked with bringing today's issue, House Resolution 121 calling on Japan to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its establishment and coordination of military rape camps or more euphemistically the wartime "comfort stations, into the present and responding to the Government of Japan's response to the Resolution.

Why is a war crime, a crime against humanity that happened over 60 years ago relevant to the United States and to its leadership in the world? Why is it important for Japan now to give an unequivocal apology for one of its greatest, albeit long ago misdeeds?

The answer is two-fold. **Japan is a great nation and important ally to the United States.** It is that simple.

Japan's reasons for refusing an unequivocal apology to the Comfort Women unfortunately undermine these positions. The explanations have unsettling parallels to the dismissal of the Holocaust, where the victims are recast as aggressors. More troubling, and unlike today's Germany, most Japanese leaders and especially the current Shinzo Abe government, hold retrogressive and pseudo-notions of Japan's wartime history.

You will be surprised to learn that over the past few months, Japan's most respected and widest circulation daily published editorials calling the Comfort Women system a "historical fabrication" and senior advisers to the Prime Minister have publicly expressed a desire to dilute or rescind the Kono Statement, the closest statement Japan has on record apologizing for the Comfort Women tragedy. And within this past week, prominent members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) decided to initiate Diet efforts to revise the Kono Statement and to send their colleagues to Washington to meet with U.S. congressional leaders on this matter.

The United States has an interest in its ally's political statements, especially those that have the potential to inflame emotions among our important regional allies such as South Korea, Singapore, Australia, The Philippines, and countries of great strategic importance to the United States such as China.

Japan's Equivocations

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

1. The Government of Japan has not extended an official government apology. An apology by a Japanese Prime Minister is an individual's opinion. 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.

2. The letters of apology to the Comfort Women by Japanese Prime Ministers (Hashimoto, Obuchi, Mori and Koizumi) do not constitute a government apology. The prime minister is not doing this with the approval of his Cabinet, thus these letters are only his personal views. Each letter is the same and does not personally address the individual recipient. Most important, note the first sentence of the so-called apology letter, which reads "in cooperation with the Government of Japan." An official apology should, however, read "on behalf of," which it clearly does not. Thus, Japanese prime ministers view these letters simply as a burden and an obligation.

The letters also **only** accompany the disbursement of funds to those women who are willing to accept Japan's atonement money. They have also not been included in the "atonement" settlement with the Dutch nor sent to any Indonesian survivors. Moreover, like all other Japanese war crime apologies, the letters are insincere. In 1996, then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said he would not sign the letters. The public disclosure of his reluctance led many to question the sincerity of the process. In the end, he did sign the letters and issued the first for the Fund in August 1996.

3. The "Kono Statement" is not an apology. On August 4, 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued a statement reporting on the results of an investigation of the veracity of the Comfort Women's claims. He announced that the Comfort Woman system was "Undeniably...an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day" and said that the "Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women." He, however, ends the statement with a hint that the Government will continue to study the issue ("continue to pay full attention to this matter, including private researched related thereto").

Most important, a Chief Cabinet Secretary is an approximate equivalent of a White House Press Secretary. An important government apology does not come from a press secretary. In addition, the statement was offered shortly after the fall of the one prime minister and barely five days before the beginning of another's government. In a word, Mr Kono was a lame duck, responsible to no one.

4. Current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said he would support the Kono Statement, but only under duress. The Prime Minister, under pressure from the Opposition party, said twice in the week before his early October trip to China that his government "respects" the Kono Statement but said, "in a narrow sense, there are no facts that endorse the existence of such a system of forced labor." His first expression of "respect" was so reluctantly made, that he was made to repeat it. Shortly after this admission, a senior member of the LDP said, "although the prime minister says he respects the Kono Statement, I don't think that is what he means." The Prime Minister is a member of several conservative groups, notwithstanding documentary evidence, that believe the Comfort Women were well-paid prostitutes supervised by independent operators outside military control.[\[1\]](#)

On January 29, 2007, the Tokyo High Court ruled that the government-owned broadcaster, NHK had altered a program on Comfort Women after meeting with then Chief Cabinet Secretary

Shinzo Abe (now PM) and possibly also with the current chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council Shoichi Nakagawa. The Court ordered NHK to pay compensation to a Japanese woman's rights group for the alteration of the program.

5. 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. Indeed, the Foreign Ministry worked very hard to distance itself from any institutional association. 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 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.

