

Press Release

May 20th, 2020

1. We extend our deepest gratitude to media outlets dedicated to truth and social justice.
2. This document represents employees from the House of Sharing (total 7) and their legal representative. This press release was produced and distributed by the legal representative with the consent of the employees.
3. In the past, the employees of the House of Sharing have requested the managers and Board of Directors to address the situation at the House of Sharing. The problems raised by the employees are summarized as the following:
 - A. The House of Sharing, located in Toechon-myeon, Gyeonggi-do Province, is a shelter/nursing facility for survivors of military sexual slavery by Japan during the WWII. The “House of Sharing Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order” operates and manages the House of Sharing. In other words, the House of Sharing Corporation operates and manages the House of Sharing shelter/nursing facility. In this document, the term “House of Sharing” refers to the shelter/nursing facility for survivors of the military sexual slavery by Japan, while the term “corporation” refers to the Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order.
 - B. The House of Sharing was established to provide shelter and welfare of survivors who are from Korea. The facility was home to thirteen survivors at its peak. Currently, there are six survivors remaining at the House of Sharing, and four are receiving serious medical attention.
 - C. The House of Sharing publicly states that they dedicate their resources to maximize the quality of shelter and welfare of survivors at all hours of the day. However, this is false. The House of Sharing provides lodging and food to survivors, but they do not extend beyond those basic services. They do not provide additional treatment or welfare.

- D. The survivors require serious medical attention due to their poor health conditions and the frequency of accidents. However, the medical fees and incidental expenses have all been paid by the personal funds of the survivors and their families. In emergency cases, the staff paid for the medical expenses with their personal funds and later received reimbursement from the survivor's families, not from the House of Sharing. The survivors did not receive personalized medical attention whatsoever. For example, the survivors were given standardized meals from free medical facilities, rather than meals tailored to their health conditions. The survivors were not permitted to leave the facilities for reasons other than to attend events to give official testimonies. Even the survivors who enjoyed outdoor excursions were restricted.

- E. The managers of House of Sharing forbid employees from taking the survivors to the hospital or restaurants, preparing alternative meals at the shelter, buying them clothes, or other activities. They prevented the employees with all kinds of offensive excuses.

- F. The House of Sharing receives an enormous amount of donations, however, these funds are not used for the House of Sharing facilities, but rather allocated to and controlled by the corporation. The corporation has never used the funds towards any kind of treatment or welfare programs for the survivors

- G. The donations were used by the corporation to either purchase property or fund construction work. For construction projects, the corporation exclusively made contracts with the same company. The amount spent on construction since 2018 that is known to us is estimated around 1.2 billion won. The corporation owns massive amounts of real estate and cash assets. All of this property was funded by the donations.

4. Employees of the House of Sharing uncovered these problems and demanded that they be addressed by the Board of Directors of the corporation. In the process, the employees have identified that the problems were caused by the management's incompetence, poor operation, and internal corruption, as well as the corporation's apathy and negligence, which was overall enabled by the complicity of the Office of Supervision.

5. The House of Sharing Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order is a corporation established not for the welfare of survivors of sexual slavery by the Japanese military, but rather for the project of “Korean Buddhist participation in social welfare.” The organization’s efforts are officially classified as the “operation of a free nursing facility,” but it should instead be classified as a business

6. The current charter lists the business operative as the “operation of a free nursing facility,” rather than operations for the survivors of the military sexual slavery by Japan. The corporation has illegally attempted to amend the term “free” to “paid” in order to change the business operative as the “operation of a paid nursing facility.” Despite unlawfulness of the infringement, the supervising administrators are currently processing the illegal amendment of the charter.

7. If this problem remains unaddressed, the donations given by citizens intended for the survivors will be used by the Korean Buddhist Social Welfare Corporation’s operation of a paid nursing facility.

8. Since July of 2019, the employees have repeatedly demanded the Board of Directors and managers to address this problem and have not publicized the current situation. The employees were reluctant to publicize the problem in fear that its reveal would dishonor the efforts of many who dedicated themselves to helping the survivors, and most of all, cause immense disappointment from the public.

9. The employees have extensively tried every possible method to persuade the Board of Directors and management. However, the only result was refusal to extend contracts or threats to immediately fire employees. Currently, replacements of the management staff have been hired to prevent employees from collecting or accessing data, and they have been instructed to oversee the unjust allocation of donations that is still ongoing.

10. The employees were left with no other option than to reach out to the media. The television program “PD Note” broadcasted the episode that exposed the problem at the House of Sharing.

11. We deliver this message with our deepest sincerity and urgency. We, by no means, wish to demoralize the efforts of citizens and the history of ‘comfort women’ survivors by bringing this problem to the public. We are deeply fearful and anxious by the possibility of having such effect. We firmly believe that the

problem at the House of Sharing can be fixed by the efforts of our team and the will of the public. We ask for your concern and support so that our efforts for truth and justice may continue to lead in the right direction.

12. Above all, we ask for the protection of our survivors. We have summarized the situation to our survivors who are still physically able to communicate. They are deeply disheartened by the existence of this problem. We ask that media outlets refrain from approaching the survivors in a way that is hurtful to their mental and physical wellbeing.

13. We request continued attention from the media. We are open to all requests for additional media coverage, but we ask that you understand our precaution. Our intention is to prevent exaggerated or distorted presentation of facts because we aim to protect the purpose and integrity of this public exposure. We appreciate your understanding.

The Representative of Seven Employees from the House of Sharing

Garosu Law Firm, Lawyer Ryu Gwang-ok

Email: hos.taskforce@gmail.com (Tsuaksa Yajima, taskforce of the House of Sharing)