



October 12, 2020

To: Mr. Stephan von Dassel
The district mayor of Mitte, Berlin

An Open Letter

Greetings from the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM). WAM is a museum located in Shinjuku, Tokyo, focusing on violence against women in war and conflict situations, particularly the issue of Japan's military sexual slavery, since its inception in August 2005.

We have learned that the district mayor of Mitte have ordered to remove the "Statue for Peace" erected on September 28, 2020 in Mitte district. We believe the decisions should be left to the residents/community of Berlin to make, however, we could not overlook the situation because we noticed that the reason for the removal had to do with a recognition of an important history, written in the text attached to the statue.

Based on our 15 years' experience raising awareness about Japan's military sexual slavery, we can safely assume that the following text must have "irritated" the government of Japan (emphasis added by WAM):

During World War II the Japanese military abducted countless girls and women from across the Asia-Pacific region and forced them into sexual slavery.

We would like to share with you the understanding of the international human rights experts on the "comfort women" issue. Following is the concluding observation on Japan by the UN Human Rights Committee in 2014.

Sexual slavery practices against "comfort women"

14. The Committee is concerned by the State party's contradictory position that the "comfort women" were not "forcibly deported" by Japanese military during wartime but that the "recruitment, transportation and management" of these women in comfort stations was done in many cases generally against their will through coercion and intimidation by the military or entities acting on behalf of the military. The Committee considers that any such acts carried out against the will of the victims are sufficient to consider them as human rights violations involving the direct legal responsibility of the State party. The Committee is also concerned about re-victimization of the former comfort women by attacks on their reputations, including some by public officials and some that are encouraged by the State party's equivocal position. The Committee further takes into account, information that all claims for reparation brought by victims before Japanese courts have been dismissed, and all complaints to seek criminal investigation and prosecution against perpetrators have been rejected on the ground of the statute of limitations. The Committee considers that this situation reflects ongoing violations of the victims' human rights, as well as a lack of effective remedies available to them as victims of past human rights violations (arts.2,7 and 8).

The State party should take immediate and effective legislative and administrative measures to ensure: (i) that all allegations of sexual slavery or other human rights violations perpetrated by Japanese military during wartime against the “comfort women”, are effectively, independently and impartially investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, punished; (ii) access to justice and full reparation to victims and their families; (iii) the disclosure of all evidence available; (iv) education of students and the general public about the issue, including adequate references in textbooks; (v) the expression of a public apology and official recognition of the responsibility of the State party; (vi) condemnation of any attempts to defame victims or to deny the events.

(Extract from CCPR/C/JPN/CO/6)

As this observation shows, the claims of the Japanese government are not accepted in the international human rights community. Please also refer to the voluminous observations by the UN bodies in attached appendix.

First and foremost, we would like to reiterate that Japan’s military sexual slavery issue is not merely a diplomatic issue between Japan and South Korea; rather, it involves the human rights of women in almost all the Asia-Pacific region. This fact also has been clearly indicated in the “Resolution on Justice for the ‘Comfort Women’” adopted by the European Parliament on 13 December 2007 (Please see the following “map of the Comfort Stations” as well as full text of the Resolution of the European Parliament).

We are deeply ashamed that the Japanese government is using diplomatic measures to pressure the government of Germany to remove the statue. As citizens of the aggressor/perpetrator state Japan, we will continue our activities to pass on the historical facts to the people in Japan to wake them up from the historical amnesia. In the meantime, we are worried that the excuse for the removal of the statue presented by the mayor may also cause considerable negative impact to the dignity and the human rights of the survivors who have courageously come out of the decades-long silence, especially those who are still alive in their twilight age. Further, it will send a message to the world that Germany and Berlin-Mitte bends on the political pressure over the human rights of women, especially those who are sexually violated in armed conflict situations.

As we cordially send this open letter for your reference, we recall the speech of the Chancellor Angela Merkel made at the 10th anniversary of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation on 6 December 2019 : “This history has to be told so that today and in the future we can protect the dignity of every individual and so that we honour the memory of the victims”.

Thank you very much for your attention, and we wish the Berlin-Mitte authority have a peaceful dialogue with the initiators and the diverse community stakeholders of Berlin to protect women’s human rights.

