

THE TRUTH OF
THE JAPANESE MILITARY

“COMFORT WOMEN”

Compiled by Northeast Asian History Foundation



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동북아역사재단
NORTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY FOUNDATION

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Preface

Throughout World War II, innumerable women were forced to serve as sex slaves in brothels set up by the Japanese military in China, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. The Japanese referred to them as “comfort women.” Although most of these women are no longer alive, those who survived are still suffering from the physical and psychological trauma inflicted upon them more than seventy years ago.

In response, these women have been demanding an official apology and compensation from the Japanese government. In Seoul, South Korea, a group of such women, assisted by supporters, have held demonstrations in front of the Japanese embassy for over twenty years. In their “Wednesday demonstration,” so called because it takes place every Wednesday, these women have been demanding an official apology and proper compensation from Japan for the atrocities and cruelties committed against the comfort women. Yet the Japanese government’s response has not only fallen short of expectations, Tokyo has also added insult to injury through its words and actions.

The crimes committed against these women are an unresolved international issue, with increasing demand for redress by Japan. The debate came to the forefront in 2007, in part because of the passing of the United

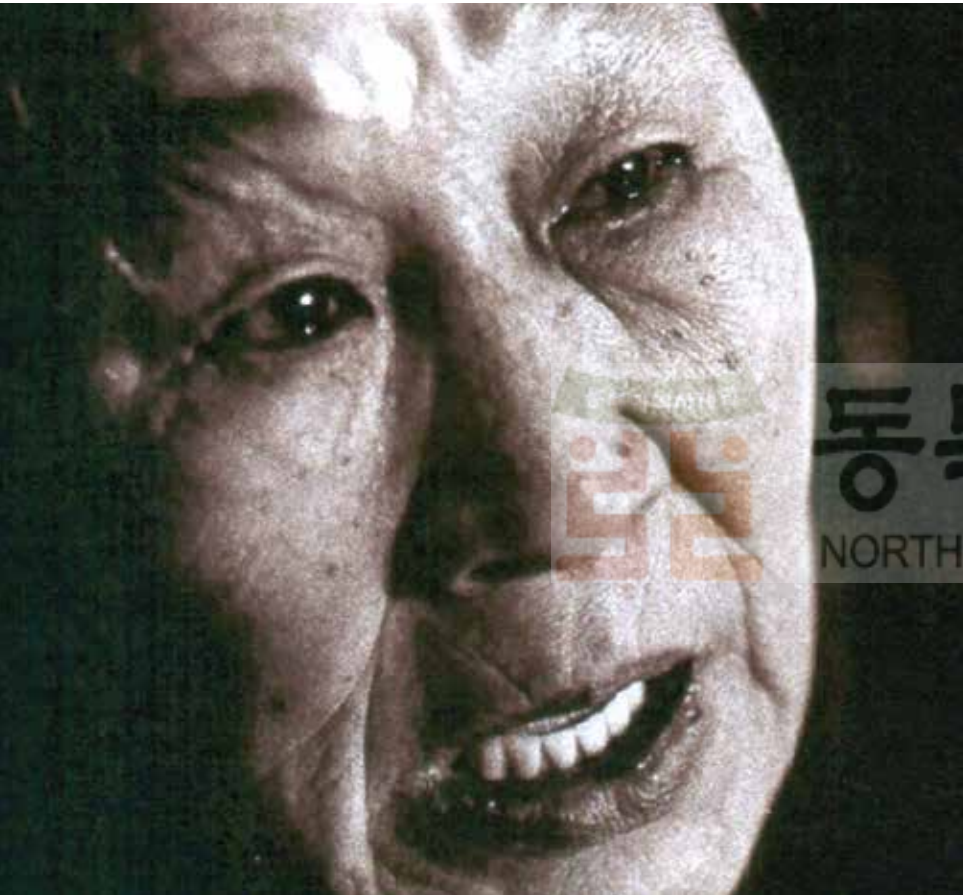
States House of Representatives House Resolution 121, which declared that the system of forced military prostitution by the Japanese Government was “unprecedented in its cruelty” and “one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century.” The Resolution also called on the Japanese government to educate present and future generations about this inhumane war crime. In 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council recommended for the third time, following the calls in 2001 and 2005, that Japan take action. The state legislatures of Illinois, New York, and New Jersey also passed comfort women resolutions in 2013. Overall, from 2007 to 2013, 12 comfort women resolutions were passed in the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, the European Union, and Taiwan. In Japan, 43 Local assemblies including Kyoto City, Takarazuka City, and Shimane Prefecture passed resolutions beginning in 2008. The Japanese central government has been reluctant to respond to the demands of the comfort women victims, and government discussion on the issue at the director-general-level of the Korean and Japanese foreign ministries only took place recently in April, May, and July 2014.

Who were the comfort women? Why should people demand that Japan acknowledge its crimes and take action now?



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WHO ARE THE
“COMFORT WOMEN”?



Cry of a comfort woman

Comfort women were confined to so-called “comfort stations”—military brothels—built by the Japanese armed forces throughout the Japanese empire and areas under its occupation, including China, Indonesia, Singapore and Papua New Guinea. These women were forced to give “sexual comfort” to the Japanese soldiers by having sexual intercourse with them.

The women, recruited from the areas colonized or occupied by Japan, consisted of Koreans, who made up the majority, Taiwanese, Chinese, Indonesian, East Timorese and Filipinas. The victims included some Dutch and Japanese women, as well. The number of comfort women, though unknown, is estimated to range from 50,000 to more than 200,000.



Sign of a "comfort station"

The women, most of whom were under twenty years of age and sexually inexperienced, were from rural and poor backgrounds. Many of them were deceived into sexual slavery by promises of factory work, nursing, or voluntary service. Deception and intimidation were often used. Many others were abducted. Procurement of the women was performed by brokers who worked in close coordination with local and military police.

The comfort women system came into full operation after the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937. The Japanese army established comfort stations throughout the war zone and was involved in their operation directly and indirectly until Japan's defeat in August 1945.

After the war, the reality of the comfort women system remained unnoticed by the public for decades. Like other sex crimes, the systematic rape committed by the Japanese military marked the surviving victims with shame and forced them to keep their painful past a secret. It was in 1991 when Kim Hak-soon came out as the first former comfort woman to make a public testimony of her experience.

Kim Hak-soon (then 67) was the first comfort woman victim to publicly reveal herself at a press conference and file a suit against the Japanese government in 1991. She passed away in 1997.