6. 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. The compensation for Indonesian survivors went directly to the government to build apartments; none of which have benefited any Indonesian Comfort Women. Survivors were also only given three years to respond to appeals from the Asian Woman's Fund to identify themselves. Men, who as boys claimed to have been also abused in this system, were also not included. For elderly, poor, generally illiterate and outcast women this was simply too little time for many to come forward.

The Dutch government negotiated a separate agreement with the Government of Japan for medical compensation for its survivors. In fact, the issue was so contentious in the Netherlands that the Dutch foundation that usually coordinated Japanese war crime compensation, the Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts, refused to work with the AWF. The Fund thus had to "create" a new foundation in the Netherlands, the Project Implementation Committee in the Netherlands (PICN), to identify survivors and to manage the disbursement of funds.

Recently, the Government of Japan released in a Diet session the figures of compensation and sources of funding. From 1995 through 2002, the AWF raised roughly \$5 million from the public for "atonement payments" and through 2007 used \$14 million from the Government of Japan for medical and other payments. Altogether the Fund spent \$19 million for the Comfort Women with operating cost being \$27 million.

The breakdown is as follows:

a) total government money for support projects is "about

1,400,000,000 yen"

b) total government grants for AWF's running cost and other projects is about 2,791,000,000 yen

c) total donations is "565,005,636 yen"

d) total amount government spent on AWF is about 4,191,000,000 yen (a +b)

e) total money AWF spent for former comfort women is about 1,965,000,000 yen (a+c)

f) total AWF spent is 4,756,000,000 yen(a+b+c)

7. It is not true that the Asian Woman's Fund was terminated because so few women remain. It is estimated that only 40 percent of the remaining survivors have been compensated by the AWF. The Fund was never intended by anyone to be a permanent body and its mandate was only for 10 years. The time was up. The AWF is not comparable to the German Future Fund (GFF). It is a Fund intended simply to deal with one past issue and then move on. Unlike the GFF, AWF was never designed to be an organization on which to build a new, open relationship of trust. It was a formula, a modality.

8. Treaties have not taken care of all compensation issues. Neither the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal from 1946-48 nor the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty note or include the Comfort Women atrocity in their documents. The reality of this war crime was not acknowledged in the international community until 1993.

The boiler plate expression "subsequent international agreements" used by Japanese diplomats to summarize other war crime related accords, refers primarily to the 1965 Japan-Korea Treaty of Normalization by which Korea gave up all further demands for reparations from Japan, and the 1972 agreement between Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka and Chinese leaders that the PRC would not seek compensation from Japan for war damages. In return, however, it was understood that Japan would actively support the PRC's economic development. In the case of both China and Korea, Japan did this by means of soft loans.

Again, in neither case was the issue of Comfort Women mentioned or recognized. Both treaties were signed out by brutal, dictatorial regimes eager to win cover for their own egregious human rights record.

9. Mention of *Hwang Geum Joo v. Japan* is simply not relevant. It was a decision about U.S. federal court jurisdiction. It has no relevance to resolutions passed by Congress.

Effect On US Foreign Policy

The Japanese government's unequivocal admission of past wrongdoing would demonstrate a deep commitment to historical truth and to human rights. Such a public commitment could only strengthen, not weaken the U.S.-Japan relationship that is now said to be based on “common values.”

An unequivocal admission of past wrongdoing would remove a lingering, corrosive issue weakening the ties between Japan and major U. S. allies in the region, namely ties with South Korea, the Philippines and Australia.

An unequivocal admission of past wrongdoing would highlight the differences between the murderous, kidnapping criminal regime in control of North Korea and democratic, open Japan.

For Japan

An unequivocal apology for a past program of state-sponsored sexual violence against women solidifies Japan's long support of the myriad international standards and rulings regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

Among the most important are:

-- 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children.

-- 1930 ILO Convention # 29 Against Forced Labor

--The Geneva Convention and its additional protocols.

-- Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the Declaration identifies the right to “seek, receive, and impart information,” under which experts have included survivor rights to know the truth.

-- The 2000 UN Security Council resolution 1325, which asked member states to guarantee the protection of women in conflict situations. Japan it should be noted is a leading member of Friends of 1325, who advocates for the resolution's implementation.

