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The “Comfort Women Statue” in Berlin Mitte District

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

It is historical fact that, based on the Tripartite Pact, Japan and Germany fought as allies against the United Nations during World War II. Both countries suffered horrible civilian losses at hands of the United Nations--losses which should be construed as war crimes—including two out-of-the- blue attacks with nuclear weapons and indiscriminate carpet bombing of defenseless cities.

After the war, both Japan and Germany were forced to bear all of the burdens of responsibility for WWII and for “war crimes”. Because both countries surrendered, Japan and Germany were forced to abandon their legal right to make claims for damages illegally inflicted by the United Nations’ military. Long after the end of the war, protests based on historical facts and legal grounds have been coldly ignored both domestically and internationally.

Today, over 75 years after the end of the WWII, we, the sons and daughters of Japan and Germany, reiterate our position based on historical facts in international forums, including the United Nations,

to clear our ancestor's name for the sake of their honor and dignity. It is of no consequence to us that our activities will be looked down upon as "glorifying the past" or "repeating mistakes of the past". It is very natural for us, the people of Japan and Germany, to want to correct lies and fabrication with historical facts so that our descendants do not endure the same abuse that we endure today. Japanese and Germans once waged war together as allies. Together, we need to fight the persistent lies and fabrications and defeat the pernicious creatures who threaten to break the bond of friendship between Japan and Germany.

Troublingly, activists like the "Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slaves by Japan," the so-called "Council for Justice", have vigorously established anti-Japan groups with the aim of smearing and humiliating Japan in front of the international community. There are also groups within Japan that march along with these activists, insulting our ancestors and urging our descendants to heap shame upon themselves without fully understanding the facts. We believe activists are trying to destroy the good relationship that exists between Japan and Germany, in both Germany and in Japan.

The so-called "Comfort Woman" statue sitting in Bezirk Mitte is based on lies and should be removed immediately because of the following reasons. It is our sincere concern that South Korean anti-Japan, pro-North Korea activists, including the so-called "Council for Justice", brought the statute into Germany to manipulate the German people's thinking with false history and fake sentiment. As an expert in Japan affairs, we hope that when you will read the following letter, you do so in the spirit of fair mindedness and objectivity. Based on your own critical examination, we believe that you will come to the conclusion that what we say is true.

On the Issue of the "Comfort Women" and the Discipline of the Japan Imperial Forces

1. Main points

Recognition of inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This is true of the former officers and soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Forces. It is a right, no one can violate, for their bereaved families and those concerned to recover their honor and to demand an apology, from damage inflicted by groundless and false criticism and slander.

According to the result of a Japanese Government, investigation, there was no evidence of direct involvement of the Japanese military regarding the comfort women during World War II. Nonetheless, the Japanese Government issued the groundless "Kono Statement" (refer to Source 1, pp. 308-309 and Source 2, pp. 187-188) in 1993, meaning that the Japanese Government admitted to various allegations,

including “forced abduction by the military.” We demand that the Japanese Government rescind the Kono Statement and apologize for the groundless slander against the dignity and honor of former Japanese military officers and soldiers. We also request that the United Nations Human Rights Bodies recommend that the Japanese Government take appropriate measures regarding this matter, based on the principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Our assertions

2-1. Retain dignity and honor of the former Japan Imperial Forces officers and soldiers and their bereaved families as an inviolable human rights

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,” and Article 1, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

The stipulation of the Declaration should be applied to officers and soldiers of a defeated nation’s military. Various allegations of human rights violation breaching the United Nations human rights treaties have been submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Bodies, such as direct involvement in the “forced abduction” of women and “comfort women” used as “sex slaves,” based on testimonies of former “comfort women.” If these allegations prove to be groundless fabrications, then they will surely constitute slander that is damaging to the dignity and honor of the officers and soldiers of the former Imperial Japanese Forces. Therefore, it is clearly the inherent right of those concerned and their bereaved families to demand an apology from those responsible.

Article 11 of the Constitution of Japan states: “The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights,” and in Article 16, “Every person shall have the right of peaceful petition for the redress of damage [omitted] and for other matters.” Thus, every Japanese citizen is guaranteed fundamental human rights and the right of peaceful petition.

2-2. Tales of “forced abduction of Korean women” are totally false

A Japanese named Yoshida Seiji was the person who spread the fictional story that comfort women were forcibly abducted by the former Japanese military in Japan and Korea, in his book, *My War Crime—Record of Forced Abduction* (published in 1983, by Japanese publisher San-Ichi Shobo). He claimed that following a mobilization order issued by Western Area Army Commander, he led a “hunt for comfort women” in Jeju, South Korea (Source 2, p.179).