“COMFORT STATIONS” OF THE JAPANESE MILITARY

Bangjin, North Korea.
The building now used as a hospital was a “comfort station” called “Gingetsu-ro”. It remains almost exactly as it was. There used to be a reception at the right hand side of the entrance, and the portraits of the women were displayed on the wall across the reception.



Shanxi Province, China.
These Yaodong (houses for local) in Jingxi, Japanese Military headquarters after the invasion of Yu Prefecture in Shanxi Province, were where members of the Anti-Japanese Resistance were imprisoned and tortured. For women, the Yaodong became rape centers. Between 1942 and 1944, Wan Aihua, Gao Xicui and Zhou Xixiang were confined here and gang-raped for prolonged periods of time.

During the period that began with the Manchurian Incident in 1931, which was followed by the outbreak of war with China in 1937 and the Asian-Pacific War in 1941, and continued until Japan’s defeat in 1945, the Japanese Military invaded and occupied many areas in Asia. The Japanese Military set up “comfort stations” throughout Asia wherever it invaded, including Korea and Taiwan, which were then Japanese colonies, and in Japan itself. Women from all over Asia were confined there, and continually raped by Japanese officers and soldiers.

Women enslaved by the Japanese Military not only Koreans, Taiwanese and Japanese, but also local women from wherever the Japanese military was stationed: China, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Netherlands, East Timor, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, India and Vietnam.

This map shows the locations of “comfort stations” established by the Japanese Military, including places where combat troops abducted, confined and raped women on their own. Various sources are used to prepare this map: testimonies and documents of the victimized women, former Japanese soldiers, and local residents; official documents and military related documents including evidence from military trials, soldiers’ dairies, records of battles, and memoirs.

Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace



Nanjing, China
“Kinsui-ro”, (the building in the center with a big roof) was used as a “comfort station” in Nanjing. In 1939, Pak Young-sim was brought from the Korean Peninsula to this “comfort station”, where about 20 Korean women were also confined. The room where Pak Young-sim stayed, No. 19 on the second floor, still exists as seen in the photograph.



Marobo, East Timor
As a young girl, Marta Abu Bere was brought to a room in this “comfort station”, where she stayed in a room with four other women. They did construction work during the day, and were raped by soldiers at night. The hot springs in Marobo were used as a health resort for Japanese soldiers.



Penang, Malaysia.
A former Japanese military “comfort station”, now the Tong Lock Hotel. In 1943, Rosalind Saw was forced into a truck and brought here by Japanese soldiers. Most of the some 50 women confined here were Chinese, except for three or four Malaysians. Rosalind Saw was not freed until Japan lost the war.



- * The yellow line shows the furthest extent of the Japanese invasion.
- * Country and city names, as well as borders, are current as of 2008.
- * In cases where places names have changed significantly, the former name is given in parenthesis.
- * In the case of Burma, the county name by present military regime is given in parenthesis.
- red testimonies of “comfort women” survivors
- blue Japanese soldiers testimonies and journals
- yellow official and military related documents
- ▲ green witness testimonies and others

Photos: Furusawa Kiyoko, Kim Yeong, Nakahara Michiko, Nishino Rumiko, Nobukawa Mitsuko



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COMFORT WOMEN
OR SEX SLAVES?



Top: Korean comfort women discovered in Burma in September 1944.

Bottom: Park Young-sim, a former comfort woman, points to herself in a photo.

The term comfort women was taken from Japanese records of the time and is now widely used to refer to the former sex slaves. Considering that these women were demeaned and made to exist solely for Japanese soldiers' "comfort," there is no denying that the term glosses over the sexual violence which constitutes the very point of the comfort women issue. Furthermore, in light of the universal values shared by humanity, the term represents patriarchal values and militaristic ethics.

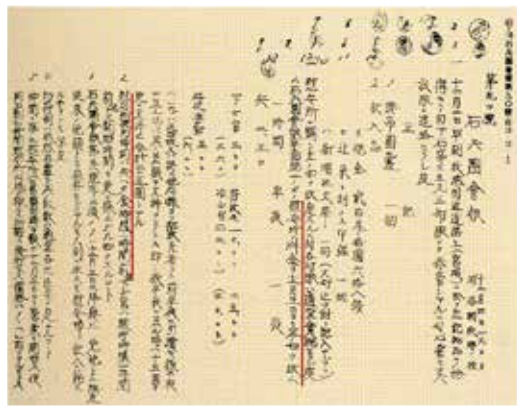
"Sexual slavery," on the other hand, came into use as a more appropriate term to describe the reality of the women's victimization (rape by the Japanese military) in a United Nations Special Rapporteur's report.

While the term comfort women is in common use in East Asia, "military sex slaves" is more generally used in the international community now. Neither term is respectful of the victims' loss of dignity, though.

Thus, just a glance at the issue of terminology reveals that the comfort women problem is essentially one related to a universal value: human rights.



Korean comfort women in an Okinawan prison camp in 1945



The 90th issue (December 4, 1944) of a bulletin published by the Ishi unit of the 62nd Division of the Japanese army, which was stationed in Okinawa. The bulletin lists the prices and hours of operation of the comfort station.

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
Psychological Warfare Team,
Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater.
APO 689

Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49.	Place interrogated: Date interrogated: Date of Report: By:	Lodo Stockade Aug. 20 - Sept. 10, 1944 October 1, 1944 T/S Alex Terichi
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Prisoners: Date of Capture: Date of Arrival at Stockade:	20 Korean Comfort Girls . August 10, 1944 August 15, 1944
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SECRET

PREFACE:

the information obtained from the "comfort girls" and two Japanese soldiers captured in August, 1944 in the mopping up operations in Burma.

Japanese recruited these Korean women for which they lived and worked, to serve the Japanese soldier, and their families.

More than a prostitute or "comfort girl" is peculiar to the "comfort girls" have been found in the Japanese Army to fight. This means "comfort girls" recruited by the Japanese Army in Burma. The Japanese Army shipped some 703 of these girls to Burma in 1942.

RECRUITING:

Early in May of 1942 Japanese agents arrived in Korea for the purpose of enlisting Korean girls for "comfort service" in newly conquered Japanese territories in Southeast Asia. The nature of this "service" was not specified but it was assumed to be work connected with visiting the wounded in hospitals, rolling bandages, and generally making the soldiers happy. The inducement used by these agents was plenty of money, an opportunity to pay off the family debts, easy work, and the prospect of a new life in a new land - Singapore. On the basis of these false representations many girls enlisted for overseas duty and were rewarded with an advance of a few hundred yen.