--Support by the G-8 and the OECD for Resolution 1325 (Japan is a member of both)

--Japan's new (2005) enforceable laws against human trafficking. However, the US State Department still reports that Tokyo does “not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.”

For the International Community

Japan is the precedent for today's understanding of humanitarian issues and sexual violence in war. The most important tool in prosecuting/stopping sexual violence in war in the future is the precedent of past recognition of sexual violence, enslavement, and exploitation. Japan's wartime military rape camps are the modern precedent for all the issues of sexual slavery, sexual violence in war, and human trafficking that so dominate today's discussion of war and civil conflict—Bosnia, Rwanda, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Darfur, Burma.

The Japanese "comfort women system—complete with doctors assigned to military units to check with STDs and condoms (with the brand name, Attack #1!) requisitioned by the thousands--consisted of the legalized military rape of subject women on a scale, over a period of time that was previously undocumented.

Japan is not oblivious to the sufferings of women during wartime. In 2004, the Japanese ambassador to the United Nations noted, “the manner in which women are often obliged to live during armed conflict is indeed a moral outrage. They are usually neither the initiators of conflict nor the wagers of war, and yet their gender is often specifically targeted. This situation should in no way be tolerated.”

Japanese diplomats and citizens do understand that the legal battles and emotional and physical traumas of the Comfort Women have led to justice and restored honor many women survivors of today’s ethnic and sectarian violence.

Can Japan Do the Right Thing?

Yes, and there is precedent for leadership by the prime minister to circumvent Japan’s political process. That example was just last year. [\[2\]](#)

In July 2006, Prime Minister Koizumi brushed aside legal and bureaucratic prevarication in order to resolve a longstanding injustice: a misleading government-sponsored campaign of the mid-1950s encouraging emigration to the Dominican Republic.

Koizumi said, “Throughout this period the emigrants had faced tremendous difficulties in settling down because of the insufficient preliminary research and disclosure of the information. The emigrants thereafter underwent the years of hardship that were combined with unfortunate circumstances.”

Instead of appealing a landmark court decision, Koizumi declared, “The Government is truly remorseful and apologizes for the immense hardship the emigrants have undergone caused by the response of the Government at that time.”

He added the “the Government has judged, in full consideration of the facts that the emigrants are now aged, among other factors, that the case of the emigrants to the Dominican Republic must be solved as early and as fully as possible. In light of this, the Government has decided to offer a special one-time payment for each of the emigrants.”

In so many ways what Koizumi has offered these hapless victims of the Japanese government deception is the same as what the comfort women want. A Government apology, a government reparation, and a government not hiding behind a legal sophistries.

Conclusion

Rep Mike Honda (D-CA) was right in identifying “equivocal” as the most important element in Japan’s war crime apologies. It is the Government of Japan’s continual splitting of hairs in its apologies that has allowed this issue to fester and responsibility to be avoided. None

of the apologies to the Comfort Woman by Japanese government officials would constitute an official apology in Japan. They have been *kabuki* theater, representations of remorse for the benefit of a foreign audience unfamiliar with Japanese law.

This resolution carries the force of the political will of Congress and the American people. It asks the Japanese government to cease injuring itself through a craven and unnecessary denial of objective fact. It asks the Japanese government to cease tarnishing the reputation of the Japan-U.S. security relationship, an alliance vital to the security of the region. For governments in the region, U.S. silence on the Comfort Women contributes to a sense of U.S. complicity in trying to bury the past. And bury is the right word in this instance – for the comfort women themselves – the only persons who can accept an apology – are passing on.

Passing this resolution is a good and decent thing to do. There is wide, bipartisan support for it. H.Res.121 projects U.S. leadership and attention to the important -- but currently unresolved -- issues of currently dividing America's Asian allies and exacerbating differences between countries in Asia. .

Reconciliation and regional peace in Asia are at the heart of Mr. Honda's resolution. The Comfort Women issue is not yesterday's problem. It is today's and, if it is not dealt with now, it will be tomorrow's problem as well. A multitude of vital U.S. interests are served by a definitive resolution of this moral issue currently dividing the governments and peoples of Asia. It is also good for our very close ally Japan, as its government seeks long-overdue recognition of Japan's sixty-year history of constructive, responsible and resolutely peaceful membership in the modern world community.

Mindy L. Kotler is director of Asia Policy Point, a Washington, DC nonprofit research center that studies the U.S. policy relationship with Japan and Northeast Asia.