Sincerely yours,

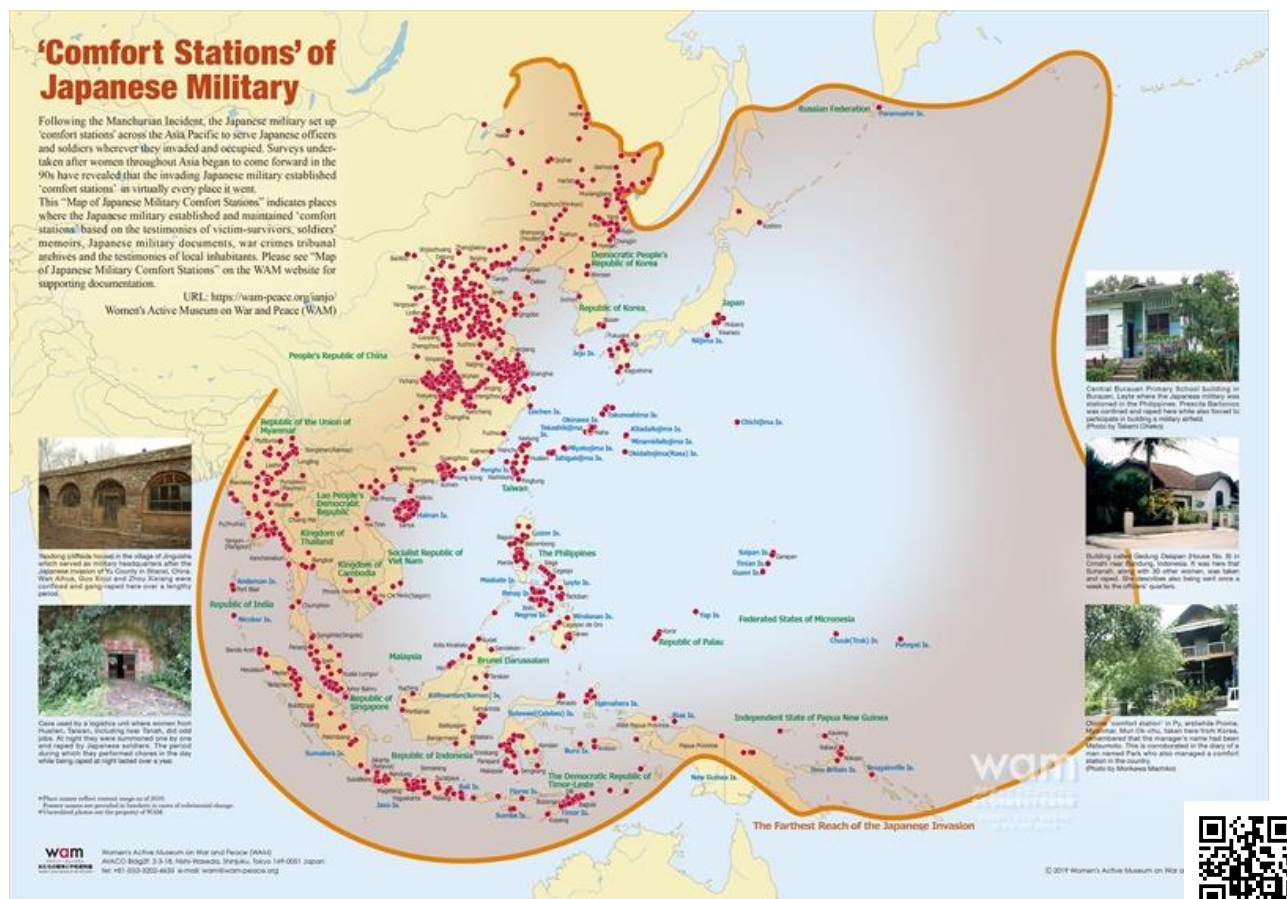
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- **Map of the “Comfort Stations” by the Japanese Military ©WAM 2019**



- **Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM)**

WAM was established in August 2005 with donations from people in Japan and abroad. WAM focuses on violence against women in war and conflict situations, particularly the issue of Japan's military sexual slavery, or the so-called "comfort women" issue. WAM holds exhibitions and educational events, conducts fact-finding projects, archives testimonials, and acts as an advocate for victims of Japan's military sexual slavery.

WAM has received the Pax Christi International Peace Prize in 2007, and the Peace Award from the Peace Studies Association of Japan in 2013.