The majority of the girls were ignorant and uneducated, although a few had been connected with "oldest profession on earth" before. The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to work for the "house master" for a period of from six months to a year depending on the family debt for which they were advanced.

SECRET



Top: A Japanese prisoner of war information report filed with the United States Office of War Information. The report was based on questioning of twenty Korean comfort women and two Japanese comfort station operators.

Inset: Korean comfort women captured in Burma in 1944



3



WAS THERE
NO FORCED
RECRUITMENT?



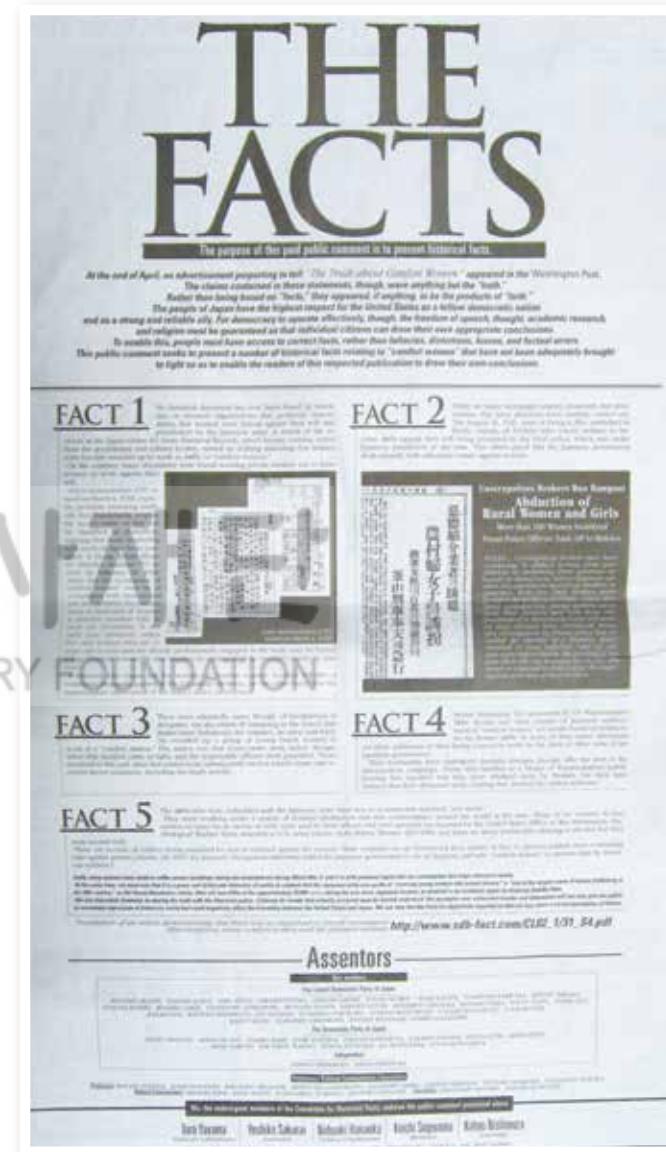
One of the Korean comfort women speaking at an international hearing in Tokyo in 1992

Remarks that deny the forced recruitment by the Japanese military have been made by many influential, conservative political leaders in Japan. When discussions began in the United States House of Representatives in March 2007 on House Resolution 121, which demanded Tokyo's formal unequivocal apology to the comfort women and pressed the Japanese government to take responsibility, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his cabinet made statements which reflect the current Abe administration's historical view.

- “There is no evidence to back up (the assertion) that there was coercion as initially defined” in the role of “the Japanese military or government” in recruiting comfort women.
- There were apparent cases of coercion by private recruiters for the military, but “it was not as though military police broke into people’s homes and took them (women) away like kidnappers,” and “testimonies to the effect that there had been a hunt for comfort women are complete fabrications.”
- The Japanese government refused to issue an apology to former comfort women in response to the passing of House Resolution 121 by the United States House of Representatives.

Exposed to a storm of criticism at home and abroad, Prime Minister Abe extended an apology “as Prime Minister” to the former comfort women, declaring that he stood by the Kono Statement of 1993, which acknowledged the official involvement of the Japanese Imperial Army as well as coerced recruitment. The apology, however, was eviscerated even before receiving comment. Hakubun Shimomura, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and Prime Minister Abe’s closest aide, said, “I believe some parents may have sold their daughters. But that does not mean the Japanese army was involved.” Prime Minister Abe himself did not retract his denial of coerced recruitment, despite his endorsement of the Kono Statement.

Such backtracking by Japanese political leaders in their remarks on coerced recruitment explains why Japan has been unable to gain the trust of neighboring countries in its sincerity regarding the comfort women system and other war crimes. Its double standard is now being criticized in the United States, as well. The Washington Post, in its editorial “Shinzo Abe’s Double Talk,” published on March 24, 2007, pointed out that if Japan seeks international support in the kidnapping cases of its citizens by North Korea,



A Japanese right-wing group ran an advertisement in a major American newspaper denying that comfort women were forced to serve during World War II (The Washington Post, June 14, 2007).



Professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi, of Chuo University, in Japan, unveiled documents proving the Japanese military was directly involved in recruiting comfort women for Japanese soldiers during World War II (*Asahi Shimbun*, January 11, 1992).

it should straightforwardly accept responsibility and apologize for its past crime of the abduction, rape, and sexual enslavement of tens of thousands of women during World War II.

The Japanese government's fixation on denying coerced recruitment, though resonant with only a small number of people, seems to obscure the big picture of the comfort women issue: that the Japanese military and government were involved in not only recruiting and transporting women, but also in establishing and operating the brothels where the women were forced to live in servitude, deprived of freedom and dignity. Although the Japanese military's abuses are an established fact supported by disclosures from official records and testimonies in various countries, and despite the numerous recommendations for Japanese action by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the fifty-five Comfort Women resolutions passed by national and local legislatures in several nations, including local assemblies in Japan, the Japanese central government has been very reluctant to accept the demands of the victims and the recommendations of international society.



A Japanese military document related to the recruitment of comfort women which was found by Professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi



Dead bodies of Japanese soldiers and two women assumed to be comfort women in Yunnan, China

Check box

Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the results of the study concerning “comfort women”

August 4, 1993

The government of Japan has been reviewing the issue of the wartime comfort women since December 1991.