[1] "LDP Panel Starts Review of Kono Statement, Arranging US Visit," *Sankei Shimbun* (27 January 2007) p 5, Translation by the US Embassy, Tokyo.

[2] *Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi toward the Early and comprehensive Solution of the Case of the Emigrants to the Dominican Republic*, July 21, 2006, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2006/07/21danwa_e.html. Another good example happened just a few days before this hearing. On February 6, 2007, Japan's Supreme Court ordered the government to pay healthcare benefits to Japanese atomic bomb survivors who emigrated abroad. As the Presiding Judge Tokiyasu Fujita said, "To claim that the time limit had expired goes against the principles of faith and trust, and is not acceptable." "Top Court: Hiroshima Must Pay Hibakusha," *The Asahi Shimbun* (English Edition) (7 February 2007), p 1.

<http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/110/soh021507.htm>

**Statement of
Ok Cha Soh, Ph. D.**

**Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives**

Hearing on

Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women
Thursday, February 15, 2007

Chairman Faleomavaega and Members of the Subcommittee:

It is an honor to appear before you this afternoon. I am grateful to the Chairman that this important topic is the first to be addressed in a hearing by the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment during the 110th Congress.

I appreciate the opportunity to share this panel with Dr. Mindy Kotler, who has done such significant work in bringing the issue of Comfort Women to the attention of the public, the press, and policymakers like yourselves.

I also am grateful for the remarks of Representative Michael Honda, who by introducing House Resolution 121 has taken on the mantle of your former colleague, Congressman Lane Evans of Illinois, who before his retirement last year championed the issue of Comfort Women through indefatigable efforts. Congressman Honda deserves much praise for his willingness to continue this effort.

Mr. Chairman,

We see the present through the past and see the future through the present.

The term “*Comfort Women*” is a euphemism referring to young women and girls who were tricked or abducted into sexual slavery during World War II by the Japanese Imperial government’s *Ken Pei Tai* security police and the Imperial Military. The total number of victims is unknown. Most experts agree that as many as 200,000 women and girls became sexual slaves in an international network of brothels and rape camps organized under Japanese government sponsorship for use by Japanese officers and enlistees. The large majority of the victims were Koreans, but the Japanese military also captured and used Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Dutch, and Indonesian women in this system. This wartime rape has been identified as a war crime and as a crime against fundamental human rights. It is simultaneously recognized as a form of slavery and trafficking in women and children.

Over six decades have passed since the end of World War II, yet the atrocities of the Japanese Imperial Army still remain as grief and sorrow in the heart of each individual; the wounds of the victims are yet to be healed. It has been almost 15 years since we began to pay attention to the long-concealed history of sex slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army. Stripped of their dignity and robbed of their honor even in their home countries, surviving Comfort Women were forced for many years to live their lives under the veil of shame, silently shouldering the burden of their horrific experience.

It is indeed difficult for them to stand up as witness to the crimes committed against them. The consequences of revealing their long-kept stories may lead to embarrassment and pain.

Nevertheless, they broke the silence to proclaim that they can not die in peace unless they receive an official apology and reparations from the Japanese government during their life time.

To resolve the issue of sexual slavery during WWII, the surviving Comfort Women strenuously knocked on the doors of the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, numerous non-governmental organizations, and many other international human right groups. As a result, many international organizations have repeatedly petitioned the Japanese government to accept its responsibilities and to extend appropriate reparations to the victims.

Thus far, the Japanese government has largely ignored these recommendations and has failed to come forward with a minimally adequate apology, as I will disclose in a moment. The handful of surviving victims today are still anxiously awaiting justice. Time is running out for these

women because the survivors are advanced in age. They have waited a very long time. We believe they should wait no longer. As time passes by, more and more victims are passing away.

Racial, Ethnic, and Class Discrimination against Comfort Women

Overall, the Comfort Women system, defined as sexual slavery, is clearly an international crime regardless the ethnic and racial background of the individual Comfort Women. The women were treated as objects and used as property, deprived of their free will and liberty, and forced to provide sexual services to the Japanese Imperial Army. But in addition to this, there is ample evidence of pervasive and often violent discrimination within the Comfort Women system. [1], [2], [3], [4]. Women of non-Japanese or non-European origin were generally treated even worse in terms of conditions of life in the comfort stations. They face beatings and summary executions much more often. The evidence shows that indigenous women were treated most brutally of all. In short, the Japanese discriminated according to race, ethnicity, and poverty. There was also post-war racial discrimination of Comfort Women by the Allied forces, including the United States. At the end of World War II, the Japanese were defeated. Naturally, the power of dealing with the war crimes was in the hands of Allied forces, the United States. If those 200,000 girls and women who were subject to this brutal sexual slavery had been primarily European or American whites, do you think that the issue of the surviving Comfort Women would have kept ignored as it has been for all these years?

