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The Comfort Women Issue

Comfort women were not Japanese military sex slaves

1. Introduction

The Korean History Textbook Research Institute is a civic body in the Republic of Korea that researches history by objectively examining historical facts based on primary sources.

We understand that the issue of Japanese military comfort women has long been discussed at the CCPR. In Paragraph no.148 - no.156 of the Seventh Periodic Report of Japan (CCPR/C/JPN/7), the Japanese Government referred to “comfort women” in response.

Comfort women are not Japanese military sex slaves. We have made this report for members of the CCPR to state the clear facts about the Japanese military comfort women.

2. The truth about comfort women—comfort women are not Japanese military sex slaves

2-1 The comfort women issue and a Korean civic group

An organization called the “Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan” (<http://womenandwar.net/kr/about-us>) plays a major role in the Japanese military comfort women issue, an issue that has caused turmoil and conflict within South Korea and has brought the diplomatic relationship between South Korea and Japan almost to the brink of rupture. Ever since 1990, for nearly thirty years, this group has claimed, on one hand, to promote the resolution of the comfort women issue, but, on the other hand, raised Japan’s “Women’s Volunteers Corps,” which had nothing to do with the military comfort women, thereby sowing confusion and dismay among those involved in the comfort women issue. Previously known as “The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery,” this group changed its name to the meaningless and ambiguous “Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.” It is not merely a Council for Justice and Remembrance (hereinafter, the “Council for Justice”) but its aim is to “resolve the issue of the Japanese military sexual slavery system.” That is to say, the core of the comfort women issue is “Japanese military sexual slavery system.” The

Council for Justice defined the Japanese military system of sexual slavery as “referring to crimes committed by the Japanese military through systematically establishing military comfort stations and mobilizing women in occupied and colonized areas and forcing women into sexual slavery from the 1930s to the time of Japan’s defeat in 1945.” They claimed that the perpetrators of the crimes were the Japanese military and the victims were women in occupied and colonized regions. Is any of this true?

2-2. What were comfort stations?

Lexically, a “slave” is “a person who is robbed of fundamental rights and freedom, not able to assert individual will and actions and is used by others at their will.” Based on this definition, a “sex slave” is “a person who cannot exercise sexual rights or freedom at one’s will, but instead, is forced to act by the will of others.” Therefore, if comfort women were sex slaves abused by the Japanese military, they would have unconditionally followed Japanese military personnel’s sexual desires without the slightest resistance or protest. However, as it is common practice to pay when eating at a restaurant, no one was allowed into a comfort station without paying. Japanese military personnel unfailingly paid in exchange for sexual service.

In fact, the Internet website of the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family “Japanese Military Comfort Women e-history Museum” (<http://www.archive814.or.kr/>) clearly states: “Comfort women bear the characteristics of contracted prostitution engaged in private spheres.” Thus, comfort women are professional prostitutes who provide sexual services in exchange for the payment of the fixed prices and the Japanese military personnel are none other than customers. In the Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, submitted by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy in 1996, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/45, it is stated that “the rationale behind the establishment of a formal system of comfort stations was that such an institution would reduce the number of rape reports in areas where the army was based.” (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1)

2-3. The licensed prostitution system

Here, “systematic prostitution” means “licensed prostitution”. Licensed prostitution refers to the system of legal prostitution subject to control and supervision by state organs. This is the same with the control of prostitutes engaged in businesses such as in restaurants and brothels by the police of the Korean Governor-General’s Office within Korea. At the time, the

Korean Governor-General's Office Police set and regulated prostitution fees. Within this context, at Japanese military comfort stations under the military supervision, not only brothel owners (masters) but the prostitutes working there were required to submit the necessary papers and obtain official approval from the state organs concerned before they were allowed to legally work. In addition, there were regulations that were strictly adhered to by the comfort station owner, comfort women and military personnel and employees who visited the comfort station. Officers and soldiers had to pay according to their rank and by the hour to enter a comfort station. Prices varied according to location, but roughly speaking, common soldiers were charged 1.50 yen per thirty minutes, 2 yen per forty minutes for non-commissioned officers, and 3 yen per fifty minutes and 8 yen for an overnight stay for officers.

2-4. Facts about comfort women revealed by a United States military report

In October 1944, the United States Office of War Information Psychological Warfare Team attached to U.S. Army Force India-Burma Theater published "Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49" (http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02_4/8_S1.pdf). According to the Report, the average monthly income of a comfort woman was 1,500 yen. In 1943, a Japanese army general received 550 yen per month, while a private received 6 yen per month. Thus, the monthly income of a comfort woman was three times that of a general and 250 times that of a private. Thus, comfort women earned extraordinarily large sums of money. The Coomaraswamy Report stated that a comfort woman received sixty to seventy customers a day. In this case, supposing that each customer paid 1.50 yen, a comfort woman would receive 90 yen per day or 2,700 yen per month if she received sixty customers a day. Even if the house master took half of her earnings, she still earned a huge amount of money.

The US Office of War Information Report also stated: "They had plenty of money with which to purchase desired articles. They were able to buy cloth, shoes, cigarettes, and cosmetics to supplement the many gifts given to them by soldiers who had received "comfort bags" from home."

Their safety was also ensured. "The girls were allowed the prerogative of refusing a customer. This was often done if the person was too drunk." To identify soldiers, two soldiers were selected from among the units, and they regularly stayed at the comfort station. The military police patrolled comfort stations to maintain order. Comfort women were prostitutes working under military protection.

2-5. Soldiers were merely customers to comfort women

In the food service industry, there are some restaurants that are busy and prosperous and some restaurants that are not. Likewise, among comfort women, some had a hard time whereas others enjoyed a glamorous life. A beauty contest was held among adjacent comfort stations and one woman was chosen Miss Japanese, grandly paraded on the streets of the city. Another woman, dressed in a green raincoat of the latest French fashion, rode a bicycle in the city of Rangoon (currently Yangon), enjoying her youth to the fullest. Comfort women were professionals, concluded employment contracts with entrepreneurs and received fixed fees from male customers like soldiers in exchange for sexual services. Sometimes comfort women may have suffered harsh treatment from their employer, the house master. However, military personnel, who were merely customers at the comfort station, were never allowed to treat comfort women as slaves. It was the employer, not military personnel, that exercised exclusive property rights over their comfort women.

2-6. Protests by former comfort women—"Why are we called sex slaves?"

The statement that comfort women were "Japanese military sex slaves" can only be made by those who know nothing about the true situation of the comfort women or by those who intentionally or maliciously distort the truth. We know this to be true when we hear the protests by women who used to work as comfort women: "How can we be sex slaves?"

The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance used to work under the name of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery, which had nothing to do with comfort women. Realizing their fault, they changed their name to the current Council for Justice. They intended to change for better, but, in fact, they changed for worse.

At the core of the assertions made by the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance are the beliefs of forced mobilization by the Japanese military, of Japanese military sexual slavery, and the belief that these women were victims of Japanese military war crimes. None of these cherished beliefs have any basis in historical fact. Now, it is time for the Council for Justice to get out of their dark cave of "lies" and into a bright world of "the truth."

3. Conclusion

We request CCPR:

- 1) Never again deal with the issue of Japanese military comfort women at the CCPR,
- 2) If the CCPR is obliged to deal with the issue of the Japanese military comfort women, then consider points of views that are not the same as those presented by the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance, and
- 3) When dealing with historical issues, including the Japanese military comfort women, to be careful and deliberate, strictly basing conclusions on objective, historical facts.

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