I wish to announce the findings of this study.

“As a result of the study which indicates that comfort stations were operated in extensive areas for long periods, it is apparent that there existed a great number of comfort women. Comfort stations were operated in response to the requests of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women. The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.”



Documents from the Taiwanese Development Company, many of which are connected with the Japanese military comfort women system.

Check box

The testimony by Kim Bok-dong conveys well the tragedy of a 15-year-old girl, who was falsely told she would be working at a factory that makes military uniforms, but was instead taken to comfort stations

I was born on May 1, 1926, in Yangsan, Gyeongnam Province, the fourth among six daughters. By 1941, all of my elder sisters had been married off for fear that otherwise the Japanese might take them away. I was considered too young to be a target at the age of 15, so I stayed behind. One day, the heads of our village came to our house, along with a Japanese man in yellowish clothes. They demanded that one of us girls be sent to a military uniform factory to serve our country since there were no sons in the family. That was how I was taken away.

Upon arriving at Guangdong, we boarded a military truck that drove us to a place that looked like a clinic. There, I struggled with all my might not to be put on a wooden examination board, but an army surgeon forced my clothes off and examined my lower body. After the examination, we were taken to a corridor with about 30 rooms in total. We were each assigned to a room tagged with a number and the comfort woman's name underneath. We could not leave because the Japanese man and the Korean man who took us there were on guard outside our rooms. That night, the surgeon who examined us came into my room. I was so terrified that I ran to the back of the room, but he chased

after me and hit me awfully hard across the face. After being beaten up for a while, I couldn't even feel my cheeks—it was impossible not to do what he wanted. Normally, I had to (sexually) serve about 15 men a day, but on weekends, the number was beyond belief, I think it was more than 50.

One morning, soldiers came in a truck and told us to pack our stuff and get on it. After we travelled for a while, first on that truck, then on a military cargo ship, we arrived in Hong Kong. We stayed in Hong Kong for about three months and then were on the move again, first to Singapore, then Indonesia a few months later, then Malaysia and finally back to Indonesia. In Singapore, we were sometimes sent to military camps deep in the mountains. About ten comfort women would be dispatched at a time, surrounded by soldiers. Each camp would transform a tent into a temporary comfort station partitioned with plywood boards to accommodate three to four at a time. The last place we went was back to Singapore. Korea regained its independence while we were there, though it was five years before I could take a ferry to Busan and get back home to Yangsan.

—From *Korean Comfort Women Drafted by the Japanese Military*, vol. 2 (1997)



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JUST PROSTITUTES?



Comfort women being transported

A key fallacy about the comfort women system is that it was a form of “licensed prostitution.” Some people have repeatedly stressed that comfort women were voluntarily engaged in sexual intercourse for money, as is seen in the March 2007 international edition of *Newsweek*, which contains an article contributed by a Japanese right-wing supporter who calls the women “prostitutes.”



Comfort women on their way to be tested for STDs



Japanese soldiers waiting in line in front of a comfort station

Because the comfort women system was modeled on the licensed prostitution system, there may have been similarities in format between the two. Yet, while the Japanese government was solely in charge of regulation of the licensed prostitution system, the military and the government still played important roles in operating the comfort women system. The Japanese state either operated brothels directly or controlled or supervised

contracted civilians, who were required to submit daily or monthly reports. Recruitment of the women was performed by brokers who worked in close coordination with local police and military police. The Japanese armed forces provided all necessary transportation for the women, such as space aboard military trucks, trains, and warships.

Furthermore, the women's freedom was severely restricted in the comfort



The old site of a comfort station in Jiqingli, Hankou, China

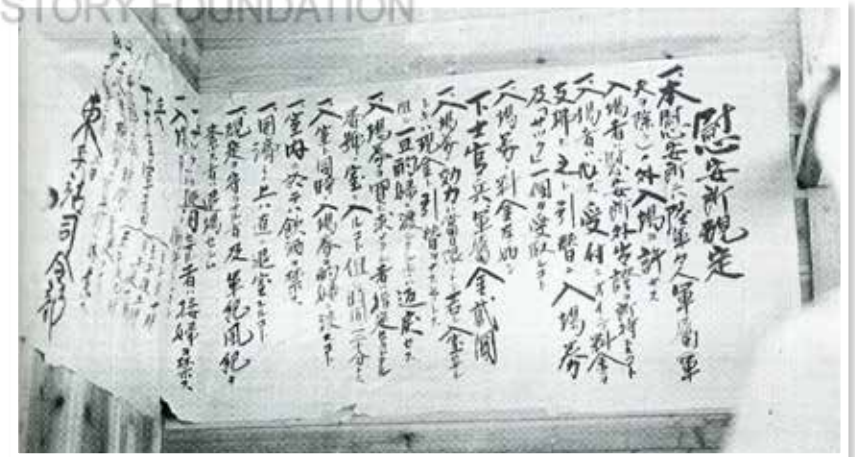
stations. Recruited in many cases through abduction, deceit, and intimidation, the women were confined to the stations, where they were deprived of freedom and forcibly raped by Japanese soldiers. It is acknowledged in the memorandum issued in 2007 by the United States government's Congressional Research Service that the sexual intercourse was not voluntary and that widespread rape had been committed. The women had no free choice of where to live or freedom of movement. Nor did they have the liberty of quitting, a key point of differentiation from licensed prostitutes. The comfort women were maintained specifically for the benefit of soldiers, and comfort women were even abandoned on the battlefield.

The comfort women system was for a military purpose, whereas licensed prostitution was commercial. While Japan insists that the system was established to prevent the rape of local women, they do acknowledge that the comfort women were considered a tool for the soldiers' successful performance in war.

Comfort women were not the same as licensed prostitutes, but were victims of a state-run system of sexual violence. Nevertheless, the day has yet to come when the Japanese government formally acknowledges its responsibility and offers a sincere apology and reasonable individual compensation to the victims.