The example of the Batavia Trial speaks eloquently for this. In 1946, an Allied Military Tribunal convicted Washio Awochi and other Japanese war criminals for kidnapping Dutch nurses and forcing them into sexual slavery. Awochi was sentenced to ten years in military prison for his crime. That trial is often cited today as a key legal precedent in prosecution of suspects who organize mass rapes in war time as a crime against humanity. However, the Allied Tribunal concerned only crimes against Dutch women who happened to be in Asia at the outbreak of the war. Awochi surely deserved punishment for crimes against these women. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no Japanese government official, military officer or corporation was ever prosecuted for the far larger, longer-running, and even more deadly organized crimes committed against hundreds of thousands of *Asian* women during World War II. In particular, the Intelligence Services of our country, the United States, had clear evidence at the time of the criminal nature and operation of Japan's systematic sexual slavery of these women and girls, yet the U.S. did not bring charges against those who had persecuted and murdered these women. It is no secret that at that time there were pervasive, demeaning stereotypes of Asian cultures in general and Asian women in particular that were common in the West. Whether it was intentional or not, these prejudices had the practical effect of protecting the criminals who approved and operated the Comfort Women system of sexual slavery from prosecution for their crimes.

Japan's continuing refusal to acknowledge responsibility for the war crimes is not only an injustice for surviving comfort women. As important as that is, Japan's present actions undermine international law, particularly law against organized rape and sexual enslavement during war. This affects not only World War II survivors, but also women from Yugoslavia, Africa, Latin America, and other parts of the world where rape recently has been used a weapon of war. The issue before us today is not simply redress for a historical wrong, it is also essential to the success of future prosecutions of criminals who use rape as a weapon of war.

Asian Women's Fund

The former Japanese prime minister, Tomiichi Murayama offered a “near apology” for war time atrocities against Korea, China, and other Asian nations and announced the establishment of a private fund for payments to surviving Comfort Women. The private fund plan explicitly rejected Japanese governmental responsibility for the system of military brothels. The Comfort Women themselves and many supporters strongly criticized the private fund plan.

The private fund, called the Asian Women’s Fund, was headed by Mrs. Miki Mutusko, widow of former Prime Minister, Miki Takeo. In 1996, she resigned as Chair of the Asian Women’s Fund, protesting her own government’s delay in offering apologies and the lack of sufficient public interest in fund. The fund’s announced goal was to raise \$20 million, but actually raised only about one quarter of that. It has issued payments directly to 285 former Comfort Women. The 285 women undoubtedly represent a very small percentage of former Comfort Women, some in the Philippines and Taiwan, but not many in Korea. The majority of surviving Comfort Women, especially in Korea, refused to accept the funds. There are several reasons for this. The South Korean government and other governments at last began providing old age pensions and medical help to many survivors. For example, equally important, without a minimally acceptable official apology from the Japanese government, many Comfort Women regarded the Japanese money as a thinly veiled insult—a perception that was re-enforced by public comments from Japanese officials.

For quite some time now, the issue of payment of reparations to Comfort Women has not been about the money as such, which is almost negligible in Japan economy. The issue is responsibility. In the absence of an unequivocal spoken apology from the Japanese government, the payment of reparations would not constitute acceptance of responsibility for past acts. Japan today seeks to avoid payment of reparations for the same reason. It has failed to make a clear apology: it is unwilling, or unable, to accept responsibility for the crimes it committed, even in the egregious case of enslavement, rape and murder of thousands of women and girls.

The Asian Women’s Fund requires any surviving Comfort Women to sign legal papers that would end any legal rights she has to seek redress in the courts of any country for the suffering she has faced at the hands of the Japanese government or Japanese corporations. Similarly, the supposed ‘atonement’ fund refuses to pay damages to the families of Comfort Women who were murdered during World War II or died during the 50-plus years between 1945 and when the fund was created. This practice raises questions. If the fund is truly intended to express remorse and atonement for crimes committed, though what sort of logic does it now require the surviving Comfort Women to abandon their rights?