WAM is the main project of the Women's Fund for Peace and Human Rights (WFPHR), a non-profit organization authorized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 2003. WFPHR holds the ECOSOC Special Consultative Status, and WAM has submitted alternative reports on Japan's military sexual slavery system to various UN human rights bodies, including ICCPR, CESCR, CEDAW, CAT, CERD, CED, CRC and UPR of the Human Rights Council over 15 years.

● **EU Resolution on Justice for the 'Comfort Women'
(sex slaves in Asia before and during World War II)**

13 December 2007

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The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007,
- having regard to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children (1921), to which Japan is a signatory,
- having regard to ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour (1930), ratified by Japan,
- having regard to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security,
- having regard to the report by Gay McDougall, UN Special Rapporteur on Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slave-like Practices during Armed Conflict (22 June 1998),
- having regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the 38th session of the UN Committee Against Torture (9-10 May 2007),
- having regard to the Report of a Study of Dutch Government Documents on the Forced Prostitution of Dutch Women in the Dutch East Indies During the Japanese Occupation, The Hague (2004),
- having regard to the resolutions on the comfort women adopted by the US Congress on 30 July 2007, and by the Canadian Parliament on 29 November 2007,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas the government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II, officially ordered the acquisition of young women, who became known to the world as ianfu or "comfort women", for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces,
- B. whereas the "comfort women" system included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death or eventual suicide, in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century,
- C. whereas the dozens of "comfort women" cases brought before Japanese courts have all ended in the dismissal of plaintiffs' claims for compensation, despite court judgments acknowledging the Imperial Armed Forces' direct and indirect involvement, and the State's responsibility,
- D. whereas most of the victims of the "comfort women" system have passed away, and the remaining survivors are 80 or more years of age;
- E. whereas over the past years numerous high-ranking members and officials of the Japanese Government have made apologetic statements on the "comfort women" system, while some Japanese officials have recently expressed a regrettable desire to dilute or rescind those statements,
- F. whereas the full extent of the sexual slavery system has never been fully disclosed by the government of Japan and some new required readings used in Japanese schools try to minimise the tragedy of the "comfort women" and other Japanese war crimes during World War II,
- G. whereas the mandate of the Asian Women's Fund, a government-initiated private foundation whose aim was the implementation of programmes and projects to compensate for the abuse

and suffering of the "comfort women", came to an end on 31 March 2007,

1. Welcomes the excellent relationship between the European Union and Japan based on the mutually shared values of a multi-party democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights;
2. Expresses its solidarity with the women who were victims of the "comfort women" system for the duration of World War II;
3. Welcomes the statements by Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono in 1993 and by the then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in 1995 on the "comfort women", as well as the resolutions of the Japanese parliament (the Diet) of 1995 and 2005 expressing apologies for wartime victims, including victims of the "comfort women" system;
4. Welcomes the Japanese Government's initiative to establish, in 1995, the now-dissolved Asian Women's Fund, a largely government-funded private foundation, which distributed some "atonement money" to several hundred "comfort women", but considers that this humanitarian initiative cannot satisfy the victims' claims of legal recognition and reparation under public international law, as stated by the UN Special Rapporteur Gay McDougall in her above-mentioned report of 1998;
5. Calls on the Japanese Government formally to acknowledge, apologise, and accept historical and legal responsibility, in a clear and unequivocal manner, for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as "comfort women", during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II;
6. Calls on the Japanese Government to implement effective administrative mechanisms to provide reparations to all surviving victims of the "comfort women" system and the families of its deceased victims;
7. Calls on the Japanese parliament (the Diet) to take legal measures to remove existing obstacles to obtaining reparations before Japanese courts; in particular, the right of individuals to claim reparations from the government should be expressly recognised in national law, and cases for reparations for the survivors of sexual slavery, as a crime under international law, should be prioritised, taking into account the age of the survivors;
8. Calls on the government of Japan to refute publicly any claims that the subjugation and enslavement of "comfort women" never occurred;
9. Encourages the Japanese people and government to take further steps to recognise the full history of their nation, as is the moral duty of all countries, and to foster awareness in Japan of its actions in the 1930s and 1940s, including in relation to "comfort women"; calls on the government of Japan to educate current and future generations about those events;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Japanese Government and Parliament, the UN Human Rights Council, the governments of the ASEAN States, to the governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Timor-Leste.