Military scrip used at a comfort station



Regulations for a comfort station in Shanghai

Check box

Three types of military comfort stations

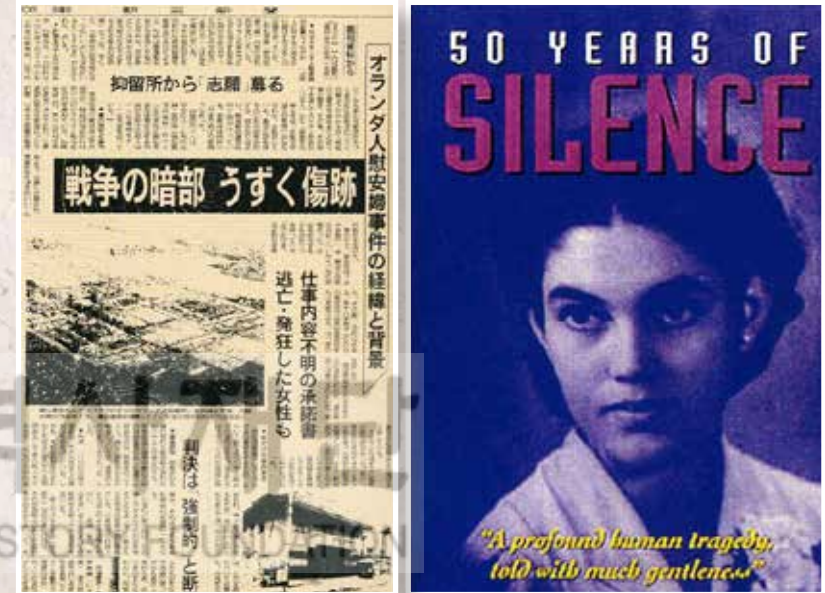
There were three types of comfort stations varying by operation: brothels operated directly by the military; brothels managed by civilians who had been selected and licensed by the military, which also controlled and supervised them; and existing local brothels designated as institutions for Japanese soldiers for a certain period of time. The second type was the one noted most frequently in Korean victims' testimonies and seems to have been the most common.



Wooden barracks of a comfort station in Shanghai

Check box

A Dutch woman's testimony



Left: A newspaper article about the Dutch comfort women (*Asahi Shimbun*, August 30, 1992)
Right: *50 Years of Silence* was published by Jan Ruff-O'Herne in 1994.

As a victim of the system, Jan Ruff-O'Herne testified before the United States House of Representatives that "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. 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."

—Statement of Jan Ruff-O'Herne, Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific and the Global Environment, Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives

5



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일본군 위안부 피해자

DID JAPAN OFFER
A SUFFICIENT
APOLOGY AND
COMPENSATION?

평화비: 1992년 1월 8일부터 일본대사관 앞에서 열린 일본군 '위안부' 문제해결을 위한 수요시위가 2011년 12월 1



Wednesday demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, Korea.

On June 26, 2007, the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs passed House Resolution 121 by an overwhelming majority, calling on 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.”

The Japanese government claimed that it has already apologized for the comfort women system. The “apology” is said to be the 1992 statement made by Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato and another statement made by his successor Yohei Kono the following year. In the Kono Statement, the Japanese government admitted to and apologized for the involvement of the Japanese armed forces in the coercion and recruitment of comfort women.

Despite these apologies, however, the Japanese government has consistently disclaimed any legal responsibility regarding this issue. Yet, it also created the Asian Women's Fund based on the idea that Japan would take moral responsibility towards former comfort women from a humanitarian standpoint.

Established in 1995, the Asian Women's Fund implemented atonement projects by collecting money from Japanese citizens on a voluntary basis. Due to the lack of response from the former comfort women, the fund ended operations in March 2007 without any notable achievements.

While criticizing the Japanese government for doing nothing about the comfort women issue is incorrect, it is also inaccurate to say that all the



Two public hearings addressing the issue of crimes committed by the imperial Japanese army were held in Tokyo in 1992 and 2000.

Check box

Asian Women's Fund

In 1995, Japan established the Asian Women's Fund for atonement in the form of material compensation and to provide each surviving comfort woman with a signed apology from the prime minister, stating "As Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women." The fund was funded by private donations and not government money, and has been criticized as a way to avoid admitting government abuse. Because of the unofficial nature of the fund, many comfort women have rejected these payments and continue to seek an official apology and compensation.

problems were resolved or that Japan has "shown its best efforts." It is necessary to ask why reconciliation has not been achieved between Japan and its neighbors and why compensation has not been made to former comfort women in spite of the Kono Statement and the Asian Women's Fund.

Did the Japanese government offer a sufficient apology and compensation in an appropriate manner? It can be safely said that these problems are well laid out in House Resolution 121, introduced by Representative Michael Honda (D-CA). The major provisions of House Resolution 121 are:

- The Japanese government should formally acknowledge the Japanese Imperial Army's coercion of young women into sexual slavery (the presence of comfort women) and apologize to them.
- The Prime Minister of Japan should apologize in his official capacity.
- The Japanese government should publicly refute claims that the comfort women system never existed.
- The Japanese government should follow the recommendations of the international community and educate current and future generations about the comfort women system.

Although former Japanese prime ministers had issued apologies as individuals, neither the Diet nor the government had approved those statements. Nor did the Diet pass the Kono Statement. In short, no official apology has been offered by the state of Japan, which was wholly responsible for the plight of the comfort women.

Despite the Japanese government's denial, there are individuals and organizations that also hold it accountable for legal compensation. Presented as an agenda item in 1992 for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights by the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, the comfort women problem has been regarded as a human rights violation.

Recommendations have been made by United Nations organizations to the Japanese government to issue an official apology to the victims and to

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Japan's 'Comfort Women' Testify to Abuses

WWII Sex Slaves Begin Mock Trial to Pressure Country to Accept Responsibility

By David Saxe
Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, Dec. 8.—Stories of rape and brutality tumbled out of the old women—in anger, in tears and in cold calm—at the start of an extraordinary public challenge to Japan to confront the system of sexual slavery it set up for its army during World War II.

At the five-day mock trial, held in the heart of Japan's capital, women from Korea offered personal and videotaped accounts of being kidnapped and imprisoned in "comfort stations" to provide sex to demand for front-line Japanese soldiers.

The tribunal, arranged by international women's groups, will hear testimony from other Asian women this weekend. The Japanese government has steadfastly ignored the event, a silence the organizers claim underscores their charge that Japan has not accepted blame.

But even as the victims' accounts become grimly repetitious, those involved in the issue are struggling over how to put Japan's "comfort women" system into the perspective of crimes against women in other wars.

The debate is whether Japan's court of public opinion" in recognizing rape and sexual violence as a war crime. But she acknowledged legal progress in most courts has been slow, and Japanese courts have so far rejected claims of the victims on grounds of sexual servitude.

"The fact that the Japanese government is on the defensive is progress," she said. "They have been particularly stubborn. They could have responded in a way to settle this case five years ago."