The Asia Women’s Fund is to be disbanded on March 31, 2007, just a few weeks from today.

Apology Issues

The Japanese government has acted specifically to avoid responsibility for clearly recognized international crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, crimes such as mass impressments of women into slavery, trafficking in slaves, organized rape, massacres of Comfort Women in Burma and in other war zones, horrific medical ‘treatments’ calculated to induce sterility, torture, and extrajudicial executions of women who refused or became too ill to provide sex to Japanese soldiers.

During the past 15 years a few Japanese government officials have made near-apology statements regarding Comfort Women issues. Nevertheless, even the personal spokesman for former Prime Minister Murayama specifically denied under questioning that the Prime Minister had acknowledged that there was a ‘system or organization’ committing crimes against these women, and specifically denied that the Japanese Imperial Army was responsible for obvious

and well-documented crimes. It is also worth noting that Murayama was the only Prime Minister from an opposition party elected since 1945 and that his term in office was cut short due to rejection by their military and Diet of even his weakly worded statement of regret. He failed to obtain support in the Diet for an official apology by a margin of almost 2 to 1. In the end, Murayama's remorse has been directly rejected by subsequent governments, who have preferred to water such statements down even further.

This rejection stance is embraced to this day by many of the most senior figures in the Japanese government, including the increasingly influential armed forces. One of the recent examples is the ongoing rejection of responsibility for war crimes by the current education minister, who has barred textbooks that even mention the abuse of comfort women until the government can come up with an even more innocuous explanation for how these were treated.

Ranking members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) speak openly of seeking a 'biological solution to the Comfort Women problem.' These men do not face sanctions or reprimands from LDP leaders. The 'biological solution' group favors refusing to make any acknowledgment of crimes against these Comfort Women, reasoning that once they die, the anger at the Japanese government will die with them.

Furthermore, the Japanese government today refuses to assist the U.S. Department of Justice in identifying World War II-era criminals responsible for crimes against Comfort Women, U.S. prisoners of war, and for biological warfare experimentation on prisoners. The U.S. Department of Justice is mandated to exclude such people from traveling to the United States, and has repeatedly requested records and other routine assistance in this task from the Japanese Ministry of Justice. Japan's government refuses to cooperate. How can this be squared with that government's claims of accepting responsibility for its WWII era crimes?

The excuse that the issue is over 60 years old is also weak. It was not until the 1980s, for example, that the United States formally apologized and paid compensation -- \$20,000 per person -- for the illegal internment of Japanese Americans during the WWII and it took 46 years for the United States fully apologize for its actions.

I do not agree that Japan's current government has ever frankly acknowledged that the Japanese Imperial Army played a central determinative and organizing role in crimes against these Comfort Women. Not even close. Public relations gestures simply do not add up to an apology, most particularly when even that gesture has been subsequently rejected by the government.

Legal Issues

Fifteen former Comfort Women filed suit in U.S. District court in September 2000, seeking redress from the Japanese government and from corporations under the terms of the U.S. Alien Tort Claims Act. After many years of court hearings and petitions, the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in February 2006 that the claims of the women constituted non-judicial "political questions," Thus leaving it to the Executive Branch to seek redress for these women. The Executive Branch has not been helpful. Indeed, it went out of its way to frustrate the Comfort Women's legal petition. There is a striking difference between how the Executive Branch has aggressively assisted certain claims made by the Holocaust victims and other Europeans against Germany after the WWII, yet has ignored, denied or even obstructed similar claims made by Asian victims seeking reparations from the Japanese government and corporations.

This inconsistency can also be found in the U.S. government's position concerning slave-labor victims from Europe and forced laborers during Japan's war time expansion. Japan has paid reparations for exploitation of slave laborers to several countries (including the Netherlands and

Switzerland) and Japan is now responsible for making equal settlements with other countries. But the United States has not sought reparations on behalf of surviving U.S. nationals who survived slave labor at Japanese corporations.

Overall, the difference between modern Japan's reaction to crimes against humanity during WWII is strikingly different from that of modern Germany. Germany has formally apologized and compensated many victims. Japan refuses. Unfortunately, the U.S. government has tacitly accepted Japan's refusal, and at some points even abetted it.