However, in 1995, Yoshida himself admitted that the contents of his book were false. Beginning in 1982, Japan's leading newspaper, the *Asahi Newspaper*, reported Yoshida's claims sixteen times in their articles. It was in August 2014 that the *Asahi Newspaper* recognized Yoshida's statements as false and officially retracted all reports citing Yoshida (Paper 2, p.210). An on-site investigation conducted in Jeju clearly demonstrated that there was no forced abduction. Furthermore, Yoshida's eldest son stated that his father had never been to Jeju (Source 4, pp.243-244, Japanese magazine *Shin-cho* 45, September 2016 issue).

It is unknown why Yoshida continued to assert his lies as truth (Source 2, p.211). Yoshida's disappeared from public life around 1988 and died in July 2000 (Source 5).

Yoshida claimed to have studied at Faculty of Law, Special Department, Hosei University in Japan. However, Yoshida's name was not listed in the University's student record. Yoshida himself testified that he adopted a Korean but that his adopted son was killed in action. In fact, the adopted Korean died in 1983 (Source 4). Much of Yoshida's career remains dubious and some suspect that Yoshida had connection with North Korea.

While Yoshida's "comfort women hunt" fallacy spread in South Korea, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (the Korean Council) was established in 1990. In 1991, Kim Hak-sun stated that she used to be a comfort woman. According to former Japanese military regulations, contractors planning to run a military comfort station were to submit an application for approval by the military. Women employed as comfort women were obligated to undergo testing for venereal disease (Source 6). Kim Hak-sun's claims about being forcibly abducted by the former Japanese military suggests military regulation and procedure were not followed. In fact, she was sold to an underground whorehouse by her stepfather.

2-3. Pro-North Korea powers that politically used Yoshida's fabrication

It was the Korean Council that politicized Kim Hak-sun's memory, turning alleged forced abduction by the Japanese military in to "fact" and disseminated this thinking to the international community (Sources 1 and 2). The Korean Council intentionally delayed and postponed efforts to resolve the comfort women issue from the very beginning. They pressured former comfort women not to receive money from Japan's Asian Women's Fund and slandered women who did receive money from the Fund, calling them "traitors." The former head of the Korean Council, Yoon Mee-hyang, espouses *juche* (philosophy of self-reliance) and her husband was arrested for violation of the National Safety law for having contact with a North Korean agent (Source 2, p.218). The Korean Council is influenced by a North Korean intelligence agency.

On May 28, 2020, Lee Yong Soo, a former comfort woman activist, scathingly rebuked Yoon Mee-hyang, head of the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, which was established in July 2018, reorganized from The Korean Council. Lee Yong Soo angrily stated, “Yoon Mee-hyang deceived, betrayed and used us as much as she could,” [on the Wednesday meetings in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul] “We were taught only hatred and hurt and donations were never spent for us and we have no idea where all the money went,” “They never told us former comfort women that Japan paid a billion yen following the Agreement between Japan and Korea.” Against Lee’s criticisms, Yoon Mee-hyang wrote on Facebook, “The first time I had a phone call from Lee Yong Soo, Lee said, ‘I am not a victim myself, but a friend of one,’” hinting at a possibility that Lee was not a former comfort woman (Source 7).

It is clear that "forced abduction" of comfort women by the former Japanese military is nothing more than a fabrication based on Yoshida’s lies, pro-North Korea groups, like the Korean Council, propagating the lie, and media such as the *Asahi Newspaper* repeating the lie. The dignity and honor of the former Japanese military officers and soldiers have thus been smeared by an entirely fabricated story. The dignity and honor of the former Japanese military officers and soldiers must be immediately restored and those responsible for repeating groundless allegations must apologize.

2-4. The former Japanese Army observed strict discipline and treated people living in the occupied regions as equals, as Japanese citizens, and with respect

The former Japanese military won the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and gallantly fought in the Greater East Asian War, not only to defend and preserve Japan, but also to establish a new order in East Asia, with the objective of liberating Western colonies and promotion of racial equality. The Japanese military was known for its strict military discipline and elite troops. The Japanese Army expelled the American and European powers, albite temporarily, paving the way for future national independence movements among Asian and African countries after World War II.

Regarding the former Japanese Army’s treatment of residents in areas of occupation, the Army made it a rule to treat residents as equals and in a friendly manner, following Emperor Meiji's Imperial Order. Japanese officers and soldiers who fought in the War and were held prisoners of war by the United States stated such (Source 8). After the War, Moon Oku-chu, who became a symbol of the comfort women, related her memories of kindness she received from Japanese military men (Source 1, pp.291-292). Moon and other former comfort women related the kindness of Japanese officers and soldiers at the time; some comfort women married Japanese military men (Source 9).

It is true that the former Japanese military set up “comfort stations.” However, the Army built them

with the aim of preventing soldiers from raping local women, spreading venereal diseases, to demonstrate dignity among the local people and to preempt possible enemy spying. The installation of “comfort stations” was intended to protect the local women against rape and protection of their human rights. Women working at comfort stations were checked to prevent them from catching venereal diseases. As a result, the rate of contracting venereal disease on the part of the Japanese Army officers and soldiers was extremely low (Source 6).

