

An “agreement” without the victim is no “resolution”

On December 28th, 2015, the foreign ministers of the ROK and Japan met to discuss the Japan's military "comfort women" issue, and held a joint press conference after the meeting. Since the judgment about the agreement should depend primarily on how the victims perceived it, we would like to offer the following comments on the decision by the foreign ministers of the ROK and Japan. As an organization which has worked hard on resolving the issue of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery and has made Recommendations to the Government of Japan for the resolution of this issue, which was adopted at Asian Solidarity Conference in 2014 where the survivors and their supporters from a variety of countries and regions met.

1. These negotiations have been carried out from the beginning without consultation with the victims. This is very clear from the result; From the point of view of the survivors there are too many unresolved issues in this agreement made as the "final solution". In particular, the governments of the ROK and Japan settled the matter politically and made the agreement final under pressure from the United States, whose focus is on security policies. This process clearly resembles the negotiation process that resulted in the ROK-Japan agreements 50 years ago. This is painfully reminiscent of the fact that East Asia remains under US control to this day.

2. At long last, the government of Japan has acknowledged its responsibility. That the Abe administration acknowledged this itself is an achievement of the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery and citizen's movements alike. Neither of these groups has ever given up the struggle over the past 25 years. In order to accept the responsibility, however, which facts are acknowledged is crucial in identifying the scope of the acceptance. In other words in this case the government of Japan must accept the following facts described in our Recommendations;

- i. That the Japanese government and military proposed, established, managed and controlled the military facilities known as "comfort stations" ;
- ii. That the women were forced to become "comfort women" / sexual slaves against their will, and were kept in coercive circumstances in the " comfort stations ";
- iii. That it was a serious violation of the human rights which contravened a variety both of domestic Japanese laws as well as international laws of the time;

The statement released on December 28th accepting only "an involvement of the Japanese Military authorities", is not acceptable to the survivors.

3. The foreign minister of the ROK stated on the issue of the Peace Monument (the statue of a girl) that the government of the ROK "will strive to solve this issue in an appropriate manner". This is a result of Japan's demand to the ROK which is an insult to the survivors. Such a selfish "agreement" is nothing but cursing the survivors

yet again.

4. Further, the fact that the agreement makes no reference whatsoever to educational measures and to passing on the memory to future generations, but rather provides that both governments are to mutually refrain from accusing or criticizing the other in the international community regarding the issue is proof that neither government understands that this issue of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery is an issue of the women's human rights. At the same time this statement is in contradiction to the survivors' rights to the restoration of honor and dignity. As such, it is utterly impossible for us to accept it.

5. Whether this issue is "resolved finally and irreversibly" depends solely on how the government of Japan deals with the issue from now on. One must understand that the reason why this problem was not resolved but kept being raised again and again is precisely because the government of Japan failed to provide measures acceptable to the survivors, and because the government of Japan itself repeatedly denied historical facts, including the Abe administration's attempt to revisit and revise the Kono Statement.

6. The government of Japan must understand that a mere governmental agreement in the absence of the victims will not solve the problem. It must take measures including the following:

- i. The prime minister's statements of apology and remorse should not be presented only in the form of the Foreign Minister reading them on his behalf or of a phone call to the President of the ROK. Rather the Prime Minister must express these things officially once more in a manner that the survivors can accept as a genuine apology.
- ii. When a statement is made by an official figure that is in contradiction with the responsibility of the State of Japan or with facts acknowledged in the Kono Statement, the government of Japan must absolutely refute it. It also must take up a resolute attitude against hate speech.
- iii. The "projects for recovering honor and dignity and healing the psychological wounds" of the survivors must include what the survivors want more than anything else, namely the full disclosure of all documents possessed by the government of Japan, further research of documents both in Japan and elsewhere, accounting of facts including interviews with the survivors and other related persons both in Japan and elsewhere, and implementing education in schools and in society including references in textbooks used in Japan's compulsory education.
- iv. The government of Japan must acknowledge its responsibility over the issue for the survivors of other areas of the Asia -Pacific and provide measures accordingly.

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Japan Nationwide Action for Resolution of the Japan's Military "Comfort Women" Issue