One standard – and unconvincing -- argument is that Japan has already addressed their obligations under the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. The Treaty mandated that Japan enter into reparations agreements with Allied countries, whose territories had been occupied by Japan. The United States negotiated this treaty, while China, Taiwan, and North and South Korea, who were most directly affected by the Japanese war machine, were not allowed to participate. Further, in 1951, correspondence with the Dutch government, Japan agreed that the 1951 Treaty did not bar individual damage claims arising from the war. But today, Japan has discarded that statement and now says that such claims are barred by the Treaty. Perhaps most fundamentally, Japan today claims that its government-to-government deals in 1951 have freed it from either moral or legal responsibility to frankly admit, either in words or in deed, its responsibility for the crimes of the Comfort Women system. Our view is that the 1951 treaty cannot block private litigation even it was intended to waive reparations between governments.

The Japan-Korea Basic Treaty was signed in 1965. In the Treaty, the issues of Comfort Women were not discussed at that time. Funds paid to Korea under the Treaty were focused on the overall economic modernization of Korea as a whole, rather than for individual compensation.

Comfort Women issues at the U.N. and ILO

The issues of military sexual slavery by Japan was raised at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in 1992. Radhika Coomaraswamy (1996) and Gay McDougall (1998), special rapporteurs on systematic rape, sexual slavery, and slavery-like practices during wartime for the Sub-Commission subsequently visited Korea and other Asian countries, interviewing dozens of surviving Comfort Women and experts in international humanitarian law. Their formal reports to the United Nations unequivocally stated that Japan has violated international human right laws. Both recommended that Japanese government accept the demands of victims for formal apology and legal reparations. A parallel investigation by the expert committee appointed by the International Labor Organization reached much the same conclusions.

In September 2001, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights made concluding observations concerning the Comfort Women issues. The Committee expresses its concerns that compensation offered to wartime Comfort Women by the Asian Women's Fund, which is primarily financed through private funding, has not been deemed an acceptable measure by the women concerned. [5] Precisely because it was viewed as a device through which the Japanese government was attempting to evade its responsibilities rather than fulfill them. The U.N. Committee urged Japan to find an appropriate arrangement in consultation with the organizations representing the Comfort Women a means to compensate the victims in a manner that would meet their expectations, before it is too late. The Committee also urged Japan to ensure that school textbooks and other teaching materials present these issues in a fair and balanced fashion, which reflects the aims and objectives of education. Finally the Committee requested that Japanese government submit a report to the U.N. detailing the steps that it had taken to fulfill these requests. Special rapporteur Coomaraswamy completed her nine year term

in 2004, she reported that the Japanese government had still not fulfilled its obligations for apology and redress for victims of military sexual slavery.

To date, the Japanese government's effort efforts to carry out the U.N. recommendations has been clearly inadequate. [6] In 2005, 42 million people signed a worldwide petition saying that the Japanese government should not be granted a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council unless they admit the issues of Japanese military sexual slavery and officially apologize for those war crimes committed during WWII. These petitions were part of the reason that Japan was not granted a permanent seat on the United Security Council.

Conclusion

Japanese government continues to reject its responsibility for systematic sexual slavery, rape and other crimes against the Comfort Women of WWII. It is in Japan's own interest, as well as in the best interests of the U.S.-Japanese relations, for the present Japanese government to squarely face its obligations under international law.

We request that the Japanese government openly acknowledge and accept the responsibility for the war crimes committed by the Japanese Imperial government and Army during WWII.

They should open the archives that are now in the Japanese government's hands of Japan's Imperial government, military, and corporations and encourage research in these files. They should assist governments around the world in investigating and prosecuting Japanese Imperial-era criminals, particularly those responsible for crimes against Comfort Women. Finally the Japanese government should encourage open study and discussion of Imperial-era Japanese government and military crimes. They should publicly repudiate current Japanese officials who demean and attack surviving Comfort Women, or who promote 'biological solutions' to Japan's historical problems.

Permit me to recall former Congressman Lane Evans, who used to say regarding Comfort Women: "I believe we have a duty; we have a duty to help those who need our help. We have a duty to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves....Because in the end, people will remember not the words of their enemies, but the silence of their friends. We must not remain silent."

It is our duty that we give those women the dignity and the respect they deserve.

Chairman Faleomavaega, thank you once again for the invitation to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the Members of the Subcommittee might have.

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