The Japanese Army document, “Army, China, Confidential Journal” (No. 10, dated 1938, Army, China, Confidential No. 745), which was supposed to constitute evidence of Japanese military involvement in obtaining "comfort women", was, in fact, an order that strictly prohibited illegally recruiting women and using the name of the Japanese Army. It further warned that those who violated this order were to be severely punished. Clearly, the purpose of the order was to maintain the trust and prestige of the Army (Source 10).

The Japanese Army also protected comfort women against exploitation by contractors for profit, from forced burdensome labor, from customers not paying for service and from violence. Visiting officers were required to pay in advance and if officers failed to pay, comfort women were allowed to sue and wrongdoers would be severely punished, including imprisonment. It is no wonder that there are no cases of customers failing to pay (Source 1).

2-5. The former Japanese Army’s treatment of their military comfort women was much better than that by the United States or South Korean military

Comfort stations and comfort women are seen around almost every military installation. United States military forces, which occupied Japan after the War, admitted the necessity of setting up comfort stations to deal with American officers and soldiers, to prevent them from raping Japanese women and to prevent theft, which were frequently committed by American officers and soldiers (Source 12).

After the War, there were many comfort stations and comfort women for American and South Korean military forces (Source 1, pp.220-228). However, treatment of Korean comfort women by the United States military and South Korean military cannot be said to have been better than that of the former Japanese Army. Abortion rates among Korean comfort women serving the U.S. military and the South Korean military were about 50% and 20%, respectively. On the other hand, the Japanese military were obligated to use condoms and only one abortion in Burma and one in Singapore were reported (Source 1). The rate of contracting venereal disease among Korean comfort women, including non-military comfort women, was 5% during the Japanese rule of the Korean Peninsula. This rose to 26% when the American military arrived—the number of comfort women rose ten times with the arrival of the Americans (Source 1, pp. 286-287).

Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates, “All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.” If the comfort women issue involving the former Japanese military officers and soldiers is to be pursued, the United Nations Human should address comfort women issues related to postwar American and South Korean military forces, raping of Japanese women and massacres committed by the Soviet Army when they invaded Manchuria, and the rights of the *Lai Dai Han*, children born to Vietnamese women who were raped by South Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War.

2-6. The former Japanese military was not directly involved in recruiting comfort women and running comfort stations and there was no force recruiting them

The major reason why Korean women became comfort women was for money. The Japanese Army did not directly take part in recruiting comfort women (Source 11). There was no "military comfort women system" in the former Japanese Army and comfort women were not employees of the military unlike, for example, military nurses. The Japanese Army never directly mobilized comfort women, who were not employees of the military. Those who recruited comfort women were Korean dealers. Korean women were cunningly enticed into becoming comfort women. It was not the Japanese Army that cajoled women. If it is true that Korean women were cajoled into becoming comfort women, then it was their fellow Koreans who deceived them, using sweet words. It was true that the Japanese military provided convenience in opening comfort stations, but they had nothing to do with the employment of comfort women (Source 13).

There were no restraints imposed by the Japanese Army on the freedoms of comfort women. (Source 11). The Army had strict management regulations and was responsible for overseeing the comfort stations. However, the military was strictly prohibited from directly running comfort stations and profiting. Comfort women were protected from contracting venereal disease and pregnancy.

Also, they were protected from exploitation by dealers--their share of profits being previously decided upon according to regulation. In fact, comfort women earned several times more money than a colonel did. Korean comfort women sent money home to Korea and were allowed to decline rude guests, to take days off and to go home to Korea (Sources 8 and 9). On average, they saved ample sums of money, from ¥6,000 to ¥10,000 (value at the time). Some saved as much as ¥30,000 (Source 14). ¥32,000 at the time is currently equivalent to ¥100 million (about USD one million). Comfort women frequently sent money to their families at home and some sent as much as ¥11,000 at a time. Though under minute Army control, comfort stations were individually run by the station owner. The owner of the comfort station and comfort women were not in a constrained relationship. A comfort woman could change

comfort stations as she wished. Comfort women were able to pay back the money they had borrowed in advance after they worked for six months at a station (Source 1, pp. 283-276). At the time, prostitution was a legal and comfort women were well taken care of. Under such a circumstance, it is totally unthinkable that the Army would need to forcibly abducted women to make them work at comfort stations (Source 15).