In 1995, Japan set up a fund for private contributions to be used as compensation for the comfort women but balked at issuing an official apology. Relatively few of the victims accepted.

Under the bright lights at an auditorium packed with spectators, some of the Korean women who testified today expressed their anger.

"I hate Japanese soldiers! I can never forgive them! I am over 70 now, and I can never forgive" shouted Kim Young-Suk, who came from North Korea to testify. She said she was abducted at age 12, and her body is scarred from the beatings she endured.

"I didn't come here for money. I didn't come for pity. I want you to see that I lost my youth, my life. Unless the Japanese government comes to me to apologize, I will never forgive them."

At the opening of the mock trial, solidified women carry their makeshift altar to honor rape victims of the Japanese army in

The tribunal, arranged by international women's groups, will hear testimony from other Asian women this weekend. The Japanese government has steadfastly ignored the event, a silence the organizers claim underscores their charge that Japan has not accepted blame.



At the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, former comfort women testified to the atrocities they suffered, but the Japanese government ignored the proceedings (*The Washington Post*, December 9, 2000).

face its legal responsibility. Citing a recent report claiming that the Japanese government organized "rape camps" and systematically enslaved over 200,000 girls and women during World War II, United Nations Special Rapporteur Gay J. McDougall notes that Japan faces a stark choice. It must either accept legal responsibility, which includes the obligation to identify and prosecute surviving criminals, or shirk this responsibility and in so doing likely violate international law as well as Japan's international treaty obligations. To date, these recommendations remain unfulfilled, and the world is watching to see if Japan will ever face its past and educate its youth about Japan's mistakes.



Left: A new edition of *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho* (meaning "New History Textbook") was published by Jiyuusha and approved in 2011. This book does not refer to the comfort women.

Right: Ikuhosha Publishing Inc. published another textbook approved in 2011 that does not mention the comfort women either.

Check box

Radhika Coomaraswamy's reports to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

In her reports to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Radhika Coomaraswamy has written on violence in the family, violence in the community, violence against women during armed conflict, and the problem of international trafficking. A strong advocate of women's rights, she has intervened on behalf of women throughout the world seeking clarification from governments in cases involving violence against women. She has also conducted field visits: to Japan and Korea regarding the problem of comfort women; to Rwanda, Colombia, Haiti, Indonesia with regard to violence against women in war time; to Poland, India, Bangladesh and Nepal on the issue of trafficking; to the United States on women in prisons; to Brazil on domestic violence; and to Cuba on violence against women generally.



Taiwanese comfort women opposing the Asian Women's Fund and calling for an apology and compensation from the Japanese government (April 29, 2002)

Check box

Demands by the victims

In this context, the Special Rapporteur would like to reflect in detail the concrete demands made by former comfort women who want their voices to be heard by the international community and by the Government of Japan in particular. In response to questions raised by the Special Rapporteur, most former comfort women informed the Special Rapporteur that the Government of Japan should:

- (a) Apologize individually to each of the surviving women for the suffering they have had to endure. ... In addition, most victims felt that the apologies made at the time of the mission of Prime Minister Murayama [Tomiiichi] were not sincere enough, especially because his statement had not been endorsed by the Japanese Diet;
 - (b) Recognize that the drafting of approximately 200,000 Korean women as military sexual slaves and the establishment of comfort houses for the use of the Japanese Imperial Army were carried out in a systematic and forcible manner by and/or with the knowledge of the government and the army command;
 - (c) Recognize that the systematic recruitment
- of women for purposes of sexual slavery should be considered a crime against humanity, a gross violation of international humanitarian law, and a crime against peace, as well as a crime of slavery, trafficking in persons and of forced prostitution;
- (d) Accept moral and legal responsibility for such crimes;
 - (e) Pay compensation from governmental resources to the surviving victims. For this purpose, it was suggested that the Government of Japan should enact special legislation to enable a settlement of individual claims for compensation through civil law suits at Japanese municipal courts.

... In addition, former comfort women are requesting the following measures to be taken by the Government of Japan:

- (a) A thorough investigation into the historical facts of the issue of military sexual slavery during World War II, including publicizing all official documents and materials on the matter still existent in Japan and, in particular, in official governmental archives;
 - (b) The amendment of Japanese history books and educational curricula to reflect
- the historical facts which would have emerged from the investigation;
- (c) The identification and prosecution, under Japanese domestic law, of all perpetrators involved in the recruitment of military sexual slaves and the institutionalization of military sexual slavery.

— From Radhika Coomaraswamy's report



6



WHY SHOULD
COMFORT WOMEN
BE REMEMBERED?



On February 15, 2007, a number of comfort women—including Kim Gun-ja and Lee Yong-su from Korea and Jan Ruff-O'Herne from the Netherlands—testified in Washington, D.C., before the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Most of the victims who “came out” have passed away without receiving any apologies or compensation. Other surviving victims, whose exact number is unknown, await the end of their own pain and poverty, concealing the fact that they were once Japanese military comfort women. Not a moment should be lost in resolving this problem as there is little time left for the aging survivors.

Check box

The Little Girl's Peace Statue on the site of the Wednesday Demonstration



The Little Girl's Peace Statue installed in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to commemorate the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration (December 14, 2011).

On December 14, 2011, the Wednesday Demonstration memorialized its 1000th meeting by installing the Little Girl's Peace Statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The girl sits in a small chair and is dressed in traditional Korean women's attire with a bird sitting on her shoulder. An empty chair is placed next to her as a space for experiencing the comfort women's fighting spirit in the face of their abused human rights and dignity. On the same day, support groups for the comfort women commemorated the day in 44 other cities in nine different countries. Yet despite increasing international support, resolutions and recommendations remain unanswered, while old age takes its toll on the victims. Of the 237 former comfort women who came out after 1991 in Korea, 183 women have passed away, leaving 63 survivors at the end



A replica of the Little Girl's Peace Statue installed in front of the city library in Glendale, California, on July 30, 2013.



of 2011 and 56 as of 2013. The demonstration continues every Wednesday (1,137 on July 30, 2014).

Comfort women memorials have also been installed in the United States: a replica of the Little Girl's Peace Statue in Seoul in Glendale, a city near Los Angeles, California in July 2013, honoring the sixth anniversary of the passing of U.S. House Resolution 121, and a stone memorial in Bergen County, New

Jersey, in March 2013.

While similar efforts to install memorials are on-going in Los Angeles and New York City, the Japanese government uses its diplomatic missions and Japanese businesses to attempt to obstruct these memorials by pressuring American municipal officials and politicians.



Chronology of Events

1894-2014

Year	Month	Event
1894	8	The first Sino-Japanese War starts.
1904	2	The Russo-Japanese War starts.
1905	11	Korea is made a protectorate of Japan.
1910	8	Japan annexes Korea.
1914-1918		World War I
1925		Japan ratifies the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children, with reservations as to the application of the Convention to its colonies, that is, Korea, Taiwan, and Guangdong Province and as to the setting of the age of minority, making it 18 instead of 21.
1931	9	Japan invades Manchuria.
1932	1	Japan invades Shanghai and establishes military-controlled comfort stations in Shanghai.
1937-1945		Asian and Pacific War (World War II) The Japanese military establishes a network of comfort stations wherever it deploys troops.
1937	12	Nanking Massacre (Rape of Nanking)
1945	7	The Potsdam Declaration foreshadows the creation of an international war crimes tribunal for Japanese and German war criminals and defines crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
	9	Japan signs the instrument of unconditional surrender, the Japanese Instrument of Surrender.
1946	5	The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) is established in Tokyo to try Japanese war criminals.
1946-1948		The allied nations create "satellite" tribunals in Asia and the Pacific to try Japanese war criminals (Classes "B" and "C").

Year	Month	Event
1948		The Batavia War Criminal Court is held in Indonesia; includes a trial of Japanese military personnel who forced about 35 Dutch women to become comfort women.
1951	9	The San Francisco Peace Treaty between Japan and the Allied Powers is signed. The Japanese and Dutch governments exchange letters in which Japan asserts that the treaty allows private claims against Japan by Dutch Nationals as citizens of the Allied Countries of World War II.
1965	6	The signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea normalizes diplomatic relations between the two countries.
1988		Women's organizations in the Republic of Korea hear of the institution of comfort stations in the Japanese military and demand an investigation.
1990	7	The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, an NGO, is formed in the Republic of Korea.
	8	Kim Hak-soon, a former comfort woman of the Republic of Korea, testifies in public that she had been forcibly taken as a comfort woman by the Japanese military.
1991		A lawsuit is filed by Kim Hak-soon and others against Japan in the Tokyo District Court for damages and other compensation.
	12	The Republic of Korea's government requests the Japanese government to conduct an investigation. The Wednesday Demonstration starts in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.
1992	1	The Asahi Shimbun publishes the Japanese archive documents obtained by Professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi, a well-known Japanese historian and researcher, establishing the direct role of the Japanese military in maintaining a huge network of military brothels known as "comfort stations."

Year	Month	Event
	2	The comfort women issue is raised at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
	7	Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoichi Kato of Japan admits for the first time that the Japanese Imperial Army was in some way involved in managing military brothels.
1992		Hwang Geum-ju, a former comfort woman, speaks on her experiences at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Virginia, U.S.A. and the Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issue (WCCWI) is organized in Washington, D.C. This is the beginning of more than twenty years of comfort women activism in the United States.
	11	
1993	8	The Kono statement apologizes for the involvement of Japanese armed forces and coercion in the recruitment of comfort women.
1994	4	The United Nations Commission on Human Rights appoints Radhika Coomaraswamy as Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, with a special brief to investigate crimes against comfort women.
1995	7	The Asian Women's Fund is established through the initiative of the Japanese government.
	4	The United Nations Commission on Human Rights, bowing to intense pressure from Japanese representatives, adopts a "compromise" resolution that "takes note" of the Coomaraswamy report.
1996		The United States Department of Justice issues a "watch list" of 16 Japanese individuals who were involved in the comfort station business during World War II.

Year	Month	Event
1997	4	The comfort women issue is discussed in all middle-school history textbooks in Japan. (It should be noted, however, that by 2012, most of these statements will have been removed from such books.)
1998	12	The second report on comfort women investigated by Special Rapporteur Gay McDougall of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is released.
	6	Lane Evans (D-IL) and thirty other members of the United States House of Representatives introduce House Resolution 357, calling on the government of Japan to formally issue an apology and pay reparations to the victims of war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II.
2000	9	Fifteen former comfort women from Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines file a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of Washington, D.C., using the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789. This is the first time the issue of military sexual slavery is addressed in the U.S. court system, as well as the first time the government of Japan is named as a defendant.
	12	A mock Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery is held in Tokyo (December 8–12). Former comfort women from nine countries (North and South Korea, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor, the Netherlands, and Japan) testify regarding abuses they suffered. The tribunal indicts Emperor Hirohito of Japan in charge of crimes against humanity.
2001	7	House Representative Lane Evans introduces House Resolution 195 to call upon the government of Japan to formally issue an unambiguous apology; this is followed by a press conference at which former comfort woman Kim Sun-deok speaks.
	8	A hearing is held for the class action lawsuit filed by fifteen comfort women at the U.S. Court for the District of Columbia.

Year	Month	Event
	9	The U.N. Commission on Human Rights recommends to Japan that "victims of Japan during World War II must be compensated."
2001	12	A mock Hague Tribunal is held in the Netherlands. Japan's war criminals, all of whom are dead, are indicted on charges of war crimes.
		Judges Douglas H. Ginsburg, Judith W. Rogers, and Davis T. Tatel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit dismiss the appeal of the comfort women.
2003	6	United States Congresspersons Lane Evans, Michael Honda (D-CA), and others reintroduce House Resolution 226, which is voted down again.
		This was the first time that the comfort women issue was addressed exclusively as a violation of women's human rights, rather than as one of Japan and Korea's conflicts over the history of wrongdoings during World War II.
2004	7	The United States Supreme Court issues an order in the comfort women case <i>Hwang v. Japan</i> . The petition was granted, the judgment was vacated, and the case was remanded for further consideration in light of <i>Republic of Austria v. Altmann</i> .
		The United Nations and Amnesty International call for the government of Japan to provide direct compensation to former comfort women, criticizing the Asian Women's Fund as a Japanese government's tactic to avoid any official responsibility.
2005	8	The Korean government declassifies all documents related to talks on the 1965 Korea-Japan Treaty on Basic Relations. New revelations such as those involving comfort women, atomic bomb victims, and forced laborers on Sakhalin raises further issues of unresolved claims.

