

A Country-Specific Report to:

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

69th Session, Feb. 19- Mar. 9, 2018, Republic of Korea

Submitted by

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January 19, 2018

Recommendation:

CEDAW is urged not to request the Government of Japan to renegotiate with the Republic of Korea regarding the Comfort Women issue.

Main Points

1. The claim that comfort women were sex-slaves is a fabricated story. There is no historical basis for the claim. Comfort women were highly paid prostitutes, whose profession was accepted at the time.
2. The Government of Japan acted with the Republic of Korea on this issue out of courtesy during the 1990's, and not on the basis of factual findings. This generated serious misunderstanding.
3. Now the government of Japan realized that it must act on the basis of historical facts, and has been working consistently on this basis recently.
4. Thus, there is no basis for accusing the government of Japan. The agreement of December 2015 is the last courtesy. There is no need of amending this agreement.

1. Comfort Women Sex-Slaves Theory is a Fabrication

The Comfort Women system is an overseas version of prostitution practices which were publicly recognized in Asian countries at that time. Those recruited were volunteers and those sold by parents. By "selling" daughters, they could move away from serious debts. Many of those who became prostitutes returned to a normal life, and some became even wives of influential politicians or businessmen. Likewise, the Comfort Women were volunteers and those sold by parents. In fact, they were not "sex-slaves" either. They were paid highly. Comfort Women were warmly treated by Japanese soldiers, and some of them were married with them. The situation of the Comfort Women is well documented in the United States Office of War Information Psychological Warfare Team Report No. 49 in 1944,¹ which is preserved in National Archives and Record Administration in College Park, MD. , U.S.A. Some critic asserts that the contents of the report were influenced by the Japanese managers who interpreted questions in Japanese to comfort women who were interviewed for this report. But, at that time in Korea, the author of this document can assert, because the author was in Korea at that time, all young Koreans were able to speak Japanese well enough for the interviews. The report states that they were not sex-slaves as alleged, and they were not coercively recruited. These findings are supported by two serious academic publications written by professors from the Korean Peninsula; Professor

C. Sarah Soh and Professor Park Yuha.ⁱⁱ In addition, the compilation of testimonies from Japanese soldiers who went to China during the wartime coincide well with the U.S. military report.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, a Japanese writer, S. Y., wrote a fiction in which he claimed that he actually conducted “girl hunting” in Cheju Island of Korea in 1943 and acquired 205 young women and girls.^{iv} This book, *My War Crimes*, was published in Japan and later published in Korea in the Korean language. This was a source of confusion. On top of this, highly reputable Asahi Newspaper of Japan propagated this fiction as if it in fact took place. This misinformation was introduced to outside of Japan by George Hicks in his *The Comfort Women* published in 1995. This misinformation was picked up by Rdhika Coomaraswamy in her 1996 United Nations report, and was spread around the world. Y.’s book was discredited by a local news reporter and also by Professor Ikuhiko Hata in 1993.^v Asahi Newspaper confessed its errors in reporting Y. in 2014.^{vi}

2. A Polite Attitude of the Government of Japan toward the Republic of Korea in the Past

Japan had a special relationship with Korea which was annexed to Japan with a treaty of 1910. After the defeat of Japan in the Second World War and the independence of Korea from Japan, the Japanese people had some sympathy toward the Korean people. As a result Japan did not treat the Republic of Korea as she treats most other countries. Whenever the South Korean government requested something, Japan reacted very politely, often accepting her demands. The Government of Japan established a practice of “Not offending the neighboring countries (近隣諸国条項)” in 1982 in the descriptions in school textbooks.^{vii} This implies that even though a neighboring country was in fault, Japan should not state this fact in school textbooks, an absolute absurdity, but was accepted by the government since then. The neighboring countries include the People’s Republic of China as well as the Republic of Korea.

When Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa was about to visit South Korea in January 1992, Asahi Newspaper published an article in which Asahi claimed that they discovered several documents which were said to prove the Japanese military’s direct involvement in recruitment of comfort women.^{viii} Prime Minister decided to apologize to his counterpart in South Korea. In fact, he did 8 times while he was in South Korea. He did not examine facts, and apologized for whatever Asahi claimed Japan did. This attitude has led to the notorious “Kono Statement” of 1993. Although the statement is ambiguously written, it

admitted “direct and indirect involvement of the government of Japan” in recruiting and supervising the system of comfort stations.^{ix} In addition, Yohei Kono, Chief Cabinet Secretary at the time, admitted forceful abduction of women by the Japanese military after the official statement in the Q&A period. This has led to the perception that the Japanese military was directly involved in coercive recruitment of women and girls. However, he did not explain fully about recruitment of comfort women.

There were two kinds of recruitment of comfort women at the time. Almost all comfort women were recruited by private recruiters in Japan as well as in Korea and Taiwan which were integral parts of Japan at that time. Many of them were recruited from existing brothels. But, some were recruited by recruiters from unexperienced women by offering good income and/or buying out family debts. In the country at that time, there were numerous poverty-stricken families in need of help. A significant part of comfort women were recruited in this way.^x

There are some exceptions. Some military soldiers forcibly moved some women to comfort stations. This happened to some Dutch women in Semarang in Indonesia. This act was an obvious violation of their own codes of the Japanese military. When these violations were found, the Japanese military corrected them. These violations of the codes took place but they were exceptions. These violators were tried after the war and principal criminals were executed. These exceptions did not occur within Korea or Taiwan, but took place in newly occupied areas. Nonetheless, the number was very limited, and these cases should not be considered as part of the comfort women issue. The “Kono Statement” did not distinguish these violent cases from the general comfort women cases.