2-7. The Korean Government implored the Japanese Government to admit to forced abduction against facts and the Japanese Government compromised and issued the “Kono Statement”

As stated earlier in Section 2-6, according to people involved with comfort stations, military and nonmilitary and those still alive, there was no military abduction of women. This was also verified by a Japanese Government investigation. When the focal point of the comfort women issue became "forced abduction" in the procurement of women, following the Korean Government's request for re-examination, further investigation related to the comfort women issue was conducted by Japanese authorities. Mr. Nagae Taro, special analyst at the War History Section, National Institute for Defense Studies, a governmental organ, was assigned reexamination, from beginning to end, and stated, “We have conveyed to the Korean Government that there was no evidence to suggest forced abduction among papers related to the Japanese military held at our National Institute for Defense Studies.”

Special analyst Nagae further stated, “The Japanese Government conveyed to the Korean Government that there was no evidence of forced abduction, based on the result of an investigation conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. In response to this, thinking that the Korean people would hardly accept the result of the reexamination, the Korean Government implored the Japanese Government to admit to "forced abduction" after directly interviewing former comfort women and allowing their testimonies whole, without any attempt to verify them. Thus, the Cabinet Secretary at the time, Kono Yohei, the Kono Statement, came into being.” (Source 3)

In 2014, the Abe Shinzo Administration conducted a study by experts regarding the origin of the Kono Statement. The study revealed that there was unofficial adjusting and reconciling between the two countries and that Korea meddled with the contents of the Kono Statement. It was also made clear that between December 1991 and January 1992, when then Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visited South Korea, there were no signs of an investigation being conducted by the Japanese Government regarding “forced abduction by the Japanese military.” Immediately before the Prime Minister's visit to South Korea, the Japanese Government quietly contemplated that “it would be appropriate, if possible, to have the Prime Minister himself admit to involvement of the Japanese Army and express regret and apology.” (Source 2, pp. 189-191)

As we have stated so far, the “Kono Statement” was issued by the Miyazawa Kiichi Administration

out of political consideration, without basis in fact, thus succumbing to Korean meddling and Korean claims based on fallacies.

It is our right as Japanese citizens to demand that the Japanese Government apologize for having tremendously damaged the dignity and honor of former Japanese military officers and soldiers and their bereaved families and to rescind the Kono Statement, based on Preamble and Chapter 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2-8. The lie of “forced abduction” was disseminated to the international community and has grave consequences

“The Special Report on Violence against Women,” submitted in February 1996 to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by Special Rapporteur Radhka Coomaraswamy, provided a great opportunity to spread the comfort women issue across the international community. However, her Report was poorly grounded and full of distortions. Stories from Yoshida Seiji, who by this time admitted that his “comfort women hunt” was a fabrication, were included as "evidence" in her Report.

The book, *Sex Slaves—Military Comfort Women*, written by George Hicks (published by San-Ichi Shobo, in 1995), was often quoted in the Coomaraswamy Report, but this book is also of dubious trustworthiness, void of verified facts and full of distortion. For example, the statement of a Japanese scholar, who cooperated in Ms. Coomaraswamy’s investigation, was placed entirely out of context in her Report. Mr. Hicks’ book contains statements that border on propaganda of a certain North Korean “former comfort woman”, claimed as her own experience, which many found highly questionable (Source 2, pp.201-201).

At first, the Japanese Government tried to counter the Special Rapporteur’s Report, in that it should have been based on neutral, objective and reliable sources of information. In the end, the Japanese Government submitting a tepid statement, that “the Report’s legal discussion is not based on sufficient evidences,” an enormous pull-back from its previous intention. The reason for this about-face has yet to be made known (Source 2, pp. 204-205).

In July 2007, the United States House of Representatives adopted a Resolution, ostensibly to protect the human rights of comfort women (H.R. 121), which stated that the Japanese Government "should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility... for its... coercion of young women into sex-slavery... thorough the duration of World War II..."

However, while Korean women claiming to have been comfort women were called to testify during the House hearing, no one from the Japanese Government or specialists on the comfort women issue

attended. Representative Mike Honda (Democrat, California), who submitted the Resolution, received huge donations from anti-Japanese Chinese activists and is regarded as spokesman for anti-Japanese Chinese organization (Source 2, p. 207).

Thus, starting with Yoshida's fabrication, the "forced abduction" and "sex-slavery" views are being deliberately and systematically spread as anti-Japanese propaganda by China, North Korea and South Korea. We strongly oppose their baseless claims and since the Coomaraswamy Report distorts facts and lacks neutrality, we request that the United Nations Human Rights Committee immediately withdraw the Coomaraswamy Report from further consideration.

3. Conclusion

In order to recover and protect the dignity and honor of the former Japanese Army officers and soldiers, the Japanese Government should:

- 1) Rescind the Kono Statement and apologize to former Japanese Army officers and soldiers and their bereaved families, allowing them to recover their honor.
- 2) Refute claims not based on facts and push-back against undue pressure without succumbing.
- 3) Guarantee that every person has his or her dignity protected, including former Japanese Army officers and soldiers, their bereaved families and those concerned, following Preamble and Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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