Year	Month	Event
2006	9	U.S. House Resolution 759, which urges Japan to formally acknowledge and accept full responsibility toward comfort women, passes the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives by unanimous vote for the first time after seven years of legal activism in American politics on behalf of comfort women. The House, however, does not consider the measure.
	11	Democrats win a large victory in the mid-term election and return as the majority party in the U.S. House of Representatives, a critical change for the political timing of the Comfort Women Resolution.
2007	1	House Resolution 121 is introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs by Congressman Michael Honda and other co-sponsors.
	3	The Asian Women's Fund is dissolved. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe raises controversy by challenging House Resolution 121 and denying the existence of coercion in the recruitment of comfort women.
	6-7	House Resolution 121 passes in the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, and moves to the floor of the House with 182 co-sponsors out of 435 members of the House and passes with unanimous consent (July 30, 2007).
	11	Passage of a comfort women resolution in the Netherlands. Passage of a comfort women resolution in Canada.
	12	Passage of a comfort women resolution in the European Union (27 member nations).

Year	Month	Event
2008	3	Passage of a comfort women resolution in Takarazuka City Assembly in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. As of 2013, 43 local assemblies in Japan had passed a similar comfort women resolution, adding to the growing international pressure on the Japanese government to “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for the coercion of young women into sexual slavery.”
	10	The Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issue holds a meeting on the first anniversary of the passing of House Resolution 121 and the promotion of global awareness in Virginia. The United Nations Human Rights Council recommends Japan take immediate action to correct its past wrongdoings towards the now octogenarian former comfort women who are passing away rapidly. It was the third time, after 2001 and 2005, that the UNCHR (the precursor to the UNHRC) called for action by the Japanese government.
2009	11	Passage of a comfort women resolution in Taiwan National Assembly.
	3	Passage of a comfort women resolution in City Council of Strathfield, New South Wales, Australia.
2010	3	Korean National Assemblymen of all parties organize the “National Assemblymen’s Society to Resolve the Comfort Women Issue” and send an official letter to the incoming Japanese government of Naoto Kan in June.
	6	The United Nations Human Rights Council releases “Thematic Report on Reparations for Women Subjected to Violence, A/HRC/14/22” by U.N. Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo, which stresses perpetrator government’s responsibility for resolution of the issue.

Year	Month	Event
2010	8	In the centennial reminder of the colonization of Korea by Japan, on August 25, 100 influential Koreans release a statement urging Japan to resolve the comfort women issue.
	5	The Constitutional Court of Korea rules that the South Korean government had failed to resolve the comfort women issue diplomatically with Japan and calls on the government for a more concrete and aggressive “dispute resolution process,” as stipulated in the 1965 Korea-Japan Claims Settlement Agreement. The Court rules that the Korean government’s failure constitutes unconstitutional negligence and urges government action. Following this ruling, the Korean government proposes talks on the issue twice in September and November 2011. The Japanese government refuses, repeating its position that the 1965 Korea-Japan Basic Treaty ended the possibility of future claims against Japan.
2011		The 2011 ruling of the Korean Constitutional Court, however, reignites the legal activism of Korean World War II victims, including comfort women, with renewed support from legal and civil communities in pursuit of the yet unresolved legal responsibilities of the Japanese government and Japanese businesses. The ruling also puts pressure on the Korean government to redress these unresolved issues through discussions with the Japanese government as per the 1965 Korea-Japan Basic Treaty’s dispute resolution mechanism.
	11	Two surviving Korean comfort women and two female Holocaust survivors meet in New York to publicly share their experiences in public.
	12	The Wednesday Demonstration memorializes its 1000th meeting by installing the Little Girl’s Peace Statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

Year	Month	Event
2012	5	The Museum of War and Women’s Human Rights opens in Seoul, South Korea.
	1-2	A comfort women resolution passes the New York State Senate and House.
	3	The Comfort Women Memorial is installed in Bergen County, New Jersey, in the United States, on March 9, World Women’s Day. The memorial is in Memorial Island Park in front of the Bergen County Court, and honors the memories of numerous comfort women of World War II, including Koreans, Chinese, Netherlanders, Filipinas, and Taiwanese. The fund raising for the memorial was started in July 2012 by a female librarian who felt resentful about the lack of response from the Japanese government in the five years following the passing of House Resolution 121.
		Passage of a comfort women resolution in the Kyoto City Assembly, in Japan.
		Passage of a comfort women resolution in the New Jersey State House.
2013		Passage of a comfort women resolution in the Illinois State House.
	5	The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the U.N. Committee against Torture repeats the request to the Japanese government to issue an official apology to comfort women victims and to face its legal obligation to compensate the victims and educate its youth about Japan’s past mistakes.
		Passage of a comfort women resolution in Shimane Prefecture Assembly, Japan.
		Passage of a comfort women resolution in New Jersey State Senate.
	6	From 2007 to 2013, 55 comfort women resolutions have passed globally in Japanese and Australian local assemblies, in the state legislatures of Illinois, New York, and New Jersey in the United States, and in the national legislatures of the United States, the Netherlands, Canada, Taiwan, and the European Union.

Year	Month	Event
2013	7	Korean-Americans in Glendale, a city near Los Angeles, California, install a replica of the Little Girl's Peace Statue for the first time overseas in commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the passage of House Resolution 121 in July, 2007. Similar efforts to establish comfort women memorials in Korean-American communities in Los Angeles and New York are ongoing. The Japanese government also obstructs these efforts on both coasts of the United States through organized pressure on city officials and city politicians through its diplomatic missions and business networks.
2014	4	Government discussions regarding the comfort women issue at the director-general-level of Korean and Japanese foreign ministries take place in April, and again in May and July.
2014	5	Along with similar efforts in Korean-American communities in other parts of the United States, on May 30, the Fairfax County (Virginia) establishes a Comfort Women Memorial in the Peace Garden behind the county government building. The memorial is a joint effort by capital-area Korean-American communities and the Fairfax County government.
2014	6	The Japanese government releases a report entitled "Details of Exchanges Between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Regarding the Comfort Women Issue—from the Drafting of the Kono Statement to the Asian Women's Fund."

Year	Month	Event
2014	7	Referring to the "comfort women," the United Nations Human Rights Committee recommends that the Japanese government investigate and punish sexual slavery and other human rights violations by its wartime military; give victims and their families justice and reparations; disclose all evidence; educate students and the public about the issue, including through textbook references; officially apologize and take responsibility for the human rights violations; and condemn attempts to defame victims or deny that the events took place.



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THE TRUTH OF
THE JAPANESE MILITARY

“COMFORT WOMEN”



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