When the “Kono Statement” became a controversial issue in Japan in the beginning of 2014, the Abe Administration undertook an in-depth review of the background behind the Kono statement. The report was filed in June of the same year.^{xi} It revealed the following: there were exchanges of views between the two governments before the announcement of the statement. The South Korean government demanded admission of the Japanese government of coercive recruitment, and the Japanese government accepted the request on the assumption that once it was admitted, the Korean government would never repeat accusation of Japan. However, the optimistic assumption of the Japanese government never materialized. After the statement, the South Korean government kept demanding Japan apologies and compensations repeatedly. The most recent agreement between the two countries of 2015 witnessed similar results. The two governments agree that that agreement is the final and irreversible. But, within two years, the Moon Administration is

saying that the agreement was faulty, and is not performing in accordance of the agreement.^{xii}

The soft approach toward South Korea taken by the Government of Japan has not succeeded in achieving Japan's objectives.

3. The New Fact-based Approach by the Government of Japan

The Government of Japan undertook a serious search during the period of December 1991 through June 1992 for crucial documents proving that the government was directly involved in recruiting comfort women.^{xiii} The search covered not only the libraries in Japan but also those in the United States. Then, they have concluded that there is no reliable document that proves direct involvement of the government in coercive recruitment. The United States government also undertook an interdepartmental survey for identifying war crime activity of the Japanese military related to comfort women from 2000 through 2007 spending \$30 million and covering 8.5 million pages of document.^{xiv} There are two parts on this study. The second part dealing with comfort women was initiated by urging from the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia, an organization established in California by Chinese-Americans. The final report refers to possible disappointment by the Chinese American organization.

In the meantime, the pressure on Japan kept intensifying. There was a U.S. House Resolution in 2007 which criticizes the Government of Japan in relation to the comfort women program.^{xv} Since 2010, several comfort women monuments have been built in the U.S.

It was July 16, 2014 on which Japan declared for the first time in international meetings that the comfort women should not be called "sex-slaves." It was a meeting of the United Nations Council for Human Rights in Geneva.^{xvi} Since then, this position has not been changed. The clearest statement was made on February 16, 2016 in Geneva. The head of the Japanese delegation, Shinsuke Sugiyama, declared that the comfort women were not coercively recruited, they were not sex-slaves, and stated that the false information originated from S. Y. and Asahi Newspaper.^{xvii}

On February 22, 2017, the Government of Japan filed an amicus curiae in support of the plaintiffs to the U.S. Federal Supreme Court. This was a lawsuit initiated by GAHT-US against the City of Glendale, California for removing the comfort women monument which was erected in a public park of the City. In the amicus curiae the Government accused the

City of Glendale strongly because the interference by the City on the issue of comfort women might jeopardize the otherwise smooth Japan-S. Korea relations. Then, it refers back to the Sugiyama statements of 2016.

More recently, the Government of South Korea expressed their misgiving on the December 2015 agreement with Japan. To this position, the Abe Administration flatly denies any flexibility with the agreement.^{xviii} Their approach to South Korea has changed from a soft one to a hard one. They are now proceeding on the basis of hard facts rather than trying to fix the problem by mere, often tentative, agreements with the partner government.

4. Conclusion & Recommendation:

On the basis of hard facts the Comfort Women sex-slaves theory is a fabrication. Thus the Government of Japan does not need to revise the 2015 “final” agreement with the Republic of Korea. Therefore, CEDAW is urged not to request the Government of Japan to renegotiate with the Republic of Korea regarding the Comfort Women issue.

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ⁱ See Reference United States (1944)

ⁱⁱ See Soh (2008) and Park (2014) in References

ⁱⁱⁱ See Nakamura (1998-2003).

^{iv} See Y. (1983) in References.

^v See pp. 233-234 in Hata (1999).

^{vi} Asahi Newspaper in its Japanese language version announced its errors on August 5 and 6, 2014.

^{vii} The current restrictions are based on the Ministry of Education Instruction No. 15 of 1989 and No. 96 of 1999.

^{viii} Nishioka in Sapio(2013), p.32.

^{ix} See <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>

^x The anthropological studies of Soh(2008) and Park(2014) lead to this interpretation.

^{xi} The report is shown in Mera (2015), pp. 43-67.

^{xii} For example, the article in Wall Street Journal of January 9, 2018 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-wont-renegotiate-comfort-women-deal-with-japan-1515482498>

^{xiii} See <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/00042171/pdf> and also Mera (2015), pp. 49-50.

^{xiv} See <https://www.archives.gov/files/iwg/reports/final-report-2007.pdf>

^{xv} Refers to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/121>

^{xvi} See Mera(2015), p. 95.

^{xvii} See http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000163.html

^{xviii} See <https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korean-report-renews-tensions-with-japan-over-forced-wartime-sex-work-1514377